

Toward a Feminist Foreign Policy in the United States

Discussion Draft

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AUTHORS:

Rachel Clement and Lyric Thompson of the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW).

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Rachel Clement and Lyric Thompson, International Center for Research on Women (ICRW)

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Gayatri Patel, CARE

Rachel Vogelstein, Council on Foreign Relations

Megan O'Donnell, Center for Global Development

CONTACT:

Lyric Thompson, ICRW - lyric@icrw.org.

I. Background

With the launch of Sweden's *Feminist Foreign Policy* in 2014,¹ Canada's *Feminist Foreign Assistance Policy* in 2017² and France's *Feminist Foreign Policy* in 2019,³ a group of Washington-based foreign policy experts and advocates for global gender equality came together over the course of three days in August of 2019 to sketch out what such an effort might look like for the United States. The group's discussion built off of a research review of feminist foreign policy as expressed by other countries,⁴ as well as ideas surfaced from consultations with more than 100 feminist activists from over 30 countries. The experts gathered discussed policy ideas in the following areas: diplomacy, defense, foreign assistance and trade, as well as in the cross-cutting issue areas of climate change⁵ and sexual and reproductive health and rights.⁶ A final policy agenda will be refined through global consultations and input of additional experts and organizations, and will be published ahead of events marking the 25th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing and resulting Declaration and Platform for Action.⁷ This document elucidates a vision for the highest standard of U.S. foreign policy that promotes gender equality, human rights, peace and environmental integrity. It includes a proposed definition, key principles and policy recommendations that will be expanded and refined over coming months.

II. Defining a Feminist Foreign Policy for the United States

A country's foreign policy is a statement of its values and priorities. The implementation of foreign policy, across all of its various levers, is one demonstration of how a nation lives its values. Now more than ever, the United States needs a feminist approach—one that fundamentally alters the way the nation conducts itself, prioritizing the importance of diplomatic solutions, cooperating with allies and international institutions, embracing a progressive, inclusive and rights-based agenda, valuing the voices of the most marginalized and addressing racist, ableist, sexist, homophobic and transphobic and patriarchal and/or male-dominated systems of power.

Foreign policy shapes how a government defines

and prioritizes peace and security, structures trade, provides humanitarian aid and development assistance and works with other nations and non-state actors. Coherence across all aspects of foreign policy is paramount for a feminist approach; so too should coherence extend across domestic and foreign policy, with both embracing the same feminist values.

To clarify the goals of a feminist foreign policy and to promote coherence of a feminist approach across policy domains, the following draft definition is proposed:

Feminist foreign policy is the policy of a state that defines its interactions with other states, as well as movements and other non-state actors, in a manner that prioritizes gender equality and environmental integrity, enshrines the human rights of all, seeks to disrupt colonial, racist, patriarchal and male-dominated power structures, and allocates significant resources, including research, to achieve that vision. Feminist foreign policy is coherent in its approach across all of its levers of influence, anchored by the exercise of those values at home and co-created with feminist activists, groups and movements, at home and abroad.

Taking that as the guiding vision for feminist foreign policy, there are a number of key principles and policy recommendations that apply across the whole of the U.S. government. Following this, specific policy recommendations are made for each of the major levers of foreign policy—aid, trade, diplomacy and defense—as well as thematic priorities that should be addressed within a U.S. feminist foreign policy. This is not yet a complete policy package; additional consultations and efforts will augment, refine and supplement this opening salvo over the course of ensuing months. However, it is a solid start.

III. Key Principles for U.S. Feminist Foreign Policy

Given the complicated legacy of U.S. global engagement as both a colony and colonizer, as well as its associated history of struggles for racial, gender and environmental integrity both at home and abroad, a number of key principles should underpin a U.S. feminist foreign policy.

First, human rights are women's rights and *women's rights are human rights*. U.S. foreign policy must respect the rights recognized by international and domestic law and should place itself on the side of those seeking to defend and expand the rights and freedoms of individuals and groups around the world.

Second, U.S. policy should be *representative, inclusive, responsive and accountable to stakeholders*. Foreign policy has traditionally been informed by patriarchal and discriminatory social norms and implemented through male-dominated institutions. A feminist approach demands gender parity in representation, as well as active commitment to gender, racial and other forms of diversity, equity and inclusion. A U.S. government commitment to diversity and inclusion should not exclusively focus on rhetoric and internal processes, but also on the impact of its policies and public-private partnerships on diverse communities. As such, this principle includes a government-wide commitment to consultation with civil society and feminist movements outside of government, including and especially in the Global South.

Third, a feminist foreign policy should take an *intersectional approach to feminism*. This is an approach that takes into account and seeks to address the multiple and often intersecting forms of discrimination such as gender, race, age, class, socioeconomic status, physical or mental ability, gender or sexual identity, religion or ethnicity.⁸

Fourth, a feminist foreign policy should promote and protect *bodily autonomy*. Recognizing that the oppression of women and gender-nonconforming individuals has traditionally been expressed in the regulation and restriction of bodies and rights, a feminist approach would model its inverse, starting with the basic principle of bodily autonomy. A feminist approach embraces sexual and reproductive health and rights, which according to the Guttmacher Institute is defined as: "*A state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being in relation to all aspects of sexuality and reproduction, not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction, or infirmity. Therefore, a positive approach to sexuality and reproduction should recognize the part played by pleasurable sexual relationships, trust and communication in promoting self-esteem and overall well-being. All individuals have a right to make decisions governing their bodies and to*

access services that support that right."⁹ This approach should also enshrine bodily autonomy, which the Blueprint for Sexual and Reproductive Health, Rights and Justice defines as: "*Achieving the highest standard of sexual and reproductive health and rights is based on the fundamental human rights of all individuals to: have their bodily integrity, privacy and personal autonomy respected; freely define their own sexuality; decide whether and when to be sexually active; choose their sexual partners; have safe and pleasurable sexual experiences; decide whether, when and whom to marry; decide whether, when and by what means to have a child or children and how many children to have; and have access over their lifetimes to the information, resources, services and support necessary to achieve all the above, free from discrimination, coercion, exploitation and violence.*"

Fifth, *environmental integrity*. Here, environmental integrity is defined as *the sustenance of biophysical processes that support all living organisms, by protecting diversity, ecological functions and resilience of all ecosystems*. Climate change erodes human freedoms and limits choice. However, the impacts of climate change are not felt equally. Climate change affects everyone, but women and men experience the impacts differently, and women are often disproportionately negatively affected. Women, compared to men, often have limited access to resources, more restricted rights, limited mobility and a muted voice in shaping decisions and influencing policy. Climate change can also impact security, particularly for those who are already most vulnerable in a society, often women, girls, gender minorities and LGBTQIA+ persons, those with disabilities and most especially those with intersecting marginalized identities. Threats related to the climate crisis generally viewed as a "threat multiplier- a phenomenon that can worsen or exacerbate other sources of instability and conflict, such as competition for natural resources and ethnic tensions."¹⁰ By way of just one example, following extreme climate-related flooding in Bangladesh, child marriage rates soared.¹¹ All efforts to adapt to and mitigate climate change must include specific protections for and acknowledgment of the harm to communities of color, indigenous peoples and other frontline and marginalized communities around the world, while seeking to address gender inequality.

IV. Cross-Cutting Recommendations for Implementation of Key Principles

There are five cross-cutting elements that are necessary to advance feminist foreign policy across the whole-of-government: (1) *High level leadership* with mandate to promote feminist foreign policy; (2) *Commitment to gender parity, diversity and inclusion* both internally, among leadership and staff, and externally, co-created¹² with feminists outside government; (3) *Training and capacity-building* to ensure robust implementation; (4) *Gender analysis* underlying all aspects of foreign policy; and (5) *Adequate resourcing* to ensure all of the above.

The full embrace of these elements would be a considerable departure from the status quo of how U.S. foreign policy is currently structured. As such, this discussion draft outlines two architectural models that might achieve this. Over the course of the ensuing consultations and outreach these proposals will be sharpened and adapted to inform the final proposal for a U.S. feminist foreign policy, to be published in early 2020.

Potential Models of High-Level Leadership for Feminist Foreign Policy

1. Presidential Leadership and Mainstreaming Throughout Current Structures

In this model, the President announces that the United States will adopt a feminist foreign policy, to be co-created and implemented in consultation with feminists inside and outside of government, and commits to ensure cohesion across all levers of foreign policy using existing structures. Under this approach, the executive branch adopts a coherent and unified vision for feminist foreign policy, and each agency articulates a series of commitments—including staffing, budgetary, legislative affairs and communications—to implement it. High-level leadership and cohesion would likely spur more meaningful action throughout the government and ensure that the agenda is mainstreamed across all relevant agencies as well as become a core priority for White House offices, including public engagement, legislative affairs and the National Security Council (NSC).

2. New Structures: Creation of A Feminist Council in the White House

Another model is the establishment of a new and separate authority for the development, implemen-

tation, and reporting of a U.S. feminist foreign policy, potentially including a standalone body to guide and monitor implementation. This would include Secretaries of each agency as well as civil society leaders from the United States and around the world. The council would oversee a robust budget and would coordinate with relevant domestic agencies as well. This council would have statutory authority as well as a public engagement function, centralizing engagement with gender issues and coordinating key high-level stakeholders across and outside of the government, including the NSC. The work of the White House Council on Women and Girls, which has traditionally had a more domestic than global focus, would be subsumed under the new Council as it would include an equal emphasis on a feminist approach to policy at home and abroad. The Council would coordinate efforts—from policy formulation to implementation and progress reporting—across agencies, elevating gender issues in the executive branch and integrating gender within White House structures.

It is critical that such a structure have authority, funding and a mandate to meaningfully and transparently engage with civil society. Otherwise, it runs the risk of separating gender from the places where power is concentrated and where key decisions are made, rather than integrating gender into the fabric of the government. The Council could also include members outside of government, particularly women and other marginalized groups from the Global South who would advise relevant agencies on of the outcomes, goals and objectives against which to be measured, which would be particularly important for ensuring foreign assistance is delivered in line with its intentions.

3. Additional Actions to Develop and Implement Feminist Foreign Policy Across Government

In addition to one of the above structural models for feminist foreign policy, the following actions should be implemented across the whole-of-government. Agency-specific recommendations follow in the ensuing section.

- Achieve gender parity in political appointments and diversity and intersectional representation throughout all agencies and ranks of government.
- Co-create feminist foreign policy with feminists inside and outside of the government,

even as the policy is implemented. This “co-creation” process should not be a one-time event, but rather an iterative and reflective exercise that is progressively more inclusive over time.

- Adopt or expand gender policies in the White House and each agency responsible for implementing feminist foreign policy, including mandatory gender analyses for all projects and programs.
- Gender analyses should be standard practice in program implementation throughout the government, tailored for each agency. Gender policies should be both internally and externally facing, from personnel decisions to agency program interventions. Agencies include but are not limited to the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), the Department of State (State), Department of Defense (DOD), Department of Justice (DOJ), Department of Agriculture (USDA), Peace Corps, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation.
- Articulate policy limitations: where implementation of U.S. foreign policy countervenes the principles of a feminist foreign policy, including in cases of national security, the rationale must be publicly articulated.
- Adopt a common accountability framework tracking desired goals, objectives, targets and outcomes of the U.S. feminist foreign policy as part of a transparent consultation process between the government and civil society, including but not limited to the public reporting of annual progress to promote gender equality through both internal operations and external foreign policy functions.

V. Agency and/or “Lever”-Specific Recommendations for U.S. Feminist Foreign Policy

1. Foreign Assistance

U.S. foreign assistance helps tens of millions of people each year, often providing life-saving assistance. As important as this aid is, it still accounts for a tiny slice of the U.S. federal budget, less than one percent.¹³ Of that, a smaller amount supports gender equality and inclusion. An infinitesimal amount finds its way to local, women-led and feminist organizations and grassroots gender equality movements—key indicators of the extent

to which foreign assistance prioritizes gender equality.

A U.S. feminist foreign policy would promote gender equality through (1) robust and transparent funding to promote gender equality in international development and humanitarian assistance; (2) gender analysis of all international development and humanitarian assistance activities; (3) consultation with and direct investments in women-led and women’s rights organizations globally; (4) full funding for comprehensive sexual, reproductive health and rights programs; and (5) the removal of harmful conditions tied to U.S. foreign assistance.

One challenge with transparent funding is that most mechanisms for tracking foreign assistance are self-reported. How one donor government or specific development agency defines a project as impacting gender equality may differ from another. Dollars counted towards promoting gender equality may also count towards economic growth or education, for example, which makes it difficult to track the exact amounts spent to increase gender equality. One of the most widely used mechanisms to track aid that is intended to promote gender equality is the OECD’s Development Assistance Committee (DAC) gender equality policy marker. This is a qualitative statistical tool that members use to report annually on whether an aid activity “principally” or “significantly” targets gender equality as a policy objective. Some private sector entities and philanthropies have also begun to monitor their activities with this tool.¹⁴ While it can be a good way to compare country investments against one another, there is also the potential for inaccurate reporting, given that the current system lacks any form of external validation or independent review of donors’ self-reported data. In addition to the DAC recommendations below, the accountability section which follows enumerates several other recommendations for reporting and prioritizing gender equality. These include support for women’s rights organizations in the form of funding and greater transparency around how projects and programs mainstream and/or prioritize gender. Where OECD DAC recommendations are made, below, it is because that is currently the best form of tracking and implementing these requests most immediately and before a more robust and transparent mechanism can be created and utilized.

Currently, U.S. foreign assistance has several contingencies, ranging from how goods and services are sourced and delivered to how trade agreements are shaped. These contingencies often make aid costlier to deliver and less effective overall. It is recommended that all limiting conditions on U.S. foreign assistance be removed, such as the prioritization of U.S. private sector entities and faith-based organizations through foreign assistance. In its current form, U.S. foreign policy exempts some U.S.-funded organizations from implementing U.S. policy. Other forms of contingencies make it difficult to establish the trust required to implement services, reach key populations and otherwise directly engage with those USAID is most meant to serve. The removal of conditions on U.S. foreign assistance would make assistance dollars go farther.

Recommendations for all agencies providing foreign assistance including USAID, State, DOD, MCC, the Peace Corps, DOJ, USDA and the Department of Labor:

- Increase investments in gender equality as measured by the OECD-DAC, as well as direct support for women's rights organizations.
- Prioritize co-creation and local ownership of foreign aid, with local constituencies informing development programs from their inception through to evaluation, including participatory approaches such as community scorecards.
- Allocate robust and transparent funding for gender equality in international development and humanitarian assistance, and throughout foreign assistance. This should include a floor of 20 percent of ODA for gender equality as a principal objective (OECD-DAC marker 2) and requiring gender analysis for all of U.S. foreign assistance programs (OECD-DAC marker 1 and 2 combined, gender equality as a principal or significant objective).
- Substantially increase direct investments in women-led and women's rights organizations. One mechanism that should be considered in this regard is Canada's recently-launched Equality Fund, which supports women's rights organizations and feminist movements by providing technical assistance, financial resources and grounding that work in the priorities identified by local orga-

nizations and the movements leading change in their communities.¹⁵ Of particular interest is that the Fund itself (\$300m CAD) is managed by feminist funders—including women's funds and gender-lens investors—and not by Canada's development agency.

- Repeal the expanded Mexico City Policy (also referred to as "Protecting Life in Global Health Assistance" by the current administration or the global gag rule by advocates) and ensure funding for sexual and reproductive health and comprehensive sexuality education. This aligns with other actions raised during the August 2019 convening, including working with Congress to end the Helms Amendment (banning the use of federal funds for abortion as a family planning method) and National Security Presidential Directive 22 (which conflates human trafficking and sex work), as well as the foreign policy proposals outlined in the Blueprint for Sexual and Reproductive Health, Rights and Justice.

[Placeholder for Feminist Humanitarian Aid]

The majority of the group discussion on feminist aid focused on development assistance, to the exclusion of humanitarian assistance. This will be addressed after future consultation with humanitarian organizations such as the International Rescue Committee (which has recently launched a feminist approach to humanitarian aid).

2. Trade

Trade is a necessary and vital component of a nation's economic success and growth and a key part of their engagement with other nations. At various points in the nation's history, trade has been used as a way to grow America's power globally, to maintain world order, to encourage peace, reduce domestic debt and to combat autocracy.

A U.S. feminist foreign policy would prioritize feminist trade policy through the promotion of women's rights and equitable and dignified labor practices up and down the value chain, as well as the reduction and mitigation of the harmful impacts of climate change associated with trade. Importantly, it would go beyond where other countries who have inserted a gender chapter in trade agreements have gone, including women's rights commitments in the binding sections of deals.

A successful trade policy should be one that: (1) Refrains from trade deals that won't equally benefit women due to de jure discrimination (e.g., importing goods from sectors that have legal restrictions on women's employment); (2) Prioritizes support of local actors — e.g., trade unions or workers' rights organizations — to engage in trade negotiations and raise complaints/violations; and (3) Set targets for public procurement from women-owned firms.

Mechanisms exist for analyzing gender impacts of trade throughout the value chain, such as those developed for gender analysis in MCC and World Bank projects, or a certification mechanism, such as **EDGE**. Such mechanisms could track the amount of trade dollars that go towards women-owned businesses and promoting women's and gender equality in the value chain, giving a competitive advantage to those private sector entities who are doing more to promote gender equality in order to foster private sector growth in this area.

Specific recommendations for trade policy and practices under a U.S. feminist foreign policy include:

- The development of new mechanisms to link gender equality to environmental and labor concerns in trade agreements.
- Incorporating women's human rights and gender equality in bilateral and multilateral trade agreements, specifically in the binding sections. This includes principles around debt and redress in how these objectives are met.
- Re-engagement in the Paris Agreement, which articulates some of these principles in the preamble. The United States should go further than the Paris Agreement, however, to operationalize these principles.
- Support for and investment in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) gender action plan, including aims to enhance women's participation and leadership in national delegations and on boards and bodies of the Convention, as well as enhanced gender-responsive implementation of national climate plans and policies. The UNFCCC supports increased participation of women in climate negotiations and also contains specific gender action plans which reports on boards and bodies, includes a senior gender advisor and

gender team and requests for training. The United States should be aware of and engaged in improving trade negotiations in their national plans and tracked against gender and climate actions.

- Working towards the goal of mobilizing jointly \$100 billion per year by 2020, the United States should re-commit ambitious and fair-share contributions to the Green Climate Fund, ensuring gender-responsive financing.
- All trade agreements should include a gender analysis as well as a strategy for energy democracy and emissions reduction and climate change mitigation. There should be a financial commitment that is 100 percent gender-responsive.
- Trade agreements should not enforce ideologically-driven agendas, such as privatization of government entities or dismantling of health, safety and labor protections. The harms of these measures usually fall most heavily on women, lower income and marginalized people and are rarely compensated directly or indirectly through improved job creation or income.

3. Defense

In order to achieve the goal of a more peaceful and healthy planet, U.S. national security and defense operations must be transformed. U.S. military interventions should be a last resort after fully utilizing the many and powerful tools available within the foreign policy apparatus: diplomacy, aid and trade. Military action should be primarily defensive in nature and require a very high standard of need. Additionally, military action should only be undertaken with a full and democratic debate, due political process¹⁶ and full disclosure of rationale, analysis of implications and clear goals and milestones for intervention. Where military action is chosen, it should be carefully overseen and subject to sunset provisions aimed at preventing mission creep, civilian deaths and ongoing obligations to continued military operations.

Furthermore, a more feminist military policy commits to preventing and responding to gender-based violence in conflict and to meaningfully including women and those who face discrimination in security forces, peace negotiations and post-conflict rebuilding. It encourages a diversity of intelligence sources, including women and other marginalized groups, to understand the true scope of

security concerns and impacts of potential actions and design responses with those interests in mind.

The body of international and U.S. law that has most directly sought to advance this approach to military action is U.N. Security Council Resolution 1325 and ensuing, “sister” resolutions that have formed the women, peace and security (WPS) agenda. A radical resolution when it passed in 2000, UNSCR 1325 sought to advance human security and the promotion of peace via specific protections for women’s safety in conflict settings and their meaningful involvement in peacekeeping and humanitarian response, peace processes and rebuilding post-conflict.¹⁷ The United States has sought to incorporate UNSCR 1325 into its foreign policy through the U.S. National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security, first launched in 2011 and updated in 2016,¹⁸ and subsequently by the Women, Peace and Security Act of 2017 and mandated National Strategy on Women, Peace and Security of 2019.¹⁹ Taken together, these laws and policies give the defense community the doctrinal mandate to implement UNSCR 1325 as a core part of their work. Gender analyses across both internal and external defense operations and an explicit focus on expanding gender expertise through training and recruitment and the diversification of intelligence sources will go a long way in advancing the necessary transformation of the U.S. defense apparatus in line with various existing WPS policy frameworks.

Specific recommendations for defense efforts authorized under a U.S. feminist foreign policy include:

- Crafting a National Security Strategy (NSS) that reflects women’s and other marginalized and gendered experiences.
- Fully implementing U.S. commitments to the women, peace and security agenda. In order to ensure that the U.S. government upholds these commitments, Congress should not release funds to agencies who are not implementing their obligations in this area.
- Creating a new, high-level position, either reporting to the Secretary of Defense at DOD or reporting to the National Security Advisor at the NSC, that is charged with developing and overseeing implementation of a more feminist approach to defense as part of the U.S. feminist foreign policy.

- Ensuring equal opportunity to meet performance standards for female and LGBTQIA+ servicemembers.
- Lifting the transgender servicemember ban.
- Retooling internal policies to ensure provision of child care and spousal support that does not assume a male service member and female “trailing” spouse, and a total redesign of promotion and retention policies to be predicated on the successful implementation of gender equitable work and increased and diverse recruitment and promotion
- Ensuring comprehensive coverage of and access to sexual and reproductive health services, including contraception and abortion, for people serving in the military.
- Designing and delivering meaningful and consistently implemented justice mechanisms for those within the military system, but also for those outside of the system but against whom acts of gender-based violence are committed by military personnel.
- Providing increased training on the women, peace and security agenda and its integration into military colleges and training. An introduction to WPS should be part of basic training. Additionally, there should be an independent evaluation gender training program at DOD that includes recommendations for improvement that are acted upon. In order to ensure a gender lens is incorporated across the board and not siloed or marginalized, each and every member of U.S. defense and military operations—including political appointees and contractors—should receive training in gender analysis.

4. Diplomacy

The United States must foster increased collaboration and cooperation among state and non-state actors. This includes supporting the institutions and mechanisms that facilitate cooperation and non-military conflict resolution and peaceful competition, as well as mitigating the effects of climate change. A new framework for diplomacy is necessary to implement a feminist foreign policy that is responsive to these and other concerns and will require leadership by both Congress and all elements of U.S. diplomatic action. If the United States is to lead the world as a moral authority or rapporteur on human rights abuses, then it must lead by example, particularly with countries where women’s freedom and bodily autonomy is a concern. There are three

areas for immediate and sustained action to advance feminist diplomacy in the United States: (1) internal State Department staffing, training and operations; (2) bilateral and multilateral diplomatic efforts; and (3) the design and delivery of foreign assistance funding and technical assistance.

Recommendations include:

- The appointment of a high-level representative tasked with oversight of the feminist approach to diplomacy, including all external and internal (HR) practices, and reporting directly to the Secretary of State.
- In order for the United States to have a feminist, collaborative, civilian-led diplomacy equal to the challenges faced, the decline in funding and staffing of the State Department must be reversed. A specific percentage or dollar amount of recommended funding for both improving internal staffing and training and to support programs that prioritize gender equity globally is forthcoming.
- The commitment of the State Department to achieving gender balance amongst all U.S. diplomatic personnel, including foreign service and civil service officers, political appointees, cabinet and high-level roles. Gender balance should not be the only measure of success: the diplomatic architecture needs equal representation of women, yes, but especially women of color, trans women and other intersectional and marginalized identities at all levels and in all auspices of diplomacy.
- Mandatory training on gender, SRHR, anti-racism and implicit bias training in both early-career and ongoing professional development. In the mandatory six-week training course that all foreign service officers (FSOs) undergo, known as the A100, advancing gender equality should be a key component. In addition to FSOs, anyone working with State Department funding should undergo the gender training, and all FSOs should participate in periodic and mandatory refresher courses on gender and SRHR as a key part of professional development.
- An update to the State human resources policies to ensure that leave policies, including family leave, child care, deployment options and policies, trailing spouses and more, build towards a more equitable and

just workforce and encourage the promotion and retention of those who choose to become parents. Gender-based violence and workplace harassment should not be tolerated, and policies that allow abusers to move from one post to another once accused without facing consequences related to their employment and/or promotion should be abolished.

- The elevation of the issue of gender equality in bilateral meetings and have consistent redlines that can be deployed in negotiations surrounding climate and other multilateral agreements.
- The United States must acknowledge and codify inconsistencies with an acknowledgment and procedure for why violating U.S. ideals to engage in diplomatic actions or negotiations that undermine feminist foreign policy goals and objectives. As part of this, the U.S. government should define terminology, including SRHR and clearly articulate redlines and what is acceptable in multilateral negotiations and include an explicit process whereby the United States can remove itself from negotiations or agreements.
- The United States must also codify processes where there are inconsistencies between diplomacy and the overarching goals of a feminist foreign policy. This includes engagement with countries that perpetuate human rights abuses and drawing redlines around where engagement is helpful to those whose rights are abused and where, even if it serves national interests, the United States cannot engage with such states.
- Mandatory gender analyses in order to receive State Department funding and include transparent reporting and accountability measures against those metrics, this includes ex ante estimates and ex post reports. Further to that, guidance should be issued to Embassies on the status of women and prioritizing the status of women a metric for evaluating the growth of any country. Diplomatic tools like the State Department's annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices should include robust evidence on all aspects of women's human rights, including SRHR. These annual country reports are key documents for development, humanitarian and private sector actors who rely on the information they contain to make important

decisions and investments.

- The United States must hold itself to the same standards to which it holds other state actors, reporting on human rights practices and abuses as part of the annual country Human Rights Reports. This has been done in the past in Trafficking in Persons (TIP) reports.

[Placeholder for Immigration]

The group discussion on feminist foreign policy raised immigration as a priority issue that would need to be addressed but those present lacked expertise in this area. Limited recommendations that emerged in the course of discussion included recognizing gender-based violence and reproductive coercion (including forced pregnancy) as eligibility criteria for individuals seeking asylum in the United States as well as law enforcement training on these types of claims and how to respond and the closure of private detention centers and ending of the family separation policy for those in detention as well as immigrants and asylum seekers. Additional insights will be captured in this area in ensuing consultations and a more robust chapter on immigration will appear in the final proposal released early next year.

VI. Accountability Mechanisms

Perhaps the greatest issue that has emerged from consultations to-date is the importance of accountability: ensuring that promises to advance a feminist approach are honored through full funding, the development of participatory approaches to policy formulation and implementation, the setting and reaching of specific, time-bound and measurable goals and through transparency.

For the purposes of this paper, accountability of a feminist foreign policy includes: 1) A process of commitment-making, implementation and evaluation that is evidence-based, transparent and inclusive of individuals impacted by its practice; and 2) the generation of outcomes that do no harm and are desired by and beneficial to those impacted.

Structurally speaking, a U.S. feminist foreign policy must be accompanied by a robust mechanism by which to publicly track progress on implementation and hold promises to account. Two key factors within this are the allocation of sufficient funds for the full implementation of the policy, and a transpar-

ent and inclusive system of reporting on progress and outcomes.

1. Funding

As noted above, the OECD-DAC gender equality policy marker records aid activities around a three-point scoring system and notes whether the policy objective is to promote gender equality as a primary objective, significant objective or whether gender equality was not targeted as an objective.²⁰ While the gender marker is an imperfect metric, it is an immediately available one. Using the OECD-DAC marker, a recommended 100 percent of U.S. foreign assistance should have gender as a principal or significant objective, and of that foreign assistance, twenty percent must include gender equality as a primary goal. This is consistent with Sweden's achievements under their feminist foreign policy,²¹ and with recommendations by feminist activists organizing to influence the Group of 7 (G7) in 2019.²²

This mechanism needs significant improvements. There should be alignment between U.S. budget creation and reporting timelines and OECD-DAC timelines to ensure that U.S. commitments intended to promote gender equality are captured accurately. Currently, the Congressional Budget Justification (CBJ), which is "the annual presentation to the Congress that justifies the entire Foreign Operations Budget Request and reflects the continuing process to provide improved strategic focus, data quality"²³ occurs early in the calendar year and is based on the U.S. government fiscal year, whereas the OECD-DAC timeline is not.

In addition to increased and more transparent funding for gender equality, the inclusion of groups and individuals typically excluded from decision making processes is pivotal. Grassroots and local organizations best-placed to do critical work to reduce gender inequality often lack the technical and financial resources to apply for U.S. government funding. U.S. policy should balance grassroots and community inclusion with mitigating time and resource burdens on organizations expected to represent traditionally marginalized viewpoints. One model to consider in this effort is the recently-established Equality Fund.

Another shortcoming of this mechanism is that it is self-reported and there is no external validation or independent review confirming that donor-reported

data is aligned to OECD guidelines for each gender policy marker. There should be an independent mechanism that tracks and validates self-reported data consistently across countries.

2. Reporting

Feminist policymaking must distinguish itself from business-as-usual both in its process and outcomes. Policymakers and implementers will need to clearly articulate those policies or conditions that violate feminist principles (e.g., Tanzania's banning of girls from school when they become pregnant). Decisions about what these circumstances are, and what U.S. policy reactions should be, must be made in consultation with local actors to avoid unintended consequences and should be transparently reported on to the public as a part of a regular reporting. The policy itself, as well as the reporting on it, should avoid the creation of new, siloed initiatives and explore how to streamline existing accountability processes.

We have limited evidence on the extent to which international conventions (e.g., the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women or CEDAW) and other accountability mechanisms have played a role in successfully narrowing gender gaps and improving the lives of women and girls. To date, Sweden's reporting process on their Feminist Foreign Policy has been in the form of illustrative case studies rather than quantifiable data on outcomes across all levers of foreign policy. It is recommended that a U.S. policy take on a more robust framework for monitoring and evaluating outcomes, rather than outputs, and be made publicly available on a regular basis.

With the understanding that complex social norm change takes time, reporting is still necessary to demonstrate incremental progress where the feminist foreign policy practices are having the greatest impact and where they are not. By making these actions more visible, greater progress against is more likely. In this respect, France's policy is perhaps a good example: they have articulated actionable objectives and outcomes, indicators, key stakeholders, and an anticipated timeline for completion against five core areas. The United States should undertake a similar mechanism in their reporting, creating new, rather than repackaged, commitments that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound (SMART).

The United States should also strive for a model of

external validation, wherein independent researchers and civil society representatives examine the extent to which commitments have been met and report publicly on their findings.

VII. Conclusion

The above recommendations for the restructuring and reprioritization of U.S. foreign policy efforts to advance a feminist foreign policy on behalf of the United States should be viewed as a starting point. In the coming months, there will be a series of stakeholder consultations to further refine and augment this proposal, seeking the benefit of additional expertise. At the end of this process, a comprehensive proposal will be developed for harnessing the full power of U.S. foreign policy in a manner that prioritizes gender equality and environmental integrity, enshrines the human rights of all, seeks to disrupt colonial, patriarchal and male-dominated power structures and allocates significant resources, including research, to achieve that vision.

Annex - List of Acronyms and Definitions

Agency: An individual or group's ability to make choices and to transform those choices into desired outcomes. Incorporating agency into policy requires contemplating issues of autonomy, choice, empowerment and meaningful engagement. A feminist lens on agency moves beyond seeing women as participants or beneficiaries; it means that women in all their diversity are experts on their own experience, agents of their own lives and actors in their community and society.

Bodily autonomy: Achieving the highest standard of sexual and reproductive health and rights is based on the fundamental human rights of all individuals to: have their bodily integrity, privacy and personal autonomy respected; freely define their own sexuality; decide whether and when to be sexually active; choose their sexual partners; have safe and pleasurable sexual experiences; decide whether, when and whom to marry; decide whether, when and by what means to have a child or children and how many children to have; and have access over their lifetimes to the information, resources, services and support necessary to achieve all the above, free from discrimination, coercion, exploitation and violence.

Environmental integrity: the sustenance of biophysical processes that support all living organisms, by protecting diversity, ecological functions and resilience of all ecosystems.

Feminist foreign policy: Feminist foreign policy is the policy of a state that defines its interactions with other states, as well as movements and other non-state actors, in a manner that prioritizes gender equality and environmental integrity, enshrines the human rights of all, seeks to disrupt colonial, racist, patriarchal and male-dominated power structures and allocates significant resources, including research, to achieve that vision. Feminist foreign policy is coherent in its approach across all of its levers of influence, anchored by the exercise of those values at home and co-created with feminist activists, groups and movements, at home and abroad.

Intersectionality: The multiple aspects of identity that play out in people's lives and experiences that can compound and exacerbate oppression. An intersectional approach in policy takes account the complex ways that multiple identities intersect and influence interests, participation and outcomes. An approach that takes into account and seeks to address the multiple and often intersecting forms of discrimination such as gender, race, age, class, socioeconomic status, physical or mental ability, gender or sexual identity, religion, or ethnicity.²⁴

Sexual and reproductive health and rights: A state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being in relation to all aspects of sexuality and reproduction, not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction, or infirmity. Therefore, a positive approach to sexuality and reproduction should recognize the part played by pleasurable sexual relationships, trust and communication in promoting self-esteem and overall well-being. All individuals have a right to make decisions governing their bodies and to access services that support that right."²⁵

Abbreviations:

DAC: Development Assistance Committee of the OECD

DOD: U.S. Department of Defense

DOJ: U.S. Department of Justice

LGBTQIA+: Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer/questioning, intersex, asexual and many other terms, such as non-binary and pansexual.

OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

SRHR: Sexual and reproductive health and rights

USAID: U.S. Agency for International Development

USDA: U.S. Department of Agriculture

WPS: Women, peace and security

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