NIAS-Europe Studies Brief

The Ground Reality of Feminist Foreign Policy: A Conceptual Analysis of the European Framework

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Introduction

The core concept of feminist foreign policy (FFP) is premised on achieving gender equality through diplomatic relations.[*] Though the diplomatic corps is regarded as male-dominated, FFP calls for infusing the policy arena with feminist ideals. The intersection of feminist IR theories and foreign policy analysis embodies the theory and policy praxis of FFP. Feminist foreign policy is the outcome of twentieth-century movements and developments worldwide in the problem-solving domain of gender rights; however, in IR and foreign policy, its entry was considerably late in the 1980s. It provides a gendered lens in explaining IR and positions women at the centre of analysis. Carol Gilligan, one of the earliest feminist contributors to IR, argues that women think differently primarily as a result of socialization. She also adds that women tend to see reality as a set of interconnected experiences and interrelationships leading towards a holistic worldview.[1] It corresponds with the belief that due to existing androcentric social-political structures, men and women experience realities differently. According to Betty A. Reardon, "over the past several years, research into women's ways of knowing, reasoning and decision-making has demonstrated that, at least in Western countries, women's thinking is different from that of men…These feminine modes of thinking and problem-solving can be learned and applied by both women and men..."[2]

Broadly, there are three existing typologies in IR feminism namely, feminist empiricism, feminist standpoint, and feminist postmodernism. Sandra Harding first proposed these typologies.[3] Whereas feminist empiricism problematises the fundamentally gendered structure of the inter-state system and instead focuses on social attitudes and structures, the feminist standpoint argues in favour of framing world politics by foregrounding the lived experiences of women who are politically marginalized and historically silenced. Feminist postmodernism goes beyond these two typologies and rejects the falsely universalizing ideas of IR and instead argues that there is basically no 'one true story.' Epistemologically speaking, gendered experiences in foreign policy become the primary unit of analysis in FFP. Therefore, the demands for gender equality in FP gain salience both normatively and pragmatically with realistic evidence corroborating gender parity with holistic prosperity.

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[1] Carol Gilligan. *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982).

[2] Betty Reardon. *Women and Peace.* (New York: Sage Publication, 1993), 141.

[3] Robert Keohane. "International Relations Theory: Contributions of a Feminist Standpoint", *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 18(2): 245.

Since FFP is currently collocated in certain foreign policy initiatives, especially from the West, this paper focuses on analysing the European framework surrounding FFP. It begins by challenging the conventional theoretical wisdom in foreign policy analysis, followed by a feminist critique of it. This paper responds to five key questions pertaining to FFP. First, what does the framework entail? Second, why is it historically important? Third, which European countries have currently adopted FFP? Fourth, how is it being implemented in these countries? Fifth, what are the challenges to FFP? The paper concludes by assessing whether FFP is a tenable framework for foreign policy analysis and its future potential as an academic construct. This paper is based on secondary literature and therefore focused more on the conceptual analysis of the theoretical engagement between feminism and foreign policy.

Foreign Policy and Theoretical Framework: A Critical Engagement
Traditionally, international politics exercises a monopoly over the game of binaries. Therefore, often one element is hierarchically privileged over the other. According to Booth, "emancipation should logically be given precedence in our thinking about security over the mainstream themes of power and order. The trouble with privileging power and order is that they are at somebody else's expense."[4]

It is, thus, the function of state sovereignty in the discourse of power politics that effectively demarcates the domestic from the international. The canonical knowledge in IR makes these discursive banalities possible. For instance, the Foucauldian concept of the power-knowledge nexus where knowledge propagated through a specific lens works as the power to produce the 'truth effect' over the rest of the knowledge domain. As Foucault puts it, "…there is no knowledge without a particular discursive practice."[5] The discourse of power politics substantially controls knowledge. These conventional masculine definitions of power are all the modernist assumptions of control, domination, and surveillance that premise security on either violence or spatial control. Since the celebration of power serves the powerful, the discipline of mainstream IR has also bolstered that particular narrative. In addition, this very perception of power has been intertwined with the prevalence of order and maintenance of the status quo rather than changing it.

The Gramscian perspective suggests that the consensual aspect of power appears to be the central pillar for the prevalence of hegemony. Intellectuals perform the function of developing and sustaining the mental images, technologies, and organisations which bind together the members of a class. Similarly, the intellectuals from mainstream academia in tandem with the policy makers create a hegemonic space of power-politics and thus, hierarchy is constantly being created and reaffirmed in the dominant discourse of international relations. According to Robert Cox:

> …there is no theory for itself; theory is always for someone, for some purpose. There is no neutral theory concerning human affairs, no theory of universal validity. Theory derives from practice and experience, and experience is related to time and place. Theory is a part of history. It addresses the problematic of the world of its time and place. An inquirer has to aim to place himself above the historical circumstances in which a theory is propounded. One has to ask about the aims and purposes of those who construct theories in specific historical situations.[6]

[4] Ken Booth. "Security and Emancipation". *Review of International Studies.* 17(4): 319.
[5] Michel Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*. (Bristol: Routledge Publications, 1972), 183.
[6] P. Schouten. 'Theory Talk #37: Robert Cox on World Orders, Historical Change, and the Purpose of Theory in International Relations', *Theory Talks*, 2009. Accessed 18 November 2015, URL:

Conventionally, security is considered as the absence of threats. Although historically this notion formed the basis of the concept of security, it limits the scope of security perceiving it from a negative point of view. Regardless, the study of security has strived to establish itself as an objective scientific discipline, where, according to Stephen Walt, the discipline has focused on "the study of the threat, use, and control of military force."[7]

The state, therefore, was prioritised and became the key referent of security, authority, and obligation, infringing on the potential of the self-fulfilment of people. People became the means and states became the end. The security of the citizens was identified with that of the state. The state's national interest, defined in terms of power, overshadowed people's interests. The unease of the critical scholars of international relations often resulted in a constant demand for extending the horizon of security. But, broadening the concept of security came with its own shortcomings as it resulted in increasing securitization.[8] Moreover, it merely reflected some of the problematic aspects of security which might be of great concern but could not be considered as a conceptual base for security. Meanwhile, the Welsh School of Critical Theory advocated the deepening of security by exploring the ontological and epistemological debates which could deepen the understanding of security. Booth defined this security as emancipation. According to him, "Emancipation is the freeing of people (as individuals and groups) from those physical and human constraints which stop them from carrying out what they would freely choose to do. War and the threat of war is one of those constraints, together with poverty, poor education, political oppression and so on. Security and emancipation are two sides of the same coin…Emancipation, theoretically, is security."[9]

Taking this argument further, Cox asserted, "Structures are prior to individuals; there are already certain established and accepted social practices. These social practices are the creation of collective human activity."[10] Echoing Cox's definition of structure Steans argued from a feminist perspective that "…gender can be seen as constituted by the structure of various social institutions and practices that tie gender into intricate patterns of domination."[11]

Agathangelou and Ling metaphorically called this mainstream discourse of IR an ordered "house" where "power" is countered with "more power" "by appropriating the knowledge, resources, and labor of racialized, sexualized Others for its own benefit and pleasure while announcing itself the sole producer."[12] As this discourse turned hegemonic, the structuring of its meaning made way for practical policy implementation as "intelligible and legitimate."[13] As it became "the play of practice," it made an effort towards the fixity of meanings as well as silencing of the subjugated knowledge systems. As a consequence, foreign policy and

http://www.theorytalks.org/2010/03/theory-talk-37.html

[7] Stephen Walt. "The Renaissance of Security Studies". *International Studies Quarterly.* 35 (2): 212–13.

[8] Barry Buzan et. al. *Security: A New Framework for Analysis.* (London: Lynne Reinner Publishers, 1998).

[9] Booth. "Security and Emancipation", 319

[10] Robert Cox. *Production, Power and World Order: Social Forces in the Making of History*, Volume 1, (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1987), 4.

[11] Jill Steans. *Gender and International Relations: Theory, Practice and Policy*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013), 35.

[12] Anna M. Agathangelou and Ling L. H. M. "The House of IR: From Family Power Politics to the *Poisies* of Worldism", *International Studies Review.* 2004, 6 (4): 21.

[13] Jennifer Milliken. "The Study of Discourse in International Relations: A Critique of Research and Methods", *European Journal of International Relations,* 1999, 5(2): 240.

diplomacy replicated the mainstream IR discourses by reiterating the existing hegemonic knowledge through their elite practitioners. Policy implementation, therefore, became the "…actions directed towards those objectified as targets of international practices."[14] Doty saw foreign policy as a social construction as she juxtaposed the Cognitive Decision-making Approach and the Social Performance Approach with the Discursive Practices Approach. Whereas the former two emphasised the cognitive aspects of individuals as well as the "collective" of the social order in the realm of policy implementation, the latter stressed the "linguistic construction of reality."[15] In this way, the horizons of foreign policy expanded and were neither "limited to the actual making of specific decisions nor the analysis of temporally and spatially bounded 'events'". On the contrary, the discourses shaped through various foreign policy documents "produce meanings and in doing so actively construct the 'reality' upon which foreign policy is based."[16]

Power politics has always been a central theme in mainstream international relations. However, foreign policy (FP) has predominantly remained a domain for policymakers with limited theoretical exposure. The domain has been deliberately kept outside the purview of critical academic engagement and thus, driven primarily by the parsimonious understanding of realpolitik. The dearth of human-centrism and the surging post-normative order in contemporary conventional foreign policy analysis makes it wary of adopting adequate critical angles. Whereas in the former, human subjects are sought to be the primary focus, the latter indicates a normative dilution in policy approach. Norms as legitimate standardised behaviour of recurring patterns reclaim the behavioural aspect. Norms, therefore, can be defined as "...a set of intersubjective understandings readily apparent to actors that makes behavioral claims on those actors."[17] The overbearing thrust on the structural aspects like military prowess as well as economic capabilities, fails to take into account the prime factors of social cohesion. Thus, FP has been relegated to being 'disciplined' in a manner that homologizes policy implementation. Homologization refers to the usage of homology which is often used in the biological sciences. It describes relationships, relative positions, and structures in a set of elements in order to prescribe how relationships ought to be ordered and how elements and their aims should be weighed.[18] The framing of policy language tends to prioritize the structural aspects of states, their interest-driven interrelationships as well as the matters of hard power in terms of the facets of military and economic capabilities. Whereas it is impossible to transcend the state in matters of FP, its predominance can be diluted by considering humans as the point of reference. Thus, FFP may be seen as providing a revised alternative framework to the conventional FP approaches.

Feminist Challenges to Mainstream Foreign Policy Assumptions
The predominant FP thinking revolves around five-key assumptions: objective theoretical grounding, the preponderance of systemic explanations, the primacy of political structures, the security maximizing behaviour of states, and the cycles of repetition and recurrence. An

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[14] Ibid.

[15] Roxanne Lynn Doty. "Foreign Policy as Social Construction: A Post-Positivist Analysis of US Counterinsurgency Policy in Philippines", *International Studies Quarterly,* 1993, 37 (3): 302.

[16] Ibid., 303.

[17] Martha Finnemore. "Constructing Norms of Humanitarian Intervention," Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Studies Association, Washington, D.C. 1994, 2.

[18] Cynthia. Weber. "Why is there no Queer International Theory?," *European Journal of International Relations,* 2015. 21 (1): 29-30.

attempt has been made in this paper to refute each of these non-reflectivist assumptions using feminist lenses.

In this context, the domain of theorization is better demonstrated through Cynthia Enloe's responses to the question, "What would a student need to become a specialist in IR?." She responded by saying "Pick something that you care about—something you just find wonderfully intriguing."[19] This leads to Butler's argument on the 'subject position' which is created artificially by the gendered discourse of the world.[20] In other words, it is important to consider the 'self' to see where the theorizer actually belongs to. Here, feminism clearly converges with critical theory, vouching for more focus on the unheard voices of women. Therefore, it directly challenges the very notion of separating the theorizer from the theory by creating a subject-object divide. Thus, rather than talking simply about the objective reality as it is, feminism calls for a change in the masculine international structure. Feminism asks: whose reality, is it? This, as feminism contends, is essentially a masculine reality that refuses to take into consideration a feminine reality. In Tickner's words, "A feminist perspective believes that objectivity, as it is culturally defined, is associated with masculinity…Dynamic objectivity offers us a more connected view of objectivity with less potential for domination."[21]

Cynthia Enloe further points out, "patriarchy is the structural and ideological system that perpetuates the privileging of masculinity. All kinds of social systems and institutions can become patriarchal…Patriarchal systems are notable for marginalizing the feminine…One of the reasons that feminists have been so astute in exposing patriarchy as a principal cause for so many of the world's processes—empire-building, globalization, modernization—is that feminists have been curious about women. By taking women seriously in their myriad locations, feminists have been able to see patriarchy when everyone else has seen only capitalism or militarism or racism or imperialism."[22]

Thus, the societal-patriarchal structure becomes one of the key factors shaping the international system. If at all feminists were to identify themselves with any of these images, they would have identified themselves more to the first image of analysis at the individual level, keeping in mind the diverse experiences of feminised individuals. The unwarranted assumption of identical units across the international system overlooks every possibility of localised diversities. Cynthia Enloe even more explicitly asserts the fact that "Personal is international, international in personal," thereby, challenging the fundamental dichotomy between the domestic and the international. Additionally, for feminists, the anarchic international system is a competitive environment where states flex their masculine power confined mostly to material gains for gaining security. Enloe writes, "To investigate the gendered workings of international politics we will have to make power visible—power in all its myriad forms…Power, taste, attraction, and desire are not mutually exclusive."[23] Tickner

[19] P. Schouten and H. Dunham. "Cynthia Enloe on Militarization, Feminism and the International Politics of Banana Boats", *Theory Talk #48.* 2012. Accessed on 1 May 2023. URL:
https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/155109/Theory%20Talk48_Enloe.pdf

[20] Judith Butler. *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'.* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

[21] J. Ann Tickner. "Hans Morgenthau's Principles of Political Realism: A Feminist Reformulation**",** *Millennium - Journal of International Studies,* 1988, 17 (3): 437.

[22] Cynthia Enloe. *The Curious Feminist: Searching for Women in a New Age of Empire,* (Berkeley: University California Press, 2004), 6-7.

[23] Cynthia Enloe. *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics,* (Berkeley: University California Press, 2014), 8.

adds, "Power as domination and control privileges masculinity and ignores the possibility of collective empowerment, another aspect of power often associated with feminity."[24]

According to Tickner, states can create a bridge between the individual and the international and work as mediators.[25] On the other hand, for V. Spike Peterson, the very foundation of the modern Western state is a perpetual source of women's insecurity and domesticity.[26] The autonomous sovereign states' capacity, essentially projecting masculinity can be seen as possessing the rational character of states.[27] Therefore, feminism denies the very primacy of state security and looks for expanding the horizon of security. As Jan J. Pettman argued, "Feminist understandings and re-visions of security are by no means monolithic, but they do reveal war and peace as gendered processes and suggest strategies for a more secure world."[28] Therefore, feminists ask these fundamental questions such as whose security are we talking about? Can we feel secure being insecure at the interpersonal level? Tickner writes, "Speaking from the margins, feminists are sensitive to the various ways in which social hierarchies manifest themselves across societies and history. Striving for security involves exposing these different social hierarchies, understanding how they construct and are constructed by the international order, and working to denaturalize and dismantle them."[29]

For feminism, the system preserves the status quo being shaped by the patriarchal structure. Tickner explains, "feminism is also committed to progressive or emancipatory goals, particularly the goal of achieving equality for women through the elimination of unequal gender relations."[30] According to her, "Women's subordinate status means that women, unlike men (or unlike some men), do not have an interest in mystifying reality in order to reinforce the status quo; therefore, they are likely to develop a clearer, less biased understanding of the world."[31]

Denying any agency to change reifies the existing order of the system. On the contrary, feminists are always affirmative and optimistic about the potential of change, where changes in interpersonal power relations by empowering women can effectively bring about structural changes. In short, feminism calls for an expansion in the circle of sensibility by being sensitive particularly to history, context, and contingency.[32]

FFP: Definitions and Objectives

Only in recent times, attempts have been made to comprehensively define FFP. Broadly, FFP "defines its interactions with other states, as well as movements and other non-state actors, in a manner that prioritizes peace, gender equality and environmental integrity, enshrines the human rights of all, seeks to disrupt colonial, racist, patriarchal and male-dominated power

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[24] Tickner. "Hans Morgenthau's Principles of Political Realism", 438.

[25] J. Ann Tickner. *Gender in International Relations: Issues and Approaches in the Post–Cold War Era,* (New York: Columbia University, 2001).

[26] V. Spike. Peterson. *Gendered States: Feminist (Re) Visions of International Relations Theory.* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1992), 4.

[27] Joshua, Goldstein and Jon. V. Pevehouse. *Innternational Relations.* (India: Pearson Education, 2009), 108.

[28] Jan J. Petterman. *Worlding Women: A Feminist International Politics*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1996)), 67.

[29] J. Ann Tickner. "You Just Don't Understand: Troubled Engagements between Feminists and IR Theorists", *International Studies Quarterly*, 1997, 41 (4): 624.

[30] Ibid., 616

[31] Tickner. *Gender in International Relations,* 17.

[32] Tickner. "You Just Don't Understand", 624.

structures, and allocates significant resources, including research, to achieve that vision."[33]1 FFP, thus, seeks adaptability and reflexivity "rooted in an intersectional approach, informed by the diversity of local knowledge, strategies and language and fully owned by the communities it seeks to support."[34] The strategies of FFP include five Rs encompassing Rights, Resources, Representation, Research and Reporting, and Reach.[35] There are at least five-core identifiable values ushering incremental change in FFP namely, intersectionality, empathetic reflexivity, substantive representation and participation, accountability, and peace commitment.[36]

Thus, FFP prioritises certain areas of policy advocacy including demilitarisation, peace, inclusivity, the dignity of individuals, mediation, solidarity, cooperation, and environmental protection. Based on these issues, FFP is an ongoing process of culling out concrete policy positions and problem-solving strategies in FP. Aggestam and True (2020) identified ways of comparative FFP analysis including reckoning with the transnational variations in implementation and analysing the discourses surrounding the pro-gender norms in diverse contexts.[37]

Genealogical Background- Forming the International Framework

Genealogically, the gender focus of foreign policy corresponds with the global gender awareness manifested through international organisational platforms. Originating from the United Nations Decade for Women between 1975 and 1985, the gender agenda attained global momentum. Consequently, in 1979, the UNGA adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and in 1995 the fourth World Conference on Women culminated in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Gender equality also found its place in the Millennium Development Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals. In 2000, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS). The WPS agenda was further expanded with the inclusion of sexual violence in conflicts in 2019 with UNSC Resolution 2467. In 2015, the UN established a gender-specific goal (SDG-5) on Gender Equality within the SDGs making it a global agenda with a renewed emphasis on gender mainstreaming. While gender mainstreaming as a policy approach has long sought to address the differential needs between men and women, contemporary times seek greater engagement with the notions of inclusivity and intersectionality.

Against the backdrop of this international framework, multiple National Actions Plans were implemented by the European states to expand their WPS purview in foreign policy. Within European Union too, there has been growing gender consciousness with the Council of Europe highlighting the significance of gender mainstreaming through the EU's Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality (2016-2019) followed by the gender equality Strategy (2020-2025). The commission's 2020 Gender Action Plan promotes a gender perspective in the EU's external relations. On 01 July 2021, the Global Partner Network for Feminist Foreign

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[33] L. Thompson et. al. *Toward a Feminist Foreign Policy in the United States*, (Washington, D. C.: ICRW, 2020), 4.

[34] L. Thompson, *Feminist Foreign Policy: A Framework*. (Washington, D. C.: ICRW, 2020), 3.

[35] Ibid., 5.

[36] J. Cheung et. al. *Practicing Feminist Foreign Policy in the Everyday: A Toolkit*, (Berlin: Internationale Frauenliga für Frieden und Freiheit Deutschland, November 2021).

[37] Karin Aggestam and Jacquie True. "Gendering Foreign Policy: A Comparative Framework for Analysis", *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 2020, 16 (2):143–162.

Policy was launched at the behest of FFP enthusiast governments together with civil society organisations.[38]

The European FFP Framework: Implementation and Lacuna

Until now, the European FFP framework includes countries such as Sweden (2014), Luxemburg (2018), France (2019), and Germany (2021). In 2022, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed its interest in developing an FFP framework for the country, though it is at a nascent stage of the policy framework. Within Europe, Sweden pioneered FFP developing its framework in 2014 under Foreign Minister Margot Wallström. The Swedish government aimed to integrate the gender perspective into its foreign policy agenda within the contours of its FFP framework which is intersectional and transformative. Its FFP primarily emphasises Rights, Representation, and Resources and these are characterised by the explicit objectives of human rights, peacebuilding, and political participation which are reflected in the country's "strong institutionalisation, manifested in various organisational entities and objectives."[29] Compared to Sweden, FFP in other European countries is at best in its gestation stage, less developed, and feebly institutionalised.

However, in November 2022, the newly elected far-right government of Ulf Kristersson in Sweden announced revoking FFP under the pretext of the 'feminist' labelling potentially jeopardising the Swedish 'international' agenda.[40] While this poses a greater threat to the policy amalgamation between the 'feminist' and 'foreign policy' streams, the Swedish FFP framework can serve as an interpretative reference point for the germination and dissemination of ideas in this field. However, it is hoped that as long as the core of promoting gender equality remains unhitched, the groundwork of Swedish FP cannot be easily undone.[41]

Notwithstanding these latest developments, the effectiveness of the Swedish FFP framework can be assessed based on three essential parameters, namely context sensitivity, transformative potential, and horizontal incongruence. Even whilst the fundamental question remains on what kind of FFP we envisage, other equally important questions are whether it is feasible or even desirable to implement a comprehensive universally applicable FFP framework.

Despite its strong institutional characteristic, Sweden's research-reporting and impact analysis mechanisms are comparatively weak. There is a clear disconnect between domain expertise and socially motivated local knowledge discourses. In fact, the Swedish gender approach is predominantly characterised to be binary and cis-centred and hence, lesser inclusive when it comes to a multidimensional understanding of gender. Luxembourg and Germany, on the other hand, have a broader concept of gender from an inclusivity perspective.[42] For instance, the German Foreign Office has expanded the concept by

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[38] L. Thompson et. al. *Defining Feminist Foreign Policy: A 2021 Update*, (Washington, D. C.: ICRW, 2021).

[39] Claudia Zilla. "Feminist Foreign Policy: Concepts, Core Components, and Controversies", *SWP Comment,* C 48, 2022 Accessed 25 November 2022, URL: https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/publication/feminist-foreign-policy#:~:text=A%20succession%20of%20states%20in,Germany%20followed%20suit%20in%202021.

[40] *The Guardian.* "Swedish government scraps country's pioneering 'feminist foreign policy'", 18 October 2022. Accessed on 22 December 2022. URL: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/18/swedish-government-scraps-countrys-pioneering-feminist-foreign-policy (Accessed on 22 December 2022)

[41] Rachel A. George. "Sweden's Feminist Foreign Policy Can't Be Undone", *Foreign Policy*, 18 November 2022, Accessed on 22 December 2022. URL: https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/11/18/sweden-feminist-foreign-policy- billstrom-gender-equality/

[42] Zilla. "Feminist Foreign Policy."

introducing a D (for diversity) alongside Rights, Representation, and Resources. The Netherlands has also proposed to implement an FFP that is inclusive of other genders and sensitive to LGBTQIA+. In this regard, recent social discourses surrounding the queer movement overlap the FFP framework with feminism being considered a natural ally to the LGBTQIA+ movement.

At the same time, the existing FFP initiatives notwithstanding their repeated iteration fail to comprehensively operationalise intersectionality. Despite taking cognizance of the experiential realities, the divergent gender interests fail to deliver policy coherence. From the postcolonial feminist perspective, the usage of FFP as a strategic narrative enhancing the global power hierarchies among the states in the guise of Western feminist values is also noteworthy.[43] [44] Thus, FFP's explicit strive to impose homogenous gender equality may herald the perils of context obliviousness. This may often become a misplaced universalisation of gender equality exerting feminist imperialistic traits. Despite transformative aspirations, the inadequacy of the existing FFP framework is captured in its reformist approach enamoured within the neoliberal economic order.[45] The discursive dimensions of the Swedish FFP swing between an essentialist Western discourse and a transformative intersectional discourse.[46] It operates on two prime matrices - the positionality of the policymaker and the perspective on gender.[47] In a dominant bureaucratic set-up like Sweden's, a strict gender mainstreaming paradigm entails more subject expertise and delimiting gender into the category of women. Thus, this may tilt more towards essentialisation than advocating transformation for which FFP needs to be seen both as working with local knowledge and catering to intersectionality. If FFP fails to capture these two succinctly, the policy implications for the same may at best be translated as cursory and superficial. While the values pertaining to FFP cater to the high ideals of gender equality, at best FFP remains limited in being relegated to a norm-based policy framework.[48]

Keeping the 3Rs in mind, Sweden maintains internal implementation coherence in terms of peacebuilding approaches, rights discourses, political participation, and budgeting,[49] while the country's horizontal incoherence is glaring, especially when it comes to arms export policy.[50] For example, Sweden continues to supply arms to Saudi Arabia which end up being used in the Yemen civil war, as evidenced by the controversy surrounding it in 2015. On the other hand, in 2018, Sweden became a major peace broker between foreign minister Khaled al-Yamani of the Hadi government in Yemen and the Houthis' senior representative Mohammed Abdelsalam, eventually culminating in the Stockholm Agreement. This Swedish

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[43] Columba Achilleos-Sarll. "Reconceptualising Foreign Policy as Gendered, Sexualised and Racialised: Towards a Postcolonial Feminist Foreign Policy (Analysis)", *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 2018, 19 (1): 34- 49.

[44] Ekatherina Zhukova. "Postcolonial Logic and Silences in Strategic Narratives: Sweden's Feminist Foreign Policy in Conflict-Affected States", *Global Society*, 2021, 37 (1): 1-22.

[45] J. Thomson. "What's Feminist about Feminist Foreign Policy? Sweden's and Canada's Foreign Policy Agendas," *International Studies Perspectives*, 2020, 21 (4): 424–437.

[46] Mia-Lie Nylund et. al. "The Transformative Potential of Feminist Foreign Policy: The Case of Sweden", *Journal of Women, Politics, and Policy,* 2022. URL: https://doi.org/10.1080/1554477X.2022.2113662

[47] Ibid.

[48] Malena Rosén Sundström et. al."Spreading a norm-based policy? Sweden's Feminist Foreign Policy in international media", *Comparative Politics*, 2021, 27 (4): 439-460. https://doi.org/10.1080/13569775.2021.1902629

[49] Thompson et. al. *Defining Feminist Foreign Policy.*

[50] Karin Aggestam et. al. Theorising feminist foreign policy. *International Relations*, 2019, 33 (1), 23–39. https://doi.org/10.1177/0047117818811892

policy commitment to peace falls short in the face of incidents such as in 2017 when the biggest Swedish arms manufacturer Saab opened its office in Abu Dhabi with UAE also being caught in the Yemeni civil war. Saab's annual arms sales have, in fact, gone up (to rank 34 in 2021 from rank 38 in 2020).[51] While the Swedish figure is nowhere comparable to other Western countries like the US or the UK, they, unlike Sweden, do not make a "feminist" commitment. Sweden and Germany are the only countries with an FFP framework to have featured in the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) top 100 arms sales list for the last decade.

Another incongruence is in the country's anti-immigration sentiments, especially in the face of rising right-wing, which cannot be discussed in a silo. With 'the rise of illiberalism' becoming a reality in many Western countries,[52] this essentially formulates a significant part of the Swedish social identity. It is derived from a brand of Western feminism that is hostile towards the 'other' including non-whites, Muslims, and other immigrants. While feminist values would require to be more receptive and human-centric in their approach towards immigration policies, those values are incongruent with Swedish social values. While Sweden has maintained an efficient social welfare mechanism, currently immigrants are being blamed for putting it at stake by financially straining Sweden.[53] Hence, it makes perfect sense for the current Swedish right-wing government to scrap 'feminist' from its foreign policy to give air to this argument.

Studies suggest that "a policy promotion effort has to be perceived as legitimate, coherent and salient by target populations in order to be effective."[54] Unfortunately, some of the biggest challenges that FFP faces today reside in this incongruity of the policy approach, an incongruity that stems from the deep-seated prejudices against feminism and its connotations, especially prominent through the media reportage.[55] This incongruity also comes from a neo-liberal commercial order that feeds on the traditional notions of security.

Conclusion
This article engages conceptually with the idea of 'feminism' and its connotations in foreign policy analysis through a European secondary literature-based case study. It examines the existing critique against dominant foreign policy inclinations followed by a feminist theoretical analysis in IR and engages in understanding and analysing the tenets of FFP in the context of Europe. While feminism needs to be celebrated on its own merits, FFP seeks a holistic approach to making it multi-dimensional and context-sensitive.

Often questions are evoked over the feasibility of the FFP framework. In other words, are not 'feminist' and 'foreign policy' oxymorons? It seems more so because both are grounded at different levels of analysis. While foreign policy analysis would often acknowledge the arguments for gender equality, it would aim at remaining sanitised and immune to gender

[51] SIPRI (n. d), SIPRI Arms Industry Database, *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute*, Accessed on 22 December 2022, URL: https://www.sipri.org/databases/armsindustry (Accessed on 22 December 2022)

[52] Thomas J. Main. *The Rise of Illiberalism,* (Massachusetts: The Brookings Institution, 2021).

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[54] Sundström et. al."Spreading a norm-based policy?".

[55] Ibid.

considerations when it comes to national interests. Even if not the best, FFP at least encourages dialogues between these two domains, traditionally known to be at loggerheads with each other. Thus, while discussing the inherent challenges that the framework faces, one needs to highlight their potential too. Especially, when the world is witnessing multiple ongoing wars, human rights violations, the rise of right-wing extremism and most importantly, the ongoing climate crises, it is imperative that countries take cognizance of the civil society demands in order to attain sustainable solutions in these areas.

In order to escape a structurally homologized and stringent discourse on FP, the paper, therefore, proposes a critical theoretical engagement of FP with the elements of human-centrism and post-normativism. And this critical FP engagement is only realisable with a policy implementation approach towards an adequate idea-interest marriage.[56] So far as ideas are concerned, they can be theoretically derived and normatively explored and similarly, interests can be driven and defined in a human-centric and gender-sensitive manner by prioritising humans. Notwithstanding the state-centric interests, an adequate bend of it with even that of ideas requires considerable inter-subjective understanding both at the level of individual and domestic as well as international. Finally, the paper advocates the inclusion of the notion of empathy as a political component in order to truly advocate for 'feminism' in 'foreign policy.'

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