

# Gender and Security – Female Military Service in Social Perspective – History, Present Days, Law and Communication

Barbara Drapikowska

*War Studies University in Warsaw, Poland*

---

**Abstract:** The article concerns the role of the women in national security on the women military service like example. The key point presentation are history and present circumstances of women military service. I plan present results my own research in this area. I have been researched this issues since 8 years. The army is the institution that has been created by man and for man from many ages. The women have been presented only in especially situation, like the lack of male resources, e.g. Second World War. But the situation has been changed; thanks feministic movement in United States. Nowadays, the women are minority in army. There are dominated masculine style of work and communication. It is connected with gender, culture, stereotypies and society's mentality. The role of women in army is the projection of women's role in society in every country. For many soldiers this situation is quite inconvenience because of sexual and gender diversity. They think about women as a problem because this needs a lot of changes in army and social mentality. But the research shows that there are places on the world where the female resources are necessity because the women are the only people who could contact with local civilians.

Keywords: Women in army, women military service, gender and security.

---

## Introduction

Security as an area of functioning of society and the state is closely related to masculinity. Uniform services, such as the army, have been men's domination institutions since the beginning of time, both numerically and in terms of behavior patterns prevailing in them. The presence of women was visible only in a situation of higher necessity, and usually with a falling number of male personnel capable of fighting. In almost every country of the terrestrial world, the army is a perfect example of this trend. The purpose of the article below is to present the military participation of women in the Polish armed forces. His main research problem was formulated in the form of a question: how is the participation of women - soldiers in the Polish armed forces?

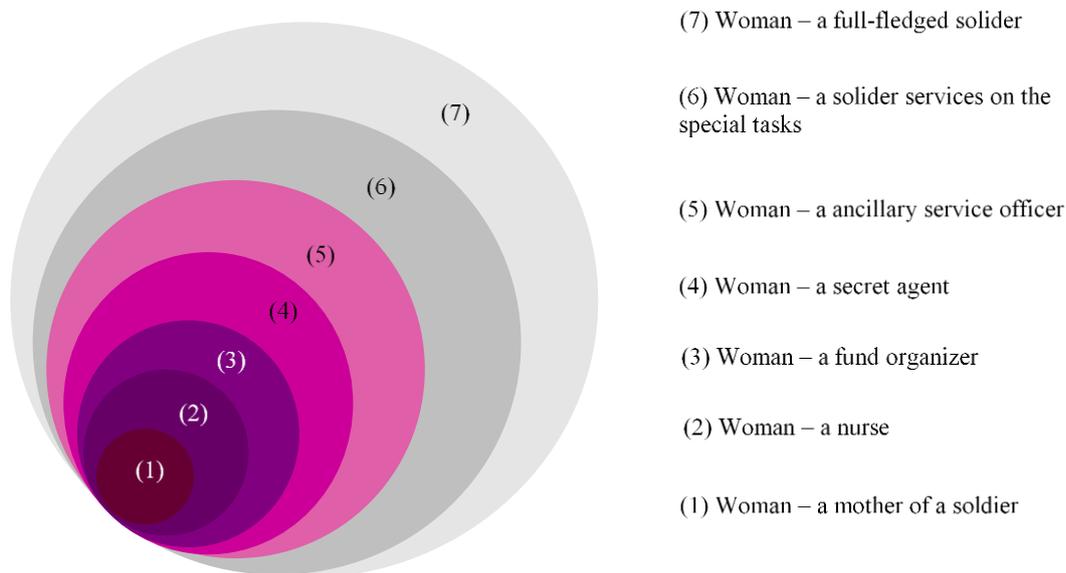
Based on the main problem, specific issues were summarized that boiled down to the following questions:

- How was the historical evolution of the role of women in the Polish army?
- How is the quantitative participation of women – soldiers in the Polish army today?
- What is the participation of women – soldiers in missions and operations carried out outside the country?
- What are the attitudes of men - soldiers towards the military service of women?

The cognitive effects presented in the article have been achieved using theoretical and empirical research methods. The evolution of the role of women in the defense of the country was determined based on the analysis of historical literature. In turn, the solutions to subsequent detailed problems were analyzed by statistical data provided by the Council for Women's Affairs in the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland (CWA AFRP). Subsequent solutions were generated based on the results of quantitative own research on attitudes of male personnel towards women - soldiers carried out on a sample of 123 Polish soldiers. Solutions to specific problems are presented in the individual parts of the article.

## **History of women military service in Poland**

The role of women in the field of national defense in the case of Poland has evolved over the centuries, ranging from a reproductive function, consisting only in providing the army with new members of society – potential fighters and soldiers. The individual stages of the process of expanding the role of women in the field of defense are presented in Picture 1.



Picture 1. The evolution of the role of women in the defense of the country.

The profession of a soldier for Polish women is a relatively new professional role in terms of form, however, in the informal area it reaches back to the Middle Ages, where the first references to the actions of armed women come from. However, such speeches were undoubtedly sporadic in nature. It was not until the time of the national uprisings (1792-1863) that the names of women engaging in national defense issues through physical or material support appeared on the pages of history and messages for posterity (Wawrzykowska-Wierciochowa, 1988).

Initially, their involvement included only sanitary functions - they were involved in the production of dressing materials and dressing wounds for soldiers. The next step in their military participation was shaping the institution of the *marquee*. It was the prototype of subsequent logistic services provided by female staff in the auxiliary service. At that time, the first of the women carried out intelligence functions, which came easily to them due to their natural communication skills, as well as remaining beyond the suspicions of the opponent. The next step towards expanding the participation of women in the implementation of defense functions was the provision of courier services, i.e. transferring orders, food, weapons and other articles intended for use on the battlefield. All tasks carried out so far served one purpose, which was always visible when women were engaged in military activities, namely - relieving men from auxiliary work for direct participation in the fight.

Implementation of this type of activity - especially the role of a nurse - was enjoying greater social acceptance, but the participation of women in armed activities was associated with overcoming various formal and mental barriers. While the first women overcome very simply, i.e. by dressing the male uniform and masking secondary sexual characteristics, the latter, due to the perception of the social role of a woman predestinating her to protect the home, were much more difficult to overcome.

Modification of ideas on this was associated with the general change in the position of women in the world initiated with the outbreak of World War I. It forced the existing housekeepers to replace the male personnel

sent to the front in paid employment. Increasing the participation of women in economic life and their "leaving home" was associated with growing social and civic awareness. Women gradually began to acquire public rights as well as legal subjectivity. Due to the need to protect the natural role of women, i.e. motherhood, the first legal regulations in the field of employing women and creating them both the right working conditions and parental leave began to appear.

Women's social awareness expanded into further areas of public life, moving towards participation in the implementation of defense functions. They were still closely guarded by men convinced that women should be kept as far away from the military as possible. Demand for women's activity in the public sphere, including participation in the armed struggle, appeared when there were no men. During the extraordinary threat, the army was heading towards women with a request to join the ranks, as well as the interested, affectionate duty to support the homeland.

This principle has been confirmed in many countries, including Poland, when female staff participated extensively in World War I and II. The military service of women in the First World War was marked by the Polish Military Organization and the Volunteer Legion of Women and was carried out in the sanitary tasks, interview and communication (Council for Women's Affairs in the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland [CWA AFRP], 2002, pp.22-23).

A similar situation took place during World War II, when every tenth soldier in the Home Army was a woman. At that time, they carried out their tasks initially in the Organization for the Defense of Women, then in the Women's Auxiliary Service and, finally, in the Military Women's Service under the Home Army.

What's more, women also acted actively on the fronts of World War II, through service in the Women's Assistance Service organized by the Polish Army in exile. Polish "pips" marked their mark in the USSR, Iraq, Great Britain, or in Italy. Women provided medical services, transported weapons, and delivered orders straight to the battlefield, where they suffered death many times.

In World War II, women's service met with approval from both the public and the soldiers themselves showing gratitude for care and help on the battlefield. The praise of the authorities at that time was also appreciated, as illustrated by the example of General D.D. Eisenhower, who argued about the usefulness of women to military craftsmanship: "I opposed the service of women in the army until I met with her in London, I realized then that they are doing very well in various positions [...] at the end of the war, even forged heads were able to convince what was expressed in the demand for more women's contingents" (Eisenhower, 1988, p.131).

Although in the Second World War many women proved their predisposition to serve, with the end of the war, the memory of the usefulness of women in the military sphere became more and more disappearing from year to year. With time, the old habits were reverted, which did not take into account the role of women in the implementation of defense functions, and in the best case they reduced it to appear in military representative orchestras.

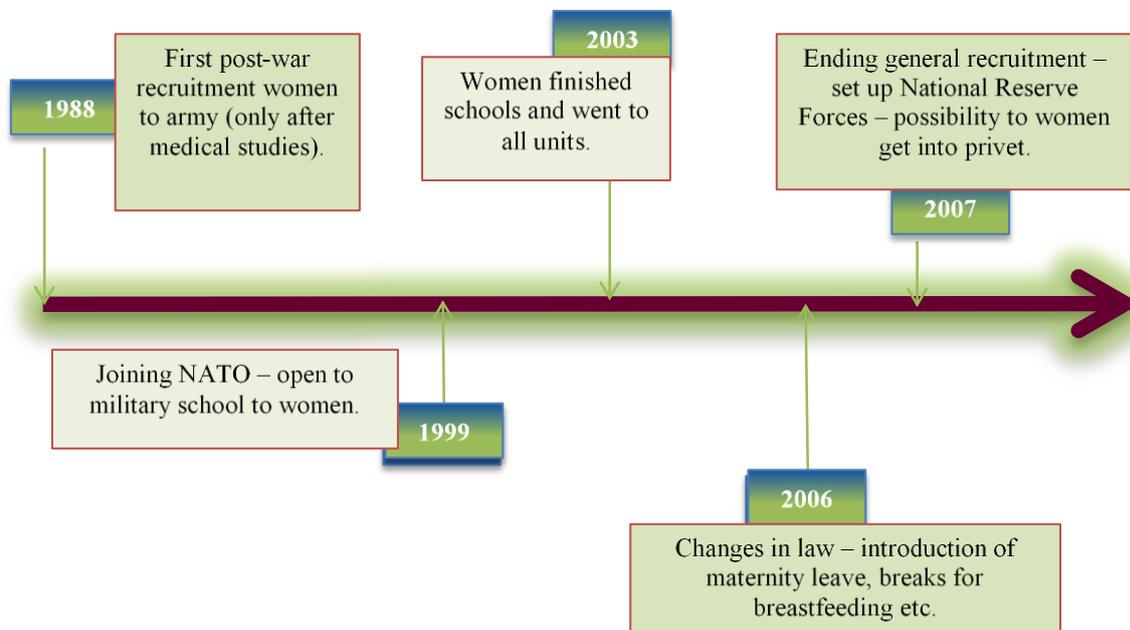
The desire to move women away from the military was a universal rule used in post-war armies. In ceremonies commemorating the fallen soldiers - ATA pilots in September 1945 in White Waltham, one of the guests of the honorary ceremony - Lord Beaverbrook – appealed to the participants for generosity, which will allow "[...] now and in the future education and upbringing of men orphans too old to fly and fight, but not too old to recommend" (Whittel, 2007, p.348). Despite the numerous ATA supplies by women, including three Polish women, they were not mentioned in solemn speeches (ibid.). The American feminists, who were the first to "take up arms" in the 1970s, appealed to this memory.

In the Polish reality, the situation changed only at the beginning of the 21st century. Entry into the structures of the Alliance forced the opening of urgently guarded gates of military units for women and enabling them to be professionally trained in uniformed formations. What's more, it also created the necessity of gradually adjusting

the military property used by men to the presence and service of women, as well as socializing soldiers to a co-ed army.

### Nowadays

The first post-war conscription of women to the army in the Polish armed forces took place in 1988. It was recruitment on special terms, which should be understood that only the graduates of some fields of study, mainly medical and psychology, had the possibility of military service. The rules changed only in 1999 with the entry of Poland into NATO structures. The then requirement of standardization in relation to military issues forced the opening of military schools for women, which in practice meant that they could choose any field of study and military specialties. While in the beginning they were very few in the ranks of candidates for soldiers, women from military students increased each year. Their growing number caused a discussion on a number of changes in the army, aimed at adapting the existing infrastructure and the principles of performing service. This has resulted in changes in legislation regarding issues that have not been regulated in the military so far, e.g. maternity leave, work breaks for breastfeeding, dismissals during pregnancy, etc. Another qualitative change was associated with the abandonment of general collection and the creation of the National Reserve Forces, which in practice opened a private professional corps for women.



Picture 2. Milestones in Polish military service of women.

The share of women in the Polish army today reached 5.6% and indicates an upward trend. The analysis of statistical data presented in Chart 1 allows to conclude that the most popular interest of women was invariably the Land Forces, which supplied more than half of all women serving in the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland. It should be noted that the tendency to choose this type of troops has been maintained since the beginning of military participation of women. The second in terms of numbers in this respect was the Air Force, where, however, it served almost three times less women. On the other hand, the Navy was the most rarely chosen by the female personnel type of armed forces. Few women are also supporting the ranks of the Territorial Defense Forces, which may be related to the fact that it is a new type of armed forces in the Polish army. A small percentage of female females also have Special Forces, which, however, certainly is not unrelated to the small size of this type of troops in the whole defense system.

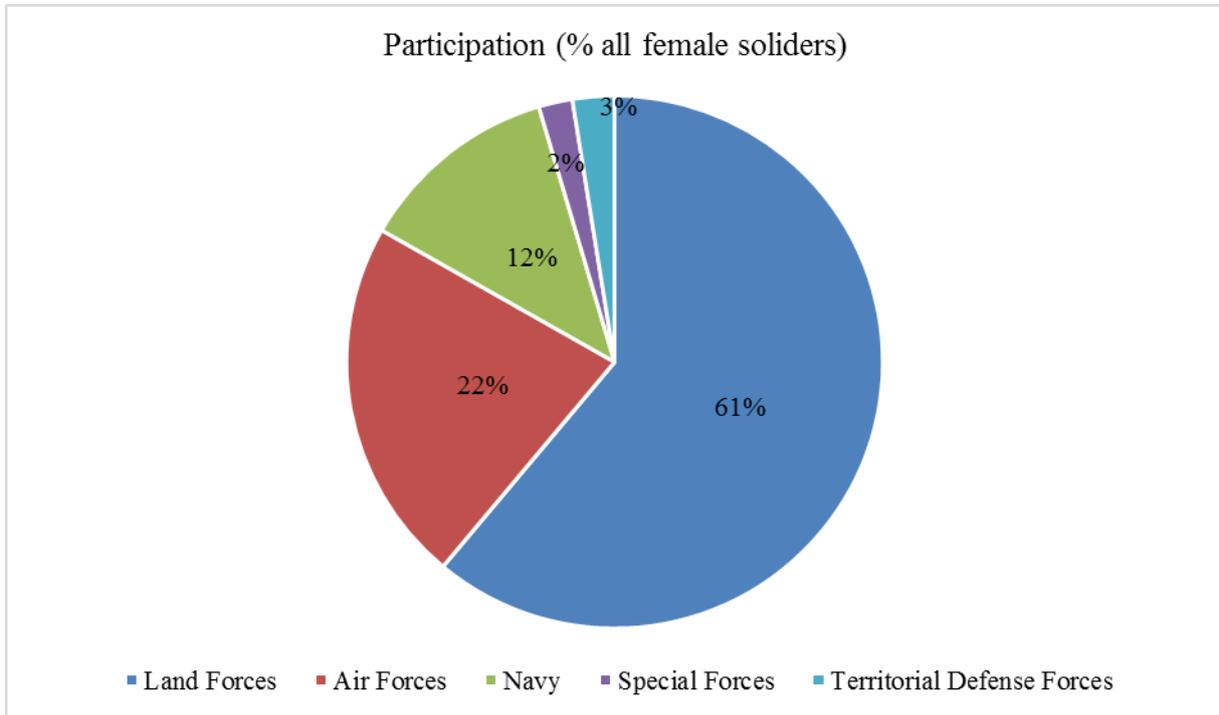


Chart 1. Women in the army (due to type of forces)

If the point of analysis is transferred to the personal corps in which women perform military service, undoubtedly the most numerous in this respect is the professional body corps. This trend increased only after 2008 with the creation of NSR – a formation that allowed women to enter into the structure of the serial corps. Earlier, due to the lack of participation of women in general conscription, in practice this corps was very difficult to reach for the female part of society.

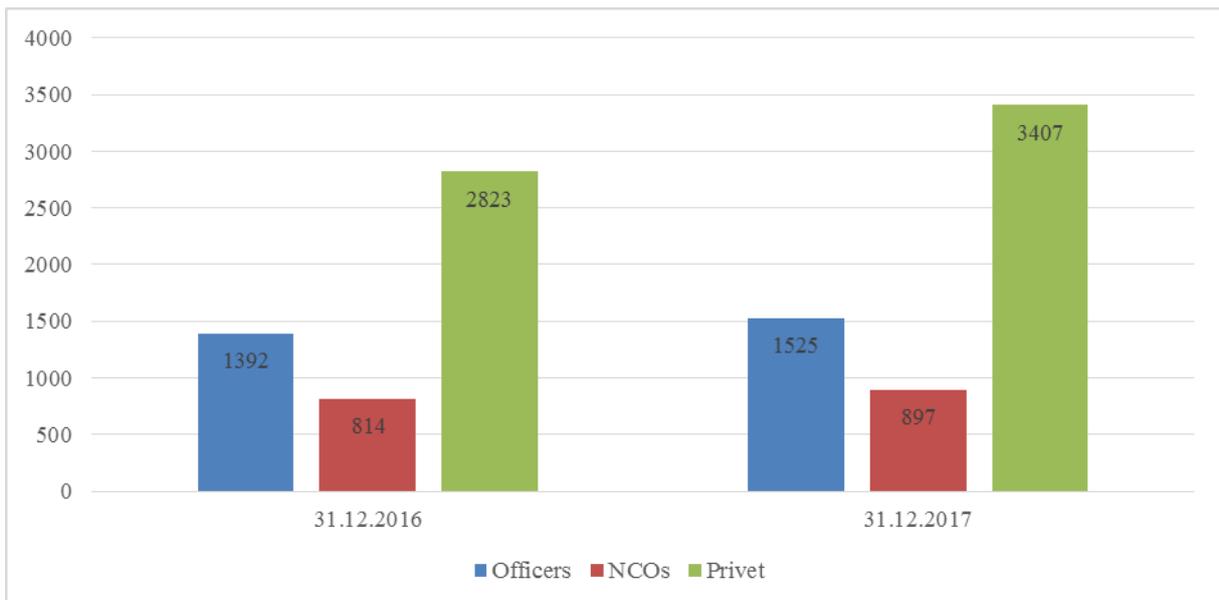


Chart 2. Women in the military corps.

In the situation of reflections on the participation of women in the army, it is also important that they take command functions. In total, there were 474 women in such positions, of which  $\frac{3}{4}$  acted as the platoon or team commander.

*Table 1. Women in command positions.*

Position	Number of women
Team leader - identical	164
Platoon commander - identical	24
Company commander - identical	80
Commander of the medical evacuation group - identical	24
Other commanders	15

Performing command functions is one of the indicators of the position of women in the military environment. It might seem that the figures do not indicate in this respect a large participation of the female sex in the command. However, it should be borne in mind that the number of command posts is limited, and their holding is often associated with meeting certain requirements, e.g. experience, education, etc. However, it can not be ruled out that men's pre-emption of being a commander is irrelevant here. , which can be particularly evident in senior officers.

### **Women in missions and operations**

The Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland participate in missions abroad since 1953, when the Polish contingent was involved in the implementation of operational tasks in the territory of Korea. It is a fact that for almost half a century this participation included only military personnel until 1988, when the first women were taken into military service on special terms, and as a result recruited for missions. Their recruitment was mainly related to medical protection for Polish military contingents. This resulted from the needs of the Armed Forces and the availability for women – soldiers only posts with medical specialties (<http://www.mon.gov.pl/pl/artykul/3250>, 2012).

The situation changed after 2003, when the ranks of the army began to supply graduates of officers' schools and military academies representing various military specialties. Of course, not immediately after school, women were directed to missions, in practice only after obtaining a minimum experience in the service in units in the country could talk about participation in missions and operations. Undoubtedly, it was quite important in this respect to direct women to positions related to civil-military cooperation.

The conclusions from the analysis of quantitative data made available by the Council for Women in the Armed Forces indicate that the number of women participating in missions abroad on an annual basis fluctuated within 50 people. This represented around 1% of the composition of the quotas. Despite the lack of formal restrictions on the availability of posts on the mission, the majority of female personnel carried out operational tasks in the medical corps. The institutions responsible for forming the quotas identified various reasons for this phenomenon. First of all, it was the lack of candidates with the required qualifications, just necessary for the Armed Forces in the area of conducting the mission. Secondly, it was the lack of proper sanitary conditions - the need to guarantee separate toilets. Another reason was the very dangerous nature of most missions and the desire to protect women from "extreme living conditions" (ibid.).

In line with the position taken by the Women's Council in the United Nations in connection with the implementation of the UN Convention 1325 on the necessity to guarantee women's participation in promoting peace and security, there are no barriers for women interested in the recruitment of candidates, as provided by institutions representing women's interests in the armed forces service in contingents (ibid.).

Nowadays, women - soldiers participate in several missions and operations outside the country. Most of them are fed by the ranks:

- PMC Afghanistan,
- PMC KFOR (Kosovo),
- PMC Latvia,
- PMC Romania,
- PMC Orlik (Baltic States),
- PMC Czernicki (Mediterranean Sea),
- PMC BiH (Bosnia and Herzegovina),
- PMC Iraq (Kuwait, Iraq, Jordan),
- PMC OIR Kuwait (Kuwait, Iraq, Qatar).

It should be noted that many of the operations undertaken by the international community are carried out in Islamic countries. An example of this is the implementation of such tasks by the Poles supplying the ranks of the PKW Iraq and PKW Afghanistan. How important the presence of women in such areas is best shown by the incident in Iraq.

"In 2004, Iraqi coalition forces wanted to interview a woman from a Shiite village in an area known as fundamentalist. They took her to the military base without her husband or any relative. When the military brought her back home, her family did not trust her anymore. She could have been raped or sexually assaulted in a different way. [...] The effects of such an approach disrespecting the gender issue were deplorable: the woman was punished by death by stoning, and the husband took his own life away because he was unable to protect his wife, which is considered a disgrace" (Military Center of Civic Education [MCCE], 2012, p.21.)

Due to the area of activity and cultural conditions under which local women and girls over 13 years of age forbid any contact with strangers, women - soldiers were the only people who could provide them with medical and humanitarian assistance as well as communicate with them. Thus, excluding women or reducing their number in such areas will naturally involve the exclusion or limitation of the number of local women who will be able to help. This, in turn, undermines the whole sensibility of the actions by which the international community is to reach through the "hearts and minds" to the local population.

### **Men`s attitudes**

Women's military service enjoys the support of nearly two-thirds of Polish society. Recent statistical data in this respect, originating in 2007, indicate 68% support. At the same time, it should be noted that more than half of the population then supported the military service of women in a decisive manner. It is worth considering whether she accepts as many supporters among the representatives of the military community.

In a study conducted in 2009 by the Military Bureau of Social Research, data was obtained that military participation of women is supported by 60% of male soldiers, while 22% are against it. It is worth emphasizing that among the arguments put forward by both sides, the supporters recognize the positive influence of women on human relations prevailing in the army, while opponents stress the lack of formal and informal preparation of the army for the service of women (Drapikowska, 2015).

If, however, the point of considerations has been transferred to attitudes towards women performing combat positions, the number of supporters drops significantly. More than half of men - soldiers are against it, arguing their attitude of women's lack of experience in the field of pounds, and also referring to the cultural gender model, in which the woman is perceived as a weak, fragile and delicate being ([http://www.wp.mil.pl/pliki/File/RADA\\_DS\\_KOBIET/Publikacje/wydawnictwo\\_dwipo.pdf](http://www.wp.mil.pl/pliki/File/RADA_DS_KOBIET/Publikacje/wydawnictwo_dwipo.pdf), 2012).

The obtained results of own research (2014) allow to state that only every tenth soldier is a supporter of women's military service and presents the view that there should not be any restrictions on the availability of positions, in other words, he accepts currently applied in this area solutions in the Polish army. Much more, however, because as many as 1/3 of the surveyed soldiers, indicates that the existing system is not correct, and for women in the army should apply restrictions on the availability of military positions and specialties. Representatives of this view, therefore, tend towards solutions used even in the American or British army, where there is no wide access to women's positions.

Among the soldiers, however, there was a negative attitude towards cooperation with women in the army. What's more, every sixth man was an opponent of the presence of women in the army, while every third only accepted it, doing so due to the changing social reality, declaring at the same time that he is not a "staunch supporter" of this issue. The attitudes represented by soldiers are shown in Chart 3.

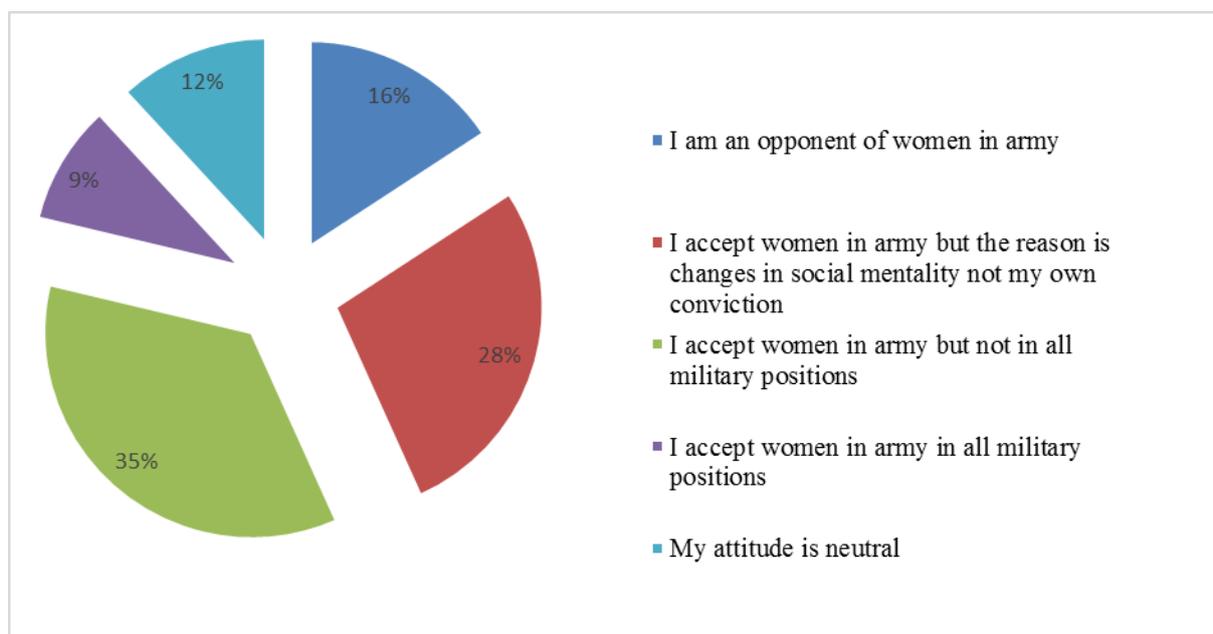


Chart 3. Ratio of male soldiers interviewed for women's military service

The study analyzed thoroughly negative attitudes towards women's military service, whose sources, based on the results obtained, were classified into several categories. The first of these was the differences observed by men - soldiers in the treatment of men and women in the army, both by senior superiors and throughout the general military system. Respondents pointed to the distinction in the standards of physical fitness assessment, as well as favoring women in the various elements of military service. An illustration of the presented thesis may be the statements of the respondents presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Selected statements of respondents indicating the differences in treatment of women and men as the main determinant of negative attitudes towards women's military service.

Questionnaire no	Contents
R7	“Less efficiency, less requirements, favoritism, and a salary such as for a man”.
R48”	“Because they are treated better. At least in my JW. This can not be generalized but some women use it in their work”.
R64	“[...] Other standards with FE (the opponent will not distinguish between whether a woman or a man [...])”.
R71	“Quick appointment, favoritism, treatment inequality with male soldiers”.
R108	“Because they are treated in a special way by senior superiors and promoted to higher positions, which should be promoted by men with more seniority”.
R113	“I am not an opponent but unfortunately women are treated differently (better) than men (lower standards with PE, preferred when nominated for positions)”.
R59	“Because there is no equality (different standards)”.
R105	“They want equality and promotion with lower fitness standards”.

An important factor that has a negative impact on the perception of women's military service was the conviction of men about the lack of predispositions in women to perform a soldier's job. In this respect, men focused on the physical construction of women, conditioning less physical fitness, as well as the qualities of character that they feel women have, and which discredit them as soldiers. Statements by officers are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Selected statements of respondents indicating the lack of predisposition among women as the main determinant of negative attitudes towards women's military service

Questionnaire no	Contents
R40	“During real tasks that are complicated and require extra effort, they can not cope with them”.
R43	“I had ladies as subordinates and they did not work”.
R41	“In my opinion, this is a difficult profession carried out under special conditions in a stressful environment and I believe that a possible woman in the army is only in dentistry or human resources as an employee of the army”.
R66	“They are favored, lack of ability and commanding skills, lack of organization of work, fear of subordinates”.
R114	“This is not a job for women, they do not work well in team management, a lot of absenteeism at work”.
R25	“The problem is that they have much higher skills and predispositions in the areas typical of exercise time and peace, subject to a real attempt are definitely useless”.
R108	“[...] In addition, they can not cope with the stress of the battlefield”.

Another issue that influences the disapproval of the presence of women in the military is a moral factor that meant the projection of courteous behavior towards women from the civil milieu to the military. As the research has shown, in the opinion of men - soldiers, it is inappropriate in the walls of a military unit. Examples of statements confirming the above statement are presented in Table 4.

*Table 4. Selected statements of respondents indicating morality as the main determinant of negative attitudes towards women's military service*

Questionnaire no	Contents
R18	"[...] There are no regulations of "moral" nature [...]"
R65	"Because they kiss them in the hand and advance faster without meeting the requirements (any)".
R83	"1) they are treated as women and not like soldiers 2) they have their spokesperson forcing some solutions to their advantage".
R126	"Because they are treated better than men, especially by senior officers, for example, the colonel kisses the corporal in her hand during the greeting".

The next factor generating negative attitudes of men-soldiers towards women soldiers, which is a kind of "natural" objection, is the involvement of women in family roles, where the dissatisfaction of the respondents concerned the absenteeism of women at work, caused by pregnancy and motherhood, while unable to appoint another person's. However, compared to other factors, this allegation rarely generated negative attitudes. The confirmation is provided in Table 5.

*Table 5. Selected statements of respondents pointing to family roles as the main determinant of negative attitudes towards women's military service*

Questionnaire no	Contents
R18	"[...] Long-term absenteeism in the event of pregnancy and childbirth with the simultaneous inability to appoint another person".
R64	"[...] 2) upbringing and maternity leave (every woman has the right to do so) but no job presence – failure".

Analyzing the attitudes of the male part of the military community one should bear in mind the issues of socio-cultural conditions. Poland belongs to a block of former communist states, where the social roles of women and men were closely related to the division of labor. In the family, the man was responsible for ensuring material existence, while the woman was responsible for looking after the children. The professional activity of women in post-war Polish society was focused mainly on odd jobs, and their income was only aimed at improving the home budget and not its creation.

Contemporary Polish society is the aftermath of education in such a social system. A few generations grew up in it, and they passed their values from home to the families they founded. Their attitudes grew out of the observation of families, in which the man was the head of the house due to the higher salary. On the other hand, the soldier's profession is closely related to masculinity. Since the beginning of time, men have had defensive functions, hence it is difficult to expect that in a society developed on the basis of a strict division of the private sphere (family and home) and the public sphere (work, politics), the work of women in men's occupations met with high and rapid social acceptance especially in the male part of the population.

## Conclusions

With reference to the first detailed problem concerning the military history of women's participation, it was established that throughout history the role of women in the state security system has evolved. Over the centuries they have come a long way - from a soldier's mother to a full-fledged soldier, carrying out tasks on a par with men. The first mention of the participation of women in the field of defense come in the Middle Ages. However, about the wider participation, after which the relations in documents can be said only from the times of Polish national uprisings, i.e. the Kosciuszko Uprising, January Uprising and November Uprising. The period of World War I and II is the formation of the first regular female formations, which, although proved to be useful in the area of the military, were removed from their functions at the end of military operations. This situation lasted until 1988, when women began to be taken into the army on special terms, which in practice meant only medical and musical corpora. The full implementation of military service came only with the entry of Poland into the structures of the North Atlantic Alliance, when the standardization requirements forced the opening of military universities for women.

The solution of the second detailed problem regarding the contemporary conditions of women's military service should be noted that today they account for less than 6% of military personnel. Most of them are servants in the Land Forces, while the least in Special Forces, which is understandable due to the fact that this type of troops is the smallest number.

Looking for solutions to the third specific problem, it was established that the participation of women soldiers in missions and operations outside the country was marginal compared to the female staff. Initially, it was associated only with the medical protection of the NEC, because only such positions were available to women. Since 2005, when women graduated from military schools and had minimal experience in the service, they could participate in operational tasks in all available positions. In practice, however, their continued involvement in medical security.

Regarding the fourth specific problem involving men's attitudes towards women's military service, it was found that in the majority of respondents they are positive, however with two reservations. The first of these are changing social roles, and hence increasing professional opportunities for women. The second in turn concerns restrictions on the availability of posts. According to the surveyed men, women should only serve in selected military specialties, primarily medical and administrative. Negative attitudes are mostly derived from the stereotypical perception of the role of women in society, mainly through the prism of family roles.

In conclusion, it is worth noting that today Polish armed forces, as well as the entire international community, are involved in peaceful activities undertaken in many parts of the world where the social position of a woman is devalued. This is especially true for Islamic states, in which, due to cultural conditioning, women - soldiers are the only people who can talk and help the female population over 13 years of age. Limiting the number of contingents in them, or closing them in the database, will in practice lead to a reduction in the quality of entire operational activities, due to the limitation or exclusion of local women from medical and humanitarian aid. It should not be forgotten that when it comes to contemporary operations, women - soldiers - Polish women, European women, Asian girls or American women - are an example for local women that their biological sex should not determine lower social status. This, in turn, may seem the first step towards changing the position of women in many parts of the world.

## References

- WAWRZYKOWSKA-WIERCIOCHOWA, D., 1988, *Rycerki I samarytanki* (Warsaw, Poland: Ministry of National Defence).
- COUNCIL FOR WOMEN IN THE ARMED FORCES, 2002, *Wojskowa służba kobiet a restrukturyzacja Sił Zbrojnych* (Warsaw, Poland: ULMAK Publishing House), pp. 22-23.
- EISENHOWER, D., 1988, *Krucjata w Europie* (Warsaw, Poland: Bellona Publishing House), p. 131.
- WHITTEL, G., 2007, *Kobiety w kokpicie. Zapomniane bohaterki drugiej wojny światowej*, transl. by Ł. Golowanow, Gdańsk, Poland: Wiatr od Morza Publishing House Michał Alenowicz), p. 348.

Służba kobiet w Siłach Zbrojnych RP – raport za 2006 rok, Date of access: 24.07.2012.

<http://www.mon.gov.pl/pl/>

artykul/3250.

WCEO, 2012, Gender ma sens. Sposób na udoskonalenie misji (Warsaw, Poland: WCEO), p. 21.

Problemy wojskowej służby kobiet. Wojskowa służba kobiet wg opracowań WBBS, Date of access: 24.08.2012. [http://www.wp.mil.pl/pliki/File/RADA\\_DS\\_KOBIET/Publikacje/wydawnictwo\\_dwipo.pdf](http://www.wp.mil.pl/pliki/File/RADA_DS_KOBIET/Publikacje/wydawnictwo_dwipo.pdf).

DRAPIKOWSKA, B. Obraz kobiety – żołnierza w opinii oficerów (Warsaw, Poland: National Defence University).