

Three Things to Know: The Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017

Last week, the United States government enacted the Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017, which was signed into law by President Trump on October 6. The bipartisan act will strengthen efforts to prevent, mitigate, and resolve conflict by increasing women's participation in negotiation and mediation processes.

Blog Post by Rachel B. Vogelstein and Jamille Bigio

October 13, 2017



An Indian officer from the first all-female unit of United Nations peacekeepers stands in front of troops as they arrive at Roberts International Airport outside Liberia's capital Monrovia January 30, 2007. REUTERS/Christopher Herwig

Last week, the United States government enacted the Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017, which was signed into law by President Trump on October 6. The bipartisan act will strengthen efforts to prevent, mitigate, and resolve conflict by increasing women's participation in negotiation and mediation processes.

Here are three things to know about this new law:

It recognizes the critical link between women's participation and peace

The Women, Peace, and Security Act reflects the growing body of evidence confirming that the inclusion of women in peace processes helps to reduce conflict and advance stability. The participation of women and civil society groups in a peace negotiation makes the resulting agreement 64 percent less likely to fail and 35 percent more likely to last at least fifteen years. Research shows that higher levels of gender equality are associated with a lower propensity for conflict, both between and within states. And data from countries around the world

demonstrate that women's inclusion in peacekeeping units, police forces, and the security sector improves accountability and decreases abuses against civilians. House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Ed Royce, a sponsor of the law, emphasized that "the benefits of women's participation—and the risks of their exclusion—in all aspects of governance and peacemaking are too great to ignore."

It requires a U.S strategy to grow women's participation in security efforts

To improve American peace and security efforts, the Women, Peace and Security Act mandates the creation of a government-wide strategy to increase the participation of women in peacekeeping and security operations, due to Congress within one year of its enactment, and again in four years. The law requires training for diplomats, development professionals, and security personnel to support the inclusion of female negotiators, mediators, and peacebuilders around the world. To promote accountability, the law also imposes reporting requirements on relevant federal agencies, including the Departments of State, Defense, Homeland Security, and USAID.

This new law builds on the growing policy framework chiseled over the past two decades to improve women's participation in security processes, from passage of the landmark Security Council Resolution 1325, which was approved at the United Nations in 2000, to the adoption of the first-ever U.S. National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security in 2011, which was implemented by Executive Order 13595 and updated in 2016. By passing the Women, Peace, and Security Act, Congress has ensured that these efforts have the full force of law.

It reflects a growing global movement to advance women's inclusion in the security sector

In recent years, as the evidence of women's contributions to peacemaking and peacekeeping has grown, women's role in conflict resolution and security has received greater international attention. Since 2000, the UN Security Council has enacted eight resolutions to promote women's participation in conflict resolution and reconciliation processes and address issues such as conflict-related sexual violence. To date, sixty-nine countries have launched National Action Plans to increase women's participation in security processes and improve women's protection from threats of violence, from developing nations like Afghanistan and Kenya, to high-income countries like Japan and the UK. Regional and multilateral bodies—including the African Union, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and the Group of Seven (G7)—also have outlined commitments to advance women's participation in preventing and resolving conflict.