

Feminist Foreign Policy

Key Principles & Accountability Mechanisms

A Discussion Summary

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Discussion Background, Scope and Limitations

There has been increased focus in recent years on the concept of feminist foreign policy (FFP). With the introduction of policies that call themselves feminist in Sweden (2014) and France (2019), and a feminist international development policy in Canada (2017), there is a growing body of work for feminist civil society to consider and critique. The absence of a common definition or core principles among existing policies is a challenge, and one that activists, academics and advocates are undertaking to respond to, offering ideas as to what constitutes a foreign policy that is responsive to feminist visions for equality, nondiscrimination and justice. It is also important to stress the difference between a feminist foreign policy and one that commits to and advances women's rights.

A country's foreign policy is of critical importance to feminists and women's rights advocates because it defines the parameters for the peace and security agenda, the trade agenda and development assistance, as well as relations between nations. It describes the approach and positions taken in both bilateral and multilateral engagements.

In service of this goal, on March 14, 2019, on the sidelines of the 63rd United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, approximately 40 feminists representing a variety of civil society organizations from Argentina, Australia, Botswana, Canada, China, the Dominican Republic, Fiji, Georgia, India, Kenya, the Netherlands, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Russia, Sweden, the United States, the UK, West Papua and Zimbabwe came together to reflect on the emergence of governments' feminist foreign policies and to propose core principles and accountability mechanisms that would enhance the development, refinement and delivery of these policies moving forward. Noting the growing interest by governments in developing FFPs and looking ahead to various women's rights anniversaries (ICPD, Beijing, UNSCR 1325), the overall goal of the session was to begin to develop a common, global agenda articulating the recommendations of feminist civil society and building a platform from which to advocate in individual country contexts for that standard for feminist foreign policy.

Ahead of the convening, participants were provided with a reading list that included Sweden's Feminist

Foreign Policy¹, Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy² and a paper by the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW)³ that summarizes Swedish, Canadian and French policies and attempts to distill a draft definition of feminist foreign policy for discussion.

The convening began with framing remarks from three speakers on existing FFPs, questions about the concept of a foreign policy with feminist ideals and principles and what that means in practice, and inherent tensions between feminist ideals and diplomacy, defense and trade practices among nation states.

Participants then broke out into small working groups to discuss FFP and the following thematic areas: 1) Women, peace and security; 2) Sexual and reproductive health and rights; 3) Climate change; 4) Women's economic empowerment and trade; 5) Violence; and 6) Government mechanisms to integration and financing. Through the course of the discussion, they attempted to articulate key principles that should be asserted as core to FFP, and what accountability mechanisms would be required for an FFP to be successful. These themes are not representative of the full range of thematic issues that could have been discussed or where participants had expertise, which is a limitation of the workshop and resulting report. Additionally, this was a small sample from which to draw large conclusions: there was insufficient capacity to accommodate all interested potential participants, and not all participants were able to attend either the CSW or this event given scheduling and financial constraints.

This FFP workshop resulted in many rich discussions. The workshop organizers made a conscious decision to apply a feminist critique to the hierarchy of knowledge and to place lived experience on the same level as academic and policy knowledge. Inevitably, this meant that participants came to the event informed by their lived experience and with differing levels of familiarity with the theory of FFP and the existing suite of policies that are considered, or call themselves, feminist and the critiques thereof. There were a number of limitations noted by participants, including the following:

The diversity in the room was a benefit to the discussion, but not all geographies or intersecting identities were present and/or represented.

Although diversity of geography, age and ability were sought, representation by feminists from the Middle East and North Africa as well as young feminists and feminists with diverse disabilities in particular was poor. Another constraint that must be noted is that donor country voices were over-represented.

The limited time available prevented participants from fully exploring all the issues and questions that were raised. In addition to the constraints related to the time available at the workshop itself, time was somewhat limited between invitations and pre-reading materials going out and the event itself.

The resulting report from the discussion is limited by these and other constraints, but nonetheless it makes a contribution in the ongoing effort to define, refine and enhance a feminist approach to foreign policy globally. What follows is a report of the overarching and common themes of the discussion, with breakout-group summaries attached as an annex.

Overview of the Issue

This workshop took place in the context of an emerging global discussion on the strengths and limitations of feminist foreign policy approaches, informed by the rich history of women's scholarship and activism. Many gains have been made towards bringing women's issues and concerns into the mainstream. The concept of feminist foreign policy has the potential to build on these gains by extending efforts to use the tools of foreign policy to advance the interests of women and marginalized groups and call out rights abuses. While participants expressed a healthy skepticism about the claims of feminist foreign policy and its potential to be co-opted in service of distinctly anti-feminist agendas, the shared commitment of participants to integrity and accountability left the organizers with a sense of 'pragmatic optimism,' which infuses our approach to the workshop and its next steps. A driving motivation was recognition that feminist foreign policy has potential of responding to the growing global conservative agenda that is clawing back on gains made towards gender equality and women's rights.

Speakers and participants raised concerns about the risks associated with the lack of clarity around a shared definition of feminist foreign policy and the

potential for degradation of language and concepts associated with the phrase. They illustrated this with examples of the ways in which concepts such as 'empowerment' and 'feminism'—and even 'human rights'—are being hollowed out through token references and co-option by entities that may have very different interests from the women's and human rights movements from which they originated. At the same time, this degradation was noted as a partial sign of progress; many of the core concepts of the feminist movement are gaining mainstream attention, often accompanied by practical gains for women's rights.

Concerns were also raised about existing and potential tensions and contradictions in FFP as practiced so far, both in the thematic discussions summarized in the sections below, as well as overarching, conceptual issues outlined here. These constraints and contradictions were raised as challenges that need to be addressed as FFP evolves, and as such are presented as issues that are not yet resolved or which will need to be continually negotiated over time. The points summarized below are drawn from the three opening presentations (Dr. Gita Sen, DAWN & Distinguished Professor & Director, Ramalingaswami Centre on Equity & Social Determinants of Health Public Health Foundation of India; an activist on LGBTQI issues in China who prefers not to be named; Marie-Claire Price, RESURJ UK) as well as a number of observations made in the group discussions.

a) Tension between what is in the 'national interest' and what serves gender equality

Foreign policy is conventionally designed to advance the 'national interest.' How national interest is defined is the outcome of political debate, and usually includes a specific representation of 'national security' as well as practices that support robust domestic economic growth, often through promotion of trade connections for domestic industry. It can include actions to advance national values overseas, ideally consistent with international treaties. These actions can include use of aid to support poverty reduction, use of diplomacy to encourage peaceful resolution of conflicts or deployment of national military to address problems that cannot otherwise be resolved. These actions can be taken on a bilateral basis or via multilateral processes.

Historically, many interpretations of the ‘national interest’ include actions taken at the expense of weaker or poorer countries. Some actions can contradict other national priorities—for instance, arms exports may support the domestic arms industry but may empower state or non-state actors that oppress women and sexual, gender and other minorities. Private sector corporate interests can be in conflict with national interests in preserving global public goods such as clean air and water. When foreign ministers recognize the centrality of gender equality to goals such as justice, democracy, peace and environmental sustainability, are they consistent with support for neoliberal economic policy prescriptions for fragile and low-income states that promote austerity and the privatization of public services?

b) National sovereignty and multilateralism

The concept of ‘national sovereignty’ needs to be unpacked in feminist foreign policy. Supporting women’s human rights can mean challenging the ‘national sovereignty’ of other nations that argue their domestic cultures permit some abuses of women’s rights. Powerful nations, however, do not accept external scrutiny of their own internal social relations, let alone any kind of intervention to protect abused parties or end the impunity of perpetrators.

Multilateralism always puts human rights in tension with national sovereignty—states surrender some rights via international treaties and are sometimes shocked at the consequences (external scrutiny, commissions of inquiry, criticism and demands for correction of human rights abuses). Multilateralism has arguably been under-employed as a lever to promote national accountability for meeting women’s rights commitments.

On the other hand, the countries practicing FFP are currently not opposing multilateral doctrine on neoliberal economic frameworks, tax havens etc., and in the Post-Cotonou trade negotiations they are collaborating in refusing to negotiate with ACP countries as a block but instead splitting them off in order to obtain better terms bilaterally. This likely contradicts feminist efforts to ensure fair deals and conditions for women to benefit from development.

c) Diplomacy, trade, and force

Several elements of foreign policy, including diplomacy, humanitarian assistance, trade and the military, are dominated by men. These male-dominated structures and narratives reinforce a patriarchal worldview that has disproportionately negative impacts on the lives of women and other marginalized persons. Moreover, they have been traditionally favored policy levers that are patriarchal in nature, favoring private sector engagement, competition, violent resolution of conflict and peace negotiations that only or primarily take the perspectives of militants and other armed actors into consideration. While there has been some progress in increasing the number of women in these spaces, this has not resulted in a change to the gendered nature of these institutions. Feminists can move into these male-dominated arenas, but much more is needed to reshape or re-invent institutions and operating practices in feminist ways. This is true both in terms of the operation of foreign policy institutions and the concrete outcomes they have in the world.

Most challenging for many feminists is the use of force and sanctions against other nations, weighing the harm perpetrated by governments against their citizens with the potential harm of sanctions or military response. Workshop participants grappled with the ways in which sanctions and violence disproportionately impact women, girls and sexual and gender minorities. One such example included the sanctions by governments following Uganda’s 2014 Anti-Homosexuality Act. The United States, for example, restricted travel and ended support for community policing, including millions in aid money. While no single solution was discussed as mitigating these kinds of harms and the often unintended consequences faced by populations already vulnerable due to gender identity or sexual orientation, participants insisted that FFP needs to be developed and implemented in close consultation with the communities it intends to support, include language that prioritizes non-violent actions, provide mitigating mechanisms for sanctions when utilized and potentially set out other redlines.

d) What is a ‘feminist approach’?

Discussions highlighted the disconnect between participants’ understanding of feminism and the definitions (or lack of definitions) used by governments. Participants’ discussions of feminism over-

whelmingly were intersectional, rooted in human rights and centered on understanding power rather than solely focused on sex or gender. Participants noted the difference between this approach and the trend among governments, which focus almost exclusively on women and sometimes girls. This comes at the expense of intersectional power analyses that truly address entrenched gender norms and power dynamics that perpetuate inequality.

Definitions of feminism are contested. When promoters of feminist foreign policy are also significant funders of aid and women's rights organizations, there is a risk that the donors' interpretations of feminism shape funding patterns in ways that exclude alternative interpretations of feminism. For example, the Swedish Government, the first to pen an explicitly feminist foreign policy, also promotes an approach to sex work that is at odds with approaches elsewhere that seek to decriminalize the industry.

An understanding of power enables these tensions to be named and explored in the pursuit of improving practice and promoting dialogue and understanding. While feminists continue to have concerns about the coherence and consistency of feminist foreign policy in practice, a pragmatic approach to FFP means not allowing the ideal of feminist practice to become the enemy of the feasible. The willingness of some states to commit to a feminist framework for international engagement is a significant opportunity to institutionalize women's rights and intersectional, feminist power analysis in the global system. By generating reflection and debate on the core principles of feminist foreign policy and positioning feminist foreign policy within a human rights and human security approach to international relations, feminists can resist the degradation of concepts and work to deepen accountability around a common understanding of feminist foreign policy.

Key Principles of Feminist Foreign Policy

The breakout sessions and plenary discussions surfaced a number of feminist principles that can and should be used to inform and interrogate an emerging gold standard for Feminist Foreign Policy. Invoking use of the term "feminist" is a radical act; as such, policies that are so named should reflect the level of ambition that the term encompasses.

The proposed principles hence represent an ideal benchmark for Feminist Foreign Policy; while it is unlikely that any country will meet all principles all the time, workshop participants were clear that the principles needed to reflect a high level of ambition if the term is to be used to describe a national shift in the objectives and management of foreign affairs.

Feminist foreign policy must be rights-based, rooted in universal principles of human rights and dignity. This includes the arguments and rationale used to support the shift to a feminist foreign policy. While advocates and officials alike sometimes use instrumental arguments as a strategic way to build support for a particular policy approach, for example, by arguing that a country should increase its budget for official development assistance (ODA) on the basis that increased prosperity within its region will lead to greater national security for the donor nation, this kind of advocacy can also lead to unintended consequences, such as conditioning or increasing aid only in service of the national interest of the donor. Grounding FFP in a rights-based approach is critical to ensuring national interests are not placed above feminist development outcomes. Policies or programs within FFP should expand rights and make the expansion of rights and the support of women's movements and organizations to make claims on duty-bearers a central intent.

In this context, there was a collective view that FFP should recognize and seek to reinforce the state as the ultimate duty-bearer for human and economic rights and justice, and should not reify the market as a delivery mechanism or outsource the provision of public goods and services to private sector (corporate or charitable) institutions, thereby undermining the role of the state in enabling and delivering public goods for all.

Feminist foreign policy must be transformative of the status quo both for gender norms and roles and policy practice. That is, it must bring about real change. A government simply declaring a policy feminist does not make it so; it must ascribe to these principles in the delivery of that policy such that outcomes (either internally as reflected in policy practice or externally as reflected in gender norms and roles and the balance of power for those on the receiving end) measurably change. Foreign policy is frequently pursued in the self-interest of

the country or economy and its constituent parts, with other considerations such as multilateralism and the global good coming in second place. This paradigm must be disrupted if a foreign policy is to be truly counted as feminist, particularly in the context of extractive policies and promotion of the neo-liberal, market practices. A good test of this would be that if the application of a feminist foreign policy doesn't change practice, it isn't feminist.

Any feminist foreign policy must be inclusive of those it is meant to benefit and have intersectionality at its center, meaning it is not solely preoccupied with women but with intersecting identities through which power has traditionally been expressed or denied—race and ethnicity, religion, age, rurality, ability, gender identity, sexual orientation and more. Rooting FFP in analysis of power enables it to be nimble and responsive to context, rather than a rigid or uniform approach that does not take into account local expressions or disruptions of power. It must be oriented in analyzing power and disrupting power accordingly.

Feminist foreign policy should be comprehensive and demand policy coherence; that is, it should apply to all policy levers and make proactive demands of all domains to ensure coherence across the whole of foreign policy. It does little good to invest in education and health to expand human capabilities and achieve gender equality through development assistance, if trade negotiations permit foreign and nationally owned extractives to pollute rivers and water bodies and deny indigenous people's their rights to commonly held ancestral lands. Several participants wanted to extend coherence not only across foreign, but domestic policy as well. Demanding policy coherence means subjecting the interests manifest across aid, trade, investment and globalization policies and approaches to feminist scrutiny. Feminist scrutiny implies review by the collective feminist polity in the global south and north.

Feminist Foreign Policy should promote non-violence and demilitarization. Policies and programs should not exacerbate conflict, place civilian populations at risk or increase violence and the use of violence as a tool to achieve policy outcomes.

Finally, self-scrutiny and accountability (being made to answer for and explain actions by domestic constituencies as well as those most affected by

FFP) was a core principle for feminist foreign policy—the deep sense that any policy that calls itself feminist must be accountable to the ideals it espouses and to the people it seeks to assist. The next section explores a number of accountability mechanisms that surfaced in the course of the discussion. Unique to the breakout discussion on climate change was the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities for climate change mitigation.⁴ This principle has provided the basis for global responses to climate change and can be distilled to the idea that those countries which have benefited most from development on the back of fossil fuels bear the most responsibility for mitigating the effects of climate change. Ultimately, this principle identifies responsibilities on the basis of power, and can be extrapolated to other areas of policy. On this basis, a feminist foreign policy must mitigate inequality and historical advantage by seeking to correct and compensate for past and current abuses of power that have assigned disproportionate advantages to some over others.

Accountability Mechanisms

Noting that a core principle of FFP is accountability, the discussion surfaced several proposals for accountability measures that will help to ensure feminist development, delivery and accountability of foreign policy. All working groups alluded to the importance of public, independent and inclusive reporting as well as resourcing; those are presented in detail here. Sector-specific accountability mechanisms were also suggested; those follow the two overarching accountability mechanisms below.

I. Public and Inclusive Planning and Progress Reporting

Central to any feminist foreign policy are the feminist principles of transparency and accountability. Feminist foreign policies should be accompanied by publicly-available action plans to articulate what activities will be done and on what timeline in order to facilitate implementation and reporting. The development of action plans should be a process that is inclusive of the groups it is meant to benefit, with meaningful civil society engagement, particularly of women's rights organizations and movements. Action plans should note and seek to develop safeguards that address traditional constructs of national interest and patriarchal power and their negative impacts on the realization of a feminist

foreign policy. In a concept dubbed “transparent misalignment,” workshop participants emphasized that action plans should clearly identify any tradeoffs that are made in order to acknowledge limitations and ensure greater policy coherence.

Progress on implementation should similarly be publicly reported by governments on an annual basis, but shadow reporting by civil society—both through rhetoric and financial support—utilizing outcomes-based measures and data disaggregated by intersectional groups should also be encouraged. Reporting structures must articulate what was done (and as applicable, at what cost), who was impacted and whether the desired outcomes were achieved and should be conducted in concert with the local communities it was meant to benefit or who may be impacted either positively or negatively. It is important that reporting documents not only positive but also negative impacts of feminist foreign policy. The group felt accountability should extend not only to government, but also to multinational corporations, international implementing NGOs, multilateral efforts and any others involved in the delivery of government policy. Of utmost importance is that it tracks finances completely and comprehensively; gender audits were also mentioned as a tool in this regard.

II. Resourcing: Human, financial, legal

Adequate financial resources are a critical test of feminist foreign policy. It must be clear how much funding is available for implementation, how and where the money is spent and the impact it had, not only in foreign assistance but for implementation of FFP across all levers of foreign policy (defense, trade and diplomacy, as well as development). On official development assistance, the DAC gender marker (measuring the proportion of aid marked as having a principal or significant gender equality objective) is the current primary measure that is used to track implementation of gender-responsive development programming, but is an imperfect one. The group expressed a desire for better and outcomes-based measures of where funding is going, what impact it is having and what mechanisms are used to ensure the money reaches women’s rights organizations working on the ground.

High-level and well-funded staff within government agencies tasked with implementing foreign policy

was also discussed as a measure of accountability against feminist commitments. For example, gender equality ambassadors must be as empowered and well-financed as any other thematic ambassadors. Staff responsible for implementation must work with outside advocates and respond to pressure from outside advocates, have a full-time mandate and the budget necessary to do the work. Additionally, for all staff, human resources instruments can be used to ensure compliance with the principles and implementation of feminist foreign policy including recruiting, evaluating and promoting staff that actively seek policy coherence and support gender justice. The group recommended institutionalizing FFP through performance frameworks and reporting, including identifying performance requirements in position descriptions, key performance indicators and promotion requirements.

Finally, legal recourse to existing accountability mechanisms at the state level and in the multilateral system was noted as an important accountability mechanism, particularly noting the Human Rights Treaty System, the SDGs Voluntary National Reviews and the development of a new, legally binding human rights agreement to regulate the activities of transnational companies.

iii. Accountability: Sector-specific

The *Women, Peace and Security* group recommended that National Action Plans on WPS include mechanisms for those most affected by foreign policy—security policy, arms trade and aid—to hold the government to account. An example that was given was that women in fragile states need a mechanism to channel their perspectives to governments professing feminist foreign policy.

The *climate change* group recommended strategic litigation to hold governments accountable for their (lack of) progress on climate change and its intersections with gender equality and women’s empowerment.

The *government mechanisms and financing* group recommended that aid, trade and investment mechanisms and financing should include tracking the financial flows and profits, both licit and illicit, to reveal the interests served and benefitted by these policies. By revealing who benefits and by how

much, it is possible for feminists to interrogate the nature of foreign policy and demand greater accountability from governments in the global north and south.

The *sexual and reproductive health and rights* group posed a question as to what to prescribe about the example of U.S. sanctions against Uganda for its LGBTQ criminalization law; some members thought sanctions worked and others thought they made life on the ground for advocates worse.

Implications and Conclusion

A far-reaching discussion took place within the geographic and time constraints described at the outset of the report. In such limited capacity, it is of course impossible to deliver a truly comprehensive and representative synopsis of feminist civil society's vision(s) for feminist foreign policy. The convening organizations, the International Women's Development Agency, the International Center for Research on Women and the New York University's School of Professional Studies Center for Global Affairs, will be sponsoring additional consultations and publications to further interrogate, refine and solicit ideas, as certainly will a number of the participants. This discussion summary contributes a starting point for future discussions, particularly as regards proposed key principles and accountability measures to ensure that the practice of feminist foreign policy approaches the ideals it invokes.

Annex A: Summaries of Thematic Breakout Group Discussions

Sexual and reproductive health and rights

The sexual and reproductive health and rights discussion group came up with two top principles and two accountability mechanisms we prioritized; following that are the other threads of discussion from the morning.

Our first principle is intersectionality: any feminist foreign policy must have intersectionality at its center. It must be oriented in analyzing power and disrupting power accordingly. Our second principle is that any feminist foreign policy must be rights-based.

As for accountability mechanisms, we concluded that any feminist foreign policy must be developed, implemented and evaluated in a participatory and inclusive manner; any programs should as a matter of principle involve the communities they are meant to benefit in the defining, designing, evaluation and reporting of impact. That reporting process should utilize outcomes-based measures using data disaggregated by intersectional groups, and reports should be publicly available.

Additional principles that surfaced in this group included that any feminist foreign policy should make proactive demands of other policies to ensure coherence with sexual and reproductive justice principles, such as trade. A good test of this was that if the application of a feminist foreign policy doesn't change practice, it isn't feminist. A government simply declaring a policy feminist does not make it so; it must ascribe to these principles. We noted that foreign policy is in the self-interest of the country, while feminism is the opposite. A feminist foreign policy is in the interest of the people, not the private sector. We affirmed nonviolence as a basic feminist principle, but were uncertain what to prescribe about interventions, for instance, in situations of wartime rape. A feminist foreign policy must be rights-based, which, in particular for sexual and reproductive rights, includes the rights of LGBTI people. A feminist foreign policy is not only about women, but is gender-diverse, and must have equally feminist intention and impact as rhetoric. Sexual and reproductive rights also include the right to abortion and the opposition to the mutilation of intersex people and the sterilization of trans people.

Finally, feminist foreign policy must apply to all areas of foreign policy, including aid, trade, diplomacy and defense, all of which must be rights-based and include consultation of feminists and affected communities.

On accountability, we determined that public reporting structures must articulate who was impacted and whether the desired outcomes were achieved and be conducted in concert with the local communities it is meant to benefit. We resolved that accountability should extend not just to government implementation, but also multinational corporations, international implementing NGOs and others involved in the delivery of the policy. We also discussed staffing as accountability to the policy: gender ambassadors must be equally empowered as other ambassadors. An example was that the China Tzar and the Gender Ambassador must have equal power. They must work with outside advocates, respond to pressure from outside advocates and have a full-time mandate and the budget necessary to do the work. It must be clear how much funding is available for implementation, how and where the money is spent and the impact it had. The DAC gender marker principal/significant measure is the only measure we have currently, and an imperfect one—we need better and outcomes-based measures of where funding is going.

On specific interventions, we were uncertain what to prescribe about the example of the Uganda LGBTQ criminalization law, as some members thought sanctions worked and others thought they made life on the ground for advocates worse. The question of redlines was most vexing to us. SRHR interventions should be tailored to what the “beneficiary” communities want and as they articulate their own needs—for instance not simply building toilets if they weren’t requested—not taking a lowest-common-denominator-approach to implementation.

Violence

Violence, and the threat thereof, is something that permeates much of foreign policy and diplomatic relations. Violence between nation states, within nations by state and non-state actors and interpersonal violence such as domestic and gender-based violence should all be considered when designing a feminist foreign policy. Reimagining foreign policy

through this lens starts at the highest levels and includes prioritizing multilateral and other intergovernmental bodies and spaces such as the UN. Nations themselves can be perpetrators of violence in everything from extrajudicial killings to state-sponsored structural forms of violence, such as those experienced by those with disabilities. Government leaders must be held to feminist principles in both words and deeds: misogynistic speech was considered a form of violence. Sexual reproductive health and rights were highlighted as particularly important when it came to these state-sponsored forms of violence: both in reproductive coercion in the form of forced sterilization or population control and in the restriction of access to safe and legal abortion. At a more individual level, forms of violence include gender-based violence such as rape, child marriage, FGM/C and honor crimes.

As principles, the group determined that an intersectional feminist lens that centers on the voices that policies will most impact was critical to the success of a truly feminist foreign policy. Additionally, gender equity and diversity must be integrated throughout all policies governments have, utilize a human rights framework and be financed/funded to do the work laid out within them. The group also noted that dialogues should take place between Global South thought leaders and nation states and that Northern supremacy should no longer be tolerated, as it perpetuates colonial norms and structures. The group also recognized that thought leaders from both the Global South and North must reflect a diversity of identities. The group acknowledged that no policy can be perfect and that, where disconnects exist (for example, where arms trades are considered necessary but would involve trading in arms with nations who frequently restrict and/or abuse human rights), countries with feminist foreign policies should be transparent about why they are choosing financial gains, for example, over human rights. Further to that, they should be required or encouraged to include language on the prioritization of one over the other in public statements and arms agreements. As an overarching principle, a feminist foreign policy-holding nation would make a commitment to collecting quality data that is disaggregated (by gender, disability, age and more) and used.

On the subject of accountability, the group maintained that there should be both internal and exter-

nal mechanisms: an action plan that the government puts forth in a transparent and open manner and checks in on annually against and reports out on, transparently coupled with a willingness to listen and make changes recommended by feminist civil society that reflects a diversity of identities experiencing violence (e.g. people with disabilities, rural women, LGBTI individuals, indigenous women). As noted above on principles, governments with FFPs should maintain transparency where there may be disconnects--no government will be perfect, but where disconnects lie (arms trade, working with repressive governments), governments who purport to have FFPs should be open and honest about how and why they are taking these actions.

Macroeconomics and women's economic empowerment

The discussion group asserted that feminist foreign policy must be grounded in the economic realities of women, most particularly women who are marginalized/oppressed. The group emphasized the importance of recognizing that women's voices are diverse. They discussed the reality that a range of factors influence the position a woman might take in relation to feminist foreign policy, recognizing that a woman living in the global south might put forward a position of the political elite in her community. In this context, the group also problematized reliance on a singular definition of "women's economic empowerment," noting that different actors emphasized different processes and outcomes in their conceptualization of women's economic empowerment.

The group agreed that feminist foreign policy must align economic justice, ecological justice and human rights as core principles. Additionally, feminist foreign policies must seek to transform inequality, within and between countries. The group reflected on concerns that feminist foreign policy must seek policy coherence between domestic and international settings and between components of foreign policy, which encompasses government levers such as foreign diplomacy and multilateral engagement, trade and economic policy, climate change policy and overseas development assistance.

The group clearly grounded their discussion in a critique of colonial and neo-colonial practices in political and economic spaces. They explored the

interlinkages between private capital and state practices (in national, bilateral and multilateral settings). The group discussed the impact of sovereign debt and loan conditionality, and the privatization of goods and services at a national level. They tied their discussion to neo-colonial cycles of extraction, of both profit and resource. The group discussed the geo-politics of debt, noting that the IMF austerity measures were playing out in both northern and southern governments, but noting also that there was a discourse in the context of southern European states that were subject to multilateral austerity measures that perpetuated colonial discourses around fiscal discipline, effective government and corruption.

The group clearly stated their concern that feminist foreign policy needed to disrupt current definitions of national interest, particularly in the context of extractive policies and promotion of the neo-liberal market practices. The group also affirmed the importance of campaigns for tax justice, noting the impact of states moving away from progressive taxation policies and the ongoing practices of tax avoidance and evasion by transnational corporations, who seek to avoid taxation by host governments by structuring company taxation locations into countries operating tax havens. The group noted that the loss to Africa of tax revenue from tax evasion practices significantly out-weighted overseas development assistance inflows.

The group went on to discuss the issues of policy incoherence in a variety of other contexts. For example, the group engaged in a high-level exploration of how feminist foreign policy would challenge governments to interrogate the outcomes of trade policies, prioritizing the realization of human rights, gender equality and the transformation of inequality between countries (characterized in the north-south geopolitical and economic inequalities). In another example, the group explored a series of interlinked practices: where loan conditionality or development conditionality opened up public services to private markets. The group also noted the impact of this in the context of land regulation practices, and the role of multilateral institutions in mandating changing land tenure practices, as a precursor to opening up land for resource extraction by transnational corporations.

The discussion group noted the need for a feminist foreign policy to be informed by a conscious

strengthening among feminists of their macroeconomic critiques, and the need to challenge the dominance of free-market, neo-liberal capitalism as the primary driver of global and national economic growth models. The group expressed concern at the dominance of public-private partnerships.

These analyses would be strengthened by greater collaboration between feminists in the south and the north. In doing this, the group recognized the importance of interrogating a range of players: at the national level, countries such as China and India, and in the private sector, the role of for-profit companies. In discussing for-profit companies, the group noted that it is important to distinguish between transnational corporations and small and medium sized enterprises. The discussion group agreed that funding of women's rights organizations would be a hallmark of a feminist foreign policy, reflecting the vital importance of women's rights organizations in transforming gendered power relations and harmful gender norms. Such funding should be self-directed, flexible, support core costs, and be easy to administer and report upon.

When discussing accountability, the group highlighted the value of practical impact assessment tool to enable assessment of the positive and negative impacts of a government's feminist foreign policies. In particular, the group suggested tracking money and voices. Accountability mechanisms must work closely with grassroots women and women's rights organizations and should take into account the strength of traditional constructs of national interest and the perpetuation of patriarchal power structures, seeking to develop safeguards which address the negative impacts of this on the realization of a feminist foreign policy. They should enable recourse to existing accountability mechanisms at the state level and in the multilateral system, particularly noting the Human Rights Treaty System, the SDGs Voluntary National Reviews and the development of a new, legally binding human rights agreement to regulate the activities of transnational companies. In this context, it was viewed as critically important that private sector accountability and transparency be included in the frame.

Government Mechanisms and Financing

There was a collective view that FFP should recognize and seek to reinforce the state as the ultimate duty-bearer for human and economic rights and justice. Allied to this recognition of the role of the state as duty-bearer, was a concern that the

preponderance of current approaches to government mechanisms and financing sought to reify the market as a delivery mechanism and undermine the role of the state in enabling and delivering public goods for all.⁵

The group discussed the recent shift towards Development and Social Impact Bonds as an example of this approach. The state is presumed to be incompetent, inefficient or corrupt, and market mechanisms are sought to provide critical public goods and services and guarantee efficiency. Private sector investors are brought in to provide up-front financing (given limitations of state financing) and a mixture of private and non-profit entities are drawn upon to deliver on the investment. Independent monitoring mechanisms are set in place to ensure results and investors are paid back by the state once these results have been delivered.⁶ Such an approach fails to build the state as a duty-bearer or to develop and strengthen public sector delivery for essential public goods such as health care, education, skills development and energy.

Another principle that was hailed as being central to FFP was demanding policy coherence as a precondition for realizing gender justice. It does little good to invest in education and health to expand human capabilities and achieve gender equality through development assistance if trade negotiations permit foreign and nationally owned extractives to pollute rivers and water bodies and deny indigenous peoples their rights to commonly-held ancestral lands. Demanding policy coherence means subjecting the interests manifest across aid, trade, investment and globalization policies and approaches to feminist scrutiny. Feminist scrutiny implies review by the collective feminist polity in the global south and north.

The accountability mechanisms sought to uphold FFP when we consider aid, trade and investment mechanisms and financing should include tracking the financial flows and profits, both licit and illicit, to reveal the interests served and benefitted by these policies. By revealing who benefits and by how much, we can interrogate the nature of our foreign policy and demand greater accountability from our governments in the global north and south.

Finally, an additional mechanism to require accountability should be to hold the foreign policy system itself, and the staff that comprise this

system, to account through human resources instruments that include recruiting, evaluating and promoting staff that actively seek policy coherence and support gender justice.

Women, Peace and Security

Challenges:

a) What is the national interest?

The definition of what is in the 'national interest' is unclear or simply assumed. Foreign policy is assumed to advance the 'national interest' and 'national security,' and this is often at the expense of other nations or people.

The concept of 'national sovereignty' also needs to be unpacked in feminist foreign policy. Supporting women's human rights can mean challenging 'national sovereignty' of other nations—but, hypocritically, powerful nations do not accept external scrutiny of their own internal social relations, let alone any kind of intervention to protect abused parties or end the impunity of perpetrators.

Multilateralism always puts human rights in tension with national sovereignty—states surrender some rights via international treaties and are sometimes shocked at the consequences (external scrutiny, commissions of inquiry, criticism and demands for correction of human rights abuses).

b) Trade/extractives:

What is in the 'national interest' in terms of economic growth can be damaging to the interests of others. Market logic can mean that foreign policy is required to support trade deals and foreign direct investment that can:

- Sustain inequitable trade relationships where poor countries are stuck exporting raw commodities so that the value-added happens in rich countries
- Exploit labor relations in poor countries and in particular women's willingness to work for less
- Damage the environment via unscrupulous extractive practices
- Provide oppressive governments with the means of intensifying oppression (weapons).

c) Immigration:

While economic globalization relies on capital mobility and exploits the willingness of poor countries to provide generous conditions for setting up industry (tax breaks or waivers, suppression of

labor rights, supply of workers, relaxation of environmental controls), there is no provision for the mobility of labor and people. When significant outflows of people are triggered by the conflict or climate crises caused by these patterns of growth, rich countries do not feel an obligation to absorb these people.

d) The fragile/parlous state of liberal governance: In countries professing feminist foreign policy (or something like that), the domestic political regimes fostering these policies have so far often been in somewhat tenuous coalitions or have seen wavering political support. Sweden is perhaps in the strongest position at this time, while the Trudeau government is under threat, as is Macron's. Domestic feminists feel obliged to support feminist foreign policy efforts and not to challenge assumptions, expose contradictions and demand more cross-governmental consistency.

e) Manufactured/exaggerated threats:

The 'war on terror' has been used for many years now to sustain an urgency/emergency basis for national security policy. This has encouraged racist threat identification mechanisms and has detracted from recognizing new types of internal and external threats (white nationalism, incels, white supremacists). It has also fostered neglect of global security priorities such as sustaining negotiations on nuclear weapons and ensuring transparent and constructive engagement with major powers such as Russia and China.

f) Whose feminism?

There is an under-examination of what is meant by 'feminist' in FFP, and a risk of privileging a version of feminism that is not genuinely intersectional, especially when it is not inclusive of all voices.

g) Failure to connect women's status in fragile states to global challenges.

Both internationally and at the grassroots in, say Mindanao or West Papua, the situation of conflict and crisis-affected women is not consistently seen as a global problem. Awareness-raising and connection-making is needed for grassroots movements to articulate their challenges as global problems. For example, West Papuan women are seeing their country's sovereignty and security eroded by extractive industries that create serious environmental damage and encourage exploitative treatment of women, resulting in serious health problems (high MMR and HIV rates), but they are

not expressing these matters as a global concern for foreign policy. At best these issues are articulated as aid challenges, encouraging a philanthropic one-off singular-focus approach. Another example: calls for Muslim women to engage in peace talks in Mindanao or Afghanistan ignore the massive risks faced by grassroots women. It is exceptionally hard to 'translate' or communicate grassroots women's voices to international levels.

Principles:

A. *Whole-of-government approach*: feminist foreign policy cannot be adopted by the foreign ministry of department of state in isolation from the rest of the government. Even in Sweden, which proclaims itself to be a 'feminist government,' the ministries of defense and the interior are not on-board with the foreign ministry's approach. In Canada, there is apparently little policy coherence across the government. In Australia, gender equality is seen as relevant to the way ODA is allocated, but refugees are seen as a domestic policy issue and an internal security threat, not a matter for feminist foreign policy. In the UK, FCO and DFID are not coordinated—at least not when it comes to WPS.

B. Apply feminist principles to *domestic security* matters: it is hypocritical to name abuses in other states without acknowledging our own. In Canada, the National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 addresses the issue of missing/murdered indigenous women and the need for substantial investment in investigations and judicial processes in relation to indigenous people.

C. *Demilitarization* (internal and external): feminist foreign policy MUST review the domestic arms industry and its trading partners. Countries professing to have an FFP should follow principles in the Arms Trade Treaty and not trade with those where weapons will be used to abuse women. Targets should be set for reduced arms production and ending arms provision to authoritarian states. The economic drivers of militarism should be identified and addressed.

D. *Intersectionality*: identify those most in need, groups of women that are particularly oppressed.

E. *Diplomatic engagement*: to address emerging crises or cultivate emerging peace, leaders should be feminist-led—engage women in all efforts to

support peace-making at all stages, particularly the earliest, most secret phases.

Accountability:

A. *NAPS on 1325* must include mechanisms for those most affected by foreign policy—security policy, arms trade, and aid—to hold the government to account. E.g., women in fragile states need a mechanism to channel their perspectives to governments professing feminist foreign policy.

B. *Gender audits* and other mechanisms are needed to enable civil society input to the decisions of governments.

Climate Change

There is a long history of women's movements advocating on climate change, with the 1992 Rio Conference on Environment and Development discussed as a key historical moment in the intersecting gender/environment movements. This stems from the link between women's issues and the environment—for example, our group discussed the potential for climate change to exacerbate the burden of women's unpaid domestic work, by exacerbating droughts leading to longer travel times to collect water and increasing food scarcity. On the other hand, addressing climate change and increasing environmental sustainability also has the potential to further gender equality outcomes.

In spite of this, there are inherent contradictions in the climate change and gender space; many governments that champion gender justice through their aid programs and/or foreign policy have the worst performance when it comes to emissions and extractives. There may also be negative incentives for developed countries to be seen to support climate change efforts internationally, in order to avoid taking responsibility for their own contribution to climate change. In this context, a 'feminist foreign policy' may be window dressing. In addition, many of the principles of FFP are simply the basic principles of good development practice which governments have not done well on and/or are not held accountable to. Despite this, at times there may be strategic benefits to allowing governments to do this 'window dressing' as a way to achieve incremental change towards gender equality. In this context, the key principles of feminist foreign

policy must include policy coherence and a holistic approach across different areas of policy, including the impact of domestic policies on the international space. In the climate change space, the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR) for climate change mitigation is key; it may also be useful to extrapolate this model to development more broadly because it allows us to view the world through a historical power analysis, rather than a charity model. Additionally, we identified a group of principles which align with the basic principles of good development: local ownership, gender analysis of differentiated impacts to inform policy and intersectionality.

Finally, the group discussed accountability mechanisms, with a focus on the need for mechanisms to measure impact and learning—this requires baseline analysis of gendered differential impacts in order to see what difference is being made. Additionally, we discussed the potential for strategic litigation and use of human rights treaty reporting processes to hold governments accountable for their (lack of) progress on climate change and its intersections with gender equality and women's empowerment. While these mechanisms can be critiqued as relatively toothless, as governments can and do regularly ignore UN reports and condemnations, they do have a normative power and can be useful for movement building.

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- 4) <https://climatenexus.org/climate-change-news/common-but-differentiated-responsibilities-and-respective-capabilities-cbdr-rc/>
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