

GBA+

Application

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Author

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Defence Against Help

About the Author



Originally from Victoria, Andrea holds a BA (Hons) in Political Science from Dalhousie, and an MA in International Affairs from Carleton (NPSIA,) with previous studies in English Literature and Classics. Her MA thesis tested a theory of differential mobilization into non-Islamic terrorism, while her undergraduate thesis explored civil-military tension in the Auditor General’s review of defence procurement in Canada. Andrea’s research interests include maritime security, military cultures, civil-military relations, defence policy and procurement, gender in security, and Canadian foreign policy. Her dissertation focusses on the impact of service-level cultures on procurement decision-making.

GBA+ Application for: “Defence Against Help” by P. Whitney Lackenbauer

DSF Thematic Team: North American Security

Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+)

GBA+ is an analytical tool to advance gender equality and diversity outcomes of various policies, programs, and services. This strategy of gender mainstreaming is specific to the Government of Canada, and includes not only gender but also intersectional considerations, such as race and sexuality. In 2016, DND-CAF adopted GBA+ in response to United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 and related resolutions, which acknowledges the need for gender perspectives in conflict, post-conflict and peacebuilding processes, and women's participation in decision making. GBA+ training through the Status of Women Canada online course is mandated for most DND-CAF employees and is an important consideration in assessing the most pressing future defence and security issues.

The GBA+ team of the DSF Group has developed a GBA+ toolkit that supports authors of working papers to integrate gender and intersectional considerations in their work from the initial stages of their research to the development of evidence-based findings and recommendations. The GBA+ Toolkit provides a series of key questions for regional teams to consider, such as: "are your concepts conceived in broad and inclusive ways to account for the experiences and perspectives of those not well represented in research and power structures?" or "how does your foresight analysis reinforce or challenge existing power relations?" A gender-liaison from each regional team works in consultation with members of the GBA+ team to develop GBA+ for the working papers. This GBA+ application complements the efforts of working paper authors to apply a GBA+ lens to their work.

GBA+ Considerations

Beyond the Nation State: Reframing Defence against Help

This paper discusses the Defence against Help (DaH) narrative, which is the broad notion that Canada ought to provide enough of its own national security and defence such that the United States feels reasonably confident that Canada is not a security risk, and thus "steps in" to "help" defend Canada. The DaH has dominated traditional Canadian defence and security scholarship for several decades. A GBA+ lens encourages one to think of DaH more broadly, and reveals that the power imbalance in the Canada—US relationship that DaH is meant to address is replicated within Canada in the relationship between the settler state and the many Indigenous communities that have developed their own policing and security mechanisms. DaH grants to the smaller, less powerful members of a security dyad a measure of sovereignty that within the Canadian settler state is often precariously granted, as the 30th anniversary of the Oka crisis in July 2020 makes clear. More generally, in considering Canadian 'national security' through a GBA+ lens, we begin to question the multiple (and competing) meanings of national within the Canadian state. This includes not only the complex citizenship and sovereignty arrangements between the Canadian Government and many First Nations, such as the Mohawk and Nisga'a Nations, but also the regional and provincial differences in how Canadians understand themselves as citizens of a/multiple 'nations', such as the Quebecois, Newfoundlanders and Western Canadians, particularly those in Alberta. Ontario's First Nations Police, Kahnawake's Peacekeepers, and Alberta Premier Kenney's recent threat to replace the RCMP with an Alberta Provincial Police (APP) can all be considered examples of DaH, challenging the traditional notions of this dynamic being at play only between states.

Beyond National Security: Rethinking the Canada-US 'security' relationship

Lackenbauer's piece applies a conception of 'national security' which prioritizes territorial sovereignty and homeland defence, and privileges the Canada-US security relationship which is timely given its precarious state. Applying a GBA+ lens to the example of the US-Canada security partnership reveals the extent to which mainstream understandings of 'national security' do not capture the full range of possible 'security' meanings. The Trump presidency has reduced questions of security to 'national security' through the Muslim travel ban and the detention of migrants and family separation policies. These initiatives challenge Canadian cooperation with US border enforcement and raise important moral questions. The COVID crisis has shown that security cooperation with the US since 9/11, which has eroded Canada's functional control of the border, has made Canadians less secure. The defence production sharing agreement, which sees Canada export an untold quantity of armaments to the US for potential sale abroad, reduces Canadians' and others' security by the less-stringent arms sale approval process of the US, and the lack of end-user control built into the agreement. Who is made safer by the criminalization of migration at the US-Mexico border, or by recent attempts to politicize 'illegal migration' in Quebec and Ontario? A GBA+ lens reveals the extent to which racialized, economically vulnerable migrants and refugees are less secure via this Canada-US border cooperation, which in turn has implications for residents and citizens of Canada who belong to the same marginalized groups.

GBA+ of NORAD-based cooperation

Applying a GBA+ lens to the NORAD-based cooperation detailed in Lackenbauer's paper enriches an assessment of Canada's defence and security policies in three main ways. First, a gender analysis of federal resource allocation shows that increases to defence spending often necessitates a reduction in social welfare spending, which has particular gendered impacts. Those Canadians who benefit from defence spending are overwhelmingly men: soldiers, defence ministers, MPs in military-heavy ridings, defence contractors, workers in defence industry factories, etc. Conversely, social welfare spending tends to benefit women directly: health, education and childcare spending benefits and employs women disproportionately, while ministers of 'soft' issues like health and education are more likely to be women. Thus, advocating for increased defence spending has gendered implications, which may adversely affect women.

Second, A GBA+ analysis of Canadian territorial sovereignty and increased land-based NORAD security installations could consider whether the sensor sites are the subject of Indigenous land claims processes, thus reducing Nation-to-Nation conflicts. Expanding the sovereign-state understanding of territory can enhance security considerations, such as viewing British Columbia as vital to the 'Washington to Alaska corridor', which encapsulates both identified and contested Indigenous territory, making the described Russian (and North Korean) threat a multi-, not bi-national one. Not only could the construction of modernized warning sites necessitate expropriation of contested lands, their location in Indigenous and rural settler communities place those same locations at increased risk of targeting and attack, while allegedly securing the urban settler state. A GBA+ application to the NORAD modernization initiatives could ensure that the risks and rewards are shared equally among Canadians.

Finally, the introduction of the cyber domain to the NORAD relationship is encouraging from a GBA+ perspective, as the manner in which cyber warfare explicitly targets civilian institutions and installations, requires a 'more than military' response, and broadens the definition of 'national security'. This could allow for a more holistic and inclusive discussion of what security means to Canadians, and who is tasked with its provision. Considerations of economic resilience or 'target hardening' in the face of cyber warfare could lead to gender-sensitive investment in education and health, for example, or to innovative efforts to foster economic investment and immigration in rural areas with baked-in Indigenous participation—all under the guise of a reimagined 'national security'.

Recommendations

1. Recognize and clearly articulate the gendered nature of defence and security spending and address the disparate impacts of defence spending on men and women in any document that advocates for increased spending.
2. Recognize the extent to which the 'security relationship' with the United States benefits only some Canadians, and in many cases creates insecurity for the most vulnerable and marginalized. This situation predates the Trump presidency, but has been accelerated by his tenure, and will only worsen with his expected re-election in November. The close relationship between the CAF and the US military should not be taken as evidence that closer cooperation with the United States is desirable. (even as I recognize the diplomatic necessity to maintain friendly relations with the US.)
3. Recognize and articulate the extent to which 'Canadian territorial sovereignty' in the context of NORAD modernization is complicated by Indigenous land rights and claims, whether formal or informal, and by rural-urban economic and power disparities. Ensure that any discussions of potential new or renovated sites involve the relevant local communities—including women leaders and dissenting voices—from the very beginning.
4. Move beyond the pattern of 'technocentric' discussions of cyber security. These characterizations of the cyber threat tend to prominently feature male military and technical experts advocating for expensive military solutions to the threat. Instead, cultivate a broad understanding of cyber warfare, one which privileges civilian voices and social, economic, and grassroots-based definitions of security, and which work towards inclusive, socially-just solutions and societal resilience in the face of cyber warfare. This is not to suggest that military and security apparatus-based solutions are irrelevant or unnecessary, but rather to recognize that these conceptions of cyber warfare are incomplete, and—even without further DND support—will already tend to dominate the security discussion in Canada.