

*Practicing Feminist  
Foreign Policy in the  
Everyday: A Toolkit*

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## **IMPRESSUM**

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# Glossary

## **FEMINISM(S)**

Various understandings and interpretations of feminism exist and we do not wish to elevate one over the other, or promote one all-encompassing concept of feminism. WILPF Germany understands feminism as a movement, form of activism and site of critical inquiry for social justice and gender equality. Our understanding of feminism questions patriarchal power structures and tackles gender inequality and its intersection with other forms of oppression based on race, class, sexuality and ability. We wish to establish a feminist vision of peace built on justice and equity.

## **BIPOC**

Black, Indigenous, People of Color. The acronym was created in order to produce a more inclusive term for racially marginalized groups in Western societies. In this paper we use BIPOC to refer to racial marginality and racially marginalised groups, while being aware of the limitations of the term. BIPOC cannot be understood as a homogenous group, nor should it represent the hierarchical positioning of marginalised groups, individuals and peoples. We also see the need to problematize the dichotomy of white versus BIPOC that is expressed through the term, as well as the troublesome repetition of “POC” referring to all non-black and indigenous peoples.

## **WOMEN**

When using “woman” and “women” we refer to any person(s) who consider(s) themselves as such. We oppose a strict gender binary understanding of “man vs. woman” and include non-binary person(s) in our analysis.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

CFFP	Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy
GWI	Gunda-Werner-Institut
ICRW	International Centre for Research on Women
IWDA	International Women’s Development Agency
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
TTIP	Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
WILPF	Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom

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# *A Feminist Vision, Background and Approach*

Feminist perspectives and voices in international politics on issues relating to foreign policy, international security and war are growing louder as a source and site of discursive political action and policy transformation. Emerging from women's rights and peace movements around the globe, feminism has come to occupy an important position within academic and political spaces and has provided a powerful mode and source of intervention against everyday forms of discrimination that go by unnoticed. This has been bolstered by the cultural and social acceptance, acknowledgement and promotion of feminism as a politically charged response to the problematic modes of thinking and acting that continue to regulate society today. The socio-cultural and political momentum surrounding feminism, gender equality and women's rights has allowed for countries such as Sweden (2014), Canada (2017), France (2018), Luxembourg (2019), Mexico (2020), Spain (2021) and Libya (2021)<sup>1</sup> to adopt different forms of feminist foreign policy.

The influx of thoughtful and critical perspectives on the concept and

approach has opened up new opportunities to encourage alternative perspectives and understandings of feminist foreign policy. Constructing and identifying a definition of feminist foreign policy is at the centre of discussions between feminist civil society organisations (i.e. WILPF, CFFP, IWDA, ICRW, GWI), academic researchers<sup>2</sup>, political practitioners and global leaders. We understand foreign policy broadly as the cooperation, interactions and relations between states, international and regional institutions, as well as transnational and civil society organisations. However, despite this framing foreign policy is not a dislocated political space. Rather, it is composed of everyday actions, all of which have an impact on the day-to-day lived realities of individuals around the world. From women working on fruit and vegetable plantations relying on favourable international trade regulations, to the gendered work of military wives located on bases around the world – the **private** is the public and the **personal** is the political<sup>3</sup>. Furthermore, foreign policy itself is an **everyday** practice brought into existence through the daily decisions, discus-

sions and concrete actions made within foreign ministries, embassies, the UN and regional assemblies, diplomatic meetings and policy adoptions. Drawing on the work of feminist civil society organisations, academia and existing policy practices, we share the consensus that patriarchal hierarchies are inherent and endemic to all these practices of foreign policy. Thus, a major restructuring and re-thinking of these practices is needed<sup>4</sup>. The framework and toolkit proposed in the following discussion is part of a growing movement to challenge and question traditional foreign policy approaches.

The inclusion of gender equality into international political dialogues was born from a legacy of struggle and resistance. Occupying a marginalised position, women have been historically excluded from foreign policy and international decision-making processes. Almost everywhere in the world women, alongside and in unison with excluded and 'vulnerable' individuals and groups, have not been able to participate in the making of important political, economic and/or cultural decisions. Their human rights

<sup>1</sup> Lyric Thompson, Spogmay Ahmed and Tanya Khokhar, "Defining Feminist Foreign Policy: A 2021 Update", International Center for Research on Women, September 2021, <https://www.icrw.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Defining-Feminist-Foreign-Policy-2021-Update.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> See below in footnote 6 for a selection of academic discussions on the topic

<sup>3</sup> Cynthia Enloe, "Bananas, Beaches, Bases" (2014).

<sup>4</sup> Karin Aggestam, Jacqui True, "Political leadership and gendered multilevel games in foreign policy" (2021).

have been neglected in practices of international politics through war, militarized violence, competitive arms trade and the absence of conflict transformation tools in diplomacy<sup>5</sup>. It is from this subordinate standpoint that feminist criticism has emerged as a powerful mode of contestation and as a source of progress in politics. Translating feminism into foreign policy is a challenging task that is restricted and complicated by the resilience of patriarchal structures, differing social and cultural contexts and varied feminist interpretations. Consequently, feminist approaches to foreign policy issues should not be limited to a universal “one-size-fits-all” definition. Rather, we propose that feminist foreign policies must be carefully examined and reviewed according to the needs and context of different societies. Therefore, differences should be included in the process, not as an obstacle to international standards and policy regulation, but as a source and catalyst of policy innovation and cultural awareness. To change traditional understandings and practices of foreign policy, our aim is not to produce a singular vision of a feminist foreign policy, but to construct an inclusive and intersectionally guided toolkit that addresses everyday practices to mobilise the adoption of diverse and sustainable feminist foreign policies.

In pursuing the transformative potential of feminism in international politics, we cannot lose sight of the overall

goal of a feminist vision for peace and international politics: the elimination of global injustice and inequality, the abolition of the military, and the creation of a peaceful and safe world for all peoples. This is the starting point of the toolkit and the ultimate goal of our feminist approach. However, given the current political climate, meaningful change cannot occur at once, rather, it accumulates over time occurring gradually and incrementally. Hence, the changes and practices we make every day have the greatest impact in facilitating sustainable and substantive change. This toolkit serves as a guide for, yet is not exclusive to, policy makers and practitioners when thinking about the practical implementation of policies in different fields of foreign policy and international cooperation. It is derived from perpetual discussions on the practical implementation of feminist approaches to foreign policy from feminist activists and scholars of the German section of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom.

The Toolkit presented here is not a collection of legal frameworks or policy instruments, nor is it a set of specific recommendations on how to facilitate legal change or how to write a policy proposal. Rather, it serves to inspire the creation of feminist-inspired policy-making that can be filled by a variety of voices, experiences and actors. This does not mean that we are presenting a hollow shell, instead it is our aim to bring forward a

value-based framework to change mindsets and enable a feminist approach to foreign policy that works to support different contexts. Our toolkit begins by outlining five core values that function as a guide instead of prescribing a feminist foreign policy. It then reviews relevant policy fields and presents a framework on how the proposed core values can be implemented. Finally, it provides a set of practical guiding questions – what we propose as a checklist for all foreign policy actors – that can be used to frame and assist in everyday practices of policy and decision making.

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<sup>5</sup> J. Ann Tickner. *Gendering World Politics*. (2001): 22.

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## *From Definitions to Values – An Inclusive and Context Driven Approach*

Critiques and studies of feminist foreign policy have often focused on the normative and practical constitution of the approach. Consequently, much of the discussion surrounding feminist foreign policy has been centred on: (1) defining what a feminist foreign policy is<sup>6</sup>; and (2) assessing the effectiveness of current feminist foreign policy practices and strategies<sup>7</sup>. Although understanding what a feminist foreign policy is and what it should include are important questions, fixating on the production of a universally acceptable and concrete definition of a feminist foreign policy fails to consider the different and varied political realities that shape our global landscape. This not only functions to homogenise the needs of different societies, communities and individuals; but it also works to produce a rigid policy definition that is devoid of practical guidance and removed from everyday acts of discrimination and exclusion.

The desire to concretely define feminist foreign policy is connected to international regulatory practices and systems of standardisation. This politically cognitive behaviour is the product of enduring colonial legacies and histories of imperialism that continue to regulate political behaviour and action today. Maintaining a global threshold, an actionable checklist and a quantifiable apparatus to measure processes and outcomes, enables states, institutions and organisations to demonstrate and highlight their progress and adherence to an instrument and/or policy framework. However, definitions are only productive when the terms, principles and goals outlined in a policy are not overly ambiguous, nor overly rigid. Navigating this fine line between generating a flexible yet accountable approach is a challenging task that requires re-thinking the ways in which we approach policy making.

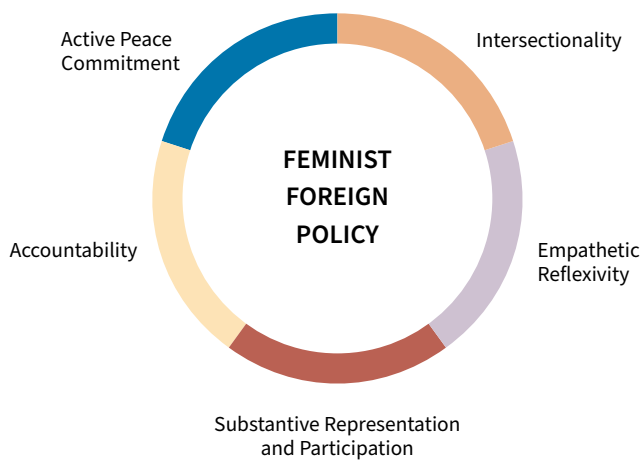
Translating feminism into foreign policy has raised questions as to what concept of feminism is being mobilised and arguably “co-opted” to produce a feminist foreign policy<sup>8</sup>. Feminism as a contested concept is subject to a variety of meanings and interpretations. Questioning **feminism** – what it means and how it is used – has thus become an important line of inquiry in the production and analysis of feminist foreign policies. Although we do not ascribe to a rigid and traditional definition of feminist foreign policy – as a normative framework, apparatus or instrument – we do advocate for different feminist approaches that are informed by and built on legacies of transnational activism, critical theory, everyday practices and solidarity. Consequently, we propose initiating feminist foreign policies from a value-based and context specific standpoint. Our vision for feminist foreign policies is built on a set of Five Core Values:

<sup>6</sup> See Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy (Feminist Foreign Policy – CFFP); Government Office of Sweden (Feminist Foreign Policy); Heinrich Böll Stiftung Warschau (<https://pl.boell.org/pl/2021/02/23/czy-kobiety-uratuja-swiat-feministyczna-polityka-zagraniczna>); IWDA Feminist Foreign Policy: Key Principles & Accountability Mechanisms; ICRW (Defining Feminist Foreign Policy); ICRW (Coalition for a Feminist Foreign Policy in the U.S.); Jennifer Thompson, “What’s Feminist About Feminist Foreign Policy? Sweden’s and Canada’s Foreign Policy Agendas” (2020); Karin Aggestam, Annika Bergman Rosamond and Annica Kronsell, “Theorising Feminist Foreign Policy” (2019); Annika Bergman Rosamond, “Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy and “Gender Cosmopolitanism” (2020); Victoria Scheyer and Marina Kumskova, “Feminist Foreign Policy: A Fine Line between ‘Adding Women’ and Pursuing a Feminist Agenda” (2019); Columba Achilleos-Sarll, “Reconceptualising Feminist Foreign Policy as Gendered, Sexualised and Racialised: Towards a Postcolonial Feminist Foreign Policy (Analysis)” (2018); and more.

<sup>7</sup> See Laura Parisi, “Canada’s New Feminist International Assistance Policy: Business as Usual? (2020); Karin Aggestam and Annika Bergman Rosamond, “Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy in the Making: ethics, politics, and gender (2016); Marlena Rosén Sundström and Ole Elgström, “Praise or Critique? Sweden’s Feminist Foreign Policy in the Eyes of its Fellow EU Members?” (2020); Fiona Robinson, “A Feminist Foreign Policy for Canada by 2042? Prospects, Possibilities and Pitfalls” (2017); and more.

<sup>8</sup> Jennifer Thompson, “What’s Feminist About Feminist Foreign Policy? Sweden’s and Canada’s Foreign Policy Agendas” (2020).

(1) Intersectionality, (2) Empathetic Reflexivity, (3) Substantive Representation and Participation, (4) Accountability and (5) Active Peace Commitment. These values are inter-related and work together in unison to guarantee a system of ethical<sup>9</sup> checks and balances across all fields of foreign policy decision making and action.



**Fig 1. Five Core Values of Feminist Foreign Policy**

We identify these values as intrinsic to the formulation of a feminist and ethical foreign policy agenda. By approaching feminist foreign policy from a value-based standpoint we have generated an actionable toolkit and guide for state and non-state actors to think **laterally** as opposed to **hierarchically** about foreign policy. This breaks from the traditional status quo of international relations and policy making which is centred around capitalist and colonial power relations. Power dynamics are complex and contingent on unequal hierarchies. Historically, dominant groups within society have gained and maintained power through the disempowerment and subordination of marginalised communities and peoples<sup>10</sup>. Traditional foreign policy approaches ensure the preservation of these hierarchies by placing national, cultural and societal security

at the core of international politics. By departing from this unequal and exclusionary approach we can work to transform the problematic core of mainstream foreign policy through the promotion of a feminist approach. This is a contextually driven practice that seeks to renegotiate traditional power dynamics through a grounded and realistic re-imagining of foreign policy.

### 2.1 INTERSECTIONALITY

Intersectionality is a concept, an analytic tool and praxis originating from Black feminist thought.<sup>11</sup> It “investigates how intersecting power relations influence social relations across diverse societies as well as individual experiences in everyday life”. This means acknowledging and addressing multiple and various forms of discrimination and how they operate in relation to one another to impact an individual or group’s political and social positioning within a domestic and foreign context. Rather than viewing social and political categories of race, gender, sexuality, class, nationality, ability, ethnicity, age, etc. as mutually exclusive, intersectionality seeks to examine how these social positionings are interrelated and co-constituted. Including intersectionality into foreign policy is crucial to disrupting traditional modes and expressions of power (e.g. the order and hierarchy of international institutions, the construction of international law and treaties, and the exclusionary nature of diplomatic interactions). By acknowledging the way power is held and distributed amongst individuals and communities we are better able to transform the ways in which discrimination operates and is compounded by multiple sites and sources of marginalisation. This is not the same as “diversity” or “inclusion”, nor is it solely focused on the intersection between race and gender; rather, intersectionality recognises “multiple interlocking identities” as defined by “relative socio cultural power and privilege that shapes people’s individual and collective identities and experiences”.<sup>12</sup>

### 2.2 EMPATHETIC REFLEXIVITY

Reflexivity is a self-induced practice that requires individuals, state actors and organisations to adopt a critical and

<sup>11</sup> Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics” (1989); Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge, “Intersectionality” (2020).

<sup>12</sup> Sam E. Morton, Judyannet Muchiri and Liam Swiss, “Which feminism(s)? For whom? Intersectionality in Canada’s Feminist International Assistance Policy” (2020); Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics” (1989) p. 335.

ethical approach to assessing their own position within existing power relations. Empathetic reflexivity requires that those in a position of power must not only consider the impact of their actions and historical position in relation to others, but they must also be attentive and responsive to the needs of those around them. In doing so, political actors are no longer removed from the subject matter under question, rather, they become personally invested and accountable to the situation, community, and people. Within a foreign policy context, empathetic reflexivity refers to the need for policy makers and non-state actors to address their own position, historical relationship and political investments in the policies being made. This locates the policy maker “in the same critical plane as the subject matter”<sup>13</sup>. Thus self-critique and introspection are necessary steps that lead towards the production of social transformation and policy innovation.

### **2.3 SUBSTANTIVE REPRESENTATION AND PARTICIPATION**

Representation has remained a key focus within existing practices of gender equality policy at an international and domestic level, and has also been used as a tool to increase the visibility and power of marginalised peoples and communities more broadly. Although quantitative and formative/descriptive representation (e.g. quotas) plays a crucial

role in increasing representation, additional measures are required to generate more substantial inclusion. At present, the ways in which representation has been mobilised to counteract intersectional inequality has only worked to superficially address the lack of diverse representation across all levels and fields of policy making<sup>14</sup>. The use of quotas to promote marginalised voices through an additive approach does not guarantee that minority rights are being advocated for, nor does it shift dominant views and performances of politics. Substantive representation – the inclusion of individuals and peoples advocating for equality from diverse backgrounds, across all policy fields and in prominent leadership positions – requires that intersectional equality is viewed as central to all political discussions and actions made.

### **2.4 ACCOUNTABILITY**

Although policies often have accountability measures in place (measuring outcomes, evaluation and monitoring and follow-up reports), accountability within the context of the Five Core Values refers to the need for state, non-state actors and institutions to be accountable to the policy beneficiaries. Thus, the onus falls on foreign policy makers and implementation partners to show a sense of responsibility and duty of care<sup>15</sup> not only to state institutions and financial investors, but to the communities and individuals that the policies are

designed to assist. This is connected to **Core Value 2 Empathetic Reflexivity** and the overarching need for states and organisations to produce contextually driven policies that adequately respond to the particularities of individual socio-political and cultural environments. It also requires that states are conscious of their domestic policy failings in relation to their international pursuits. Consequently, the ethical dimension of feminist foreign policy should not be limited to international politics, rather, it should inspire a reflexive and accountable approach domestically as well.

### **2.5 ACTIVE PEACE COMMITMENT**

Traditional approaches to foreign policy are centred around the need for international and domestic security<sup>16</sup> which is guaranteed and maintained through the use of national armed forces and increased militarisation. Feminists have long since advocated for demilitarisation, mediation and the use of non-violent mechanisms in the promotion of gender-sensitive human security. However, the discourse on security needs to shift from focusing on what can be done within existing militarised frameworks in the name of national/international security, to abolishing all structured methods of violence and sources of insecurity, namely the military. This process can be supported through the use of a positive peace approach<sup>17</sup>. Positive peace refers to “a thriving

<sup>13</sup> Sandra Harding, “Feminism and Methodology” (1987): 8.

<sup>14</sup> Karen Celis, Sarah Childs, Johanna Kantola & Mona Lee Krook, “Rethinking Women’s Substantive Representation” (2008).

<sup>15</sup> Fiona Robinson, “Feminist Foreign Policy as Ethical Foreign Policy? A Care Ethics Perspective” (2021.)

<sup>16</sup> Soumita Basu, Paul Kirby and Laura J. Shepherd, “Women, Peace and Security: A Critical Cartography (2020).

<sup>17</sup> Paul Kirby and Laura Shepherd, “The futures past of the Women, Peace and Security agenda” (2016).



peace, one that is collaborative, complex and inclusive, and allows the integration of human society”.<sup>18</sup> Such an approach would go beyond the absence of war or violence and include the promotion of social justice and well-being as valuable outcomes. This requires an active commitment to **peace by peaceful means** which is based on reconciliation, empathetic dialogues, equality and equity, as well as including justice and diplomacy in conflict resolution.

### **A Work in Progress: Moving Feminist Foreign Policy Forward**

At present there are a number of countries that have adopted some form of explicit feminist foreign policy: Sweden (Feminist Foreign Policy (2014)<sup>19</sup>); Canada (Feminist International Assistance Policy (2017)<sup>20</sup>); France (Feminist Diplomacy (2018)<sup>21</sup>); Luxembourg (Feminist Foreign Policy (2019)<sup>22</sup>); Mexico (Feminist Foreign Policy (2020)<sup>23</sup>); Spain (Feminist Foreign Policy (2021)<sup>24</sup>); and Libya (Feminist Foreign Policy (2021)<sup>25</sup>). However, despite showing a commitment to a feminist approach, these trailblazers have often maintained domestic and foreign policy approaches that undermine their feminist initiatives<sup>26</sup>, thereby keeping traditional foreign policy structures largely intact. There is a need to better

integrate feminist practices into the everyday work of political actors, institutions, organisations and governments, and there is work to be done by the international community at large to combat unequal and hierarchical global power structures. Countries that explicitly commit themselves to feminist foreign policy are by no means exempt from this responsibility, rather, the onus falls upon them to guide the way forward and to further push the limits of traditional foreign policy making.

As emphasised throughout this toolkit, feminist foreign policy manifests in and should be informed by the everyday. Discrimination, prejudice and violence are everyday occurrences entrenched in the systems, structures, and modes of political thinking and action that take place day-to-day across a wide range of issues and policy areas reproducing inequality and oppression in the international system. Feminist foreign policies are dynamic and subject to further development, constant improvement, and a willingness to do better and be better. Therefore, by approaching feminist foreign policy from a value-centred perspective, and in relation to the everyday lived realities of individuals around the world, in their respective contexts, we can work collabora-

tively to generate a widespread feminist (re)vision of international politics. This requires adopting a feminist perspective across **all** areas of foreign policy.

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<sup>18</sup> Grewal, B. S. and Galtung, J., 'Positive and negative peace', *School of Social Science: Auckland University of Technology*, vol. 30 (Aug. 2003), pp. 23–26; Gary Milante "Peace and Development" (2017).

<sup>19</sup> Government Offices of Sweden, "Handbook on Feminist Foreign Policy" (2018).

<sup>20</sup> Government of Canada, "Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy" (2017).

<sup>21</sup> Ministère de L'Europe et des Affaires Étrangères, "Feminist Diplomacy" (2018).

<sup>22</sup> Le Gouvernement du Grande-Duché de Luxembourg Ministère des Affaires étrangères et européennes, "Foreign Policy Address" (2019).

<sup>23</sup> Gobierno de México Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, "Conceptualizing Feminist Foreign Policy: Notes for Mexico" (2020).

<sup>24</sup> Gobierno de España Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, "Spain's Feminist Foreign Policy: Promoting Gender Equality in Spain's External Action" (2021).

<sup>25</sup> ICRW, "Defining Feminist Foreign Policy: A 2021 Update (2021).

<sup>26</sup> Laura Parisi. "Canada's New Feminist International Assistance Policy: Business as Usual? (2020); Karin Aggestam and Annika Bergman Rosamond, "Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy in the Making: ethics, politics, and gender (2016).

3

## *What Does This Mean for Different Fields of Foreign Policy?*

### **What fields of external action are relevant for feminist foreign policy?**

The answer is simple: all of them. To make tangible the cross-cutting relevance of feminist foreign policy, the following section will apply the toolkit to a selection of (foreign) policy fields. Feminist practice in foreign policy must be understood as a system-wide approach that is not simply added to existing or unitary policy frameworks, but instead shifts the approach and focus of foreign policy towards a distinctive feminist “way of doing things” consistent with the Five Core Values.

Writing this toolkit, we are aware of the limitations of implementing FFP within the current geopolitical environment and mindset. Shaping a feminist foreign policy – and implementing it – takes time. Our aim is therefore to show feminist ways forward in different foreign policy fields, in addition to conveying the message that a feminist foreign policy lens should be **desired, and consequently integrated**, in all areas of politics. We chose to provide insights into different

foreign policy fields which are considered important foreign policy portfolios or priorities by ministries of foreign affairs across the world, yet remain anchored in traditional, patriarchal structuring mechanisms. The Five Core Values guide our approach to practicing feminism within foreign policy structures and practice. It is our aim to propose a framework for a more ethical approach to foreign policy that can ultimately lead towards a feminist vision (see p. 4). The implementation of a feminist foreign policy requires commitment and a step-by-step approach.

Research suggests that the implementation of a feminist agenda often relies on political will by individual decision makers in government (IWDA report 2021), indicating the importance of an approach that looks at specific portfolios to implement change. This allows individual actors as well as institutions shaping policies to pursue a distinctive feminist agenda. We try to accommodate these political realities by offering a transformative approach that recog-

nizes the importance of incremental, yet substantive steps from a feminist standpoint.

### **3.1 FEMINIST DIPLOMACY IN PRACTICE**

#### **Who is represented in/through diplomatic services? Who has access to international bargaining processes? Who sets the agenda of global diplomacy?**

In theory, diplomacy can be viewed as a nonviolent tool for governments and state actors to work towards understanding, cooperation, reconciliation and, ultimately, peace. In practice diplomacy often becomes “an area of state policy that is intensely hierarchical, still builds on colonial power structures”<sup>27</sup> where women and other marginalized groups are underrepresented and left out of negotiations and processes<sup>28</sup>. Despite increasing efforts to include non-state actors into diplomatic negotiations, the truth is that today’s diplomacy remains state-centric<sup>29</sup>. The misrepresentation of women in active diplomatic service has been tackled in many ministries of foreign affairs, and different diplo-

<sup>27</sup> Sam Okoth Opondo. “Diplomacy and the Colonial Encounter”. In: Constantinou (eds) *The SAGE handbook of diplomacy* (2016).

<sup>28</sup> Karin Aggestam, Ann E. Towns, “Gendering Diplomacy and International Negotiation” (2018).

<sup>29</sup> Nadine Ansorg, Toni Haastrup, Katharine A. M. Wright. “Foreign Policy and Diplomacy: Feminist Interventions” (2021) in Nadine Ansorg, Toni Haastrup, Katharine A. M. Wright (eds.). *Routledge Handbook of Feminist Peace Research*.

matic services have paid lip service to “advocating gender equality in international forums”<sup>30</sup>. Feminist diplomacy, however, should entail much more than the representation of (presumably already privileged) women in the ranks of diplomats. Simply changing the players does not change the game. Instead, the conduct of diplomacy must shift from a statist national security mindset towards a human-centered, context-specific and value-driven approach that breaks gendered and racialized hierarchies in the way it is facilitated.

### **A Feminist Way Forward for Diplomacy**

The current negotiations between Germany and Namibia give a good example to showcase the possible benefits of a feminist practice in diplomacy. After more than a century of silence, the German government officially recognized the Herero and Nama genocide through the hands of German colonizers in the early 20th century in 2015 and issued an official apology in the summer of 2021.

The compensation offer from Germany falls short of the reparations needed to express a sincere and **accountable** approach to past colonial atrocities. The negotiations have been criticised for a lack of **substantive representation, especially of civil society actors**<sup>31</sup>. Substantive representation and participation

mean that diplomatic efforts give space, funds and capacities, especially to groups who have been traditionally located outside of formal diplomacy, so they can participate in diplomatic efforts.

A committed and responsible approach in the reparations for the genocide against Herero/Nama people would have been based on **intersectional** inclusion of negotiating partners and sought out marginalized groups specifically to ensure that compensations – reparations – would benefit these groups the most. Research shows that “narratives of the Ovaherero/Nama genocide often neglect the gendered experiences of women or reduce women’s roles to those of victims and/or nurturers”<sup>32</sup>. The example of the shortcomings in the negotiations with Namibia outlines in various ways the continuing harm done through foreign policy that does not make a strong commitment to act upon the prevailing inequalities arising from one’s own colonial history and legacies, or the masculinist bias present in existing foreign policy practices. Integrating an **empathetically reflexive** approach towards Germany’s own role would help support an empathetic relationship for future and past experiences.

To understand the virtue of diplomacy as a tool for nonviolent cooperation offers a great starting point for an **active peace commitment**. Paired with an ambitious agenda to embrace

gender equality a top priority by, for example, initiating summits, (high level) dialogue and inclusive negotiations, diplomacy can be an effective and important tool for a feminist way forward in foreign policy.

### **3.2 FEMINIST GLOBAL SECURITY IN PRACTICE**

#### **Who gets to define security? And more importantly, who does not?**

Security is central to the discourse on international relations and foreign policy. Traditionally, the security of the state has been the focus whereby peace is defined as the absence of war. This is called negative peace, and its preservation has been guaranteed by military and (traditional) security actors<sup>33</sup>. In the 20th century, international structures such as the UN, the EU and NATO were created – if with very diverging intentions and rationales – to enable cooperation between states and to contain the space for violent (military) attack by different means. However, the composition and leadership structure of pivotal bodies, most importantly the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), are placing crucial decisions on war and peace in the hands of state actors – mainly those in the Global North that own nuclear weapons. Considering that all five permanent UNSC members hold nuclear weapon power, security is defined by the will of the strong, resisting to share it equally among all states in the international system.

<sup>30</sup> French government on “Feminist Diplomacy” <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy/feminist-diplomacy/>.

<sup>31</sup> This criticism has been discussed and reflected on (interview with Esther Muinjangu from June 2, 2021 at die Zeit, <https://www.zeit.de/zett/politik/2021-06/voelkermord-namibia-esther-utjiua-muinjangu-genozid-herero-abkommen>); feature at Deutschlandfunk September 21, 2021 ([https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/versoehnungsabkommen-mit-namibia-deutschland-erkennt.2897.de.html?dram:article\\_id=497979](https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/versoehnungsabkommen-mit-namibia-deutschland-erkennt.2897.de.html?dram:article_id=497979))

<sup>32</sup> Penohole Brock, Ester Muinjangu, “Gender, genocide, and memorialisation in Namibia” (2021) in Gender, Transitional Justice and Memorial Arts.

<sup>33</sup> Johan Galtung. “Violence, Peace, and Peace Research.” (1969)

The **War On Terror** is one example of contemporary security discourse that has primarily been led by Western state perceptions of, and their need for, greater 'security' which the aforementioned structures serve<sup>34</sup>. Consequently, despite the effects of terrorism and counter terrorism attacks (also including effects on the access to dignified livelihoods) measures by western military powers were taken that functioned to further harm populations, ignoring gendered and racialized outcomes such as the destroying of livelihoods of millions of people, rendering them insecure and ignoring their agency.<sup>35</sup> 'States of insecurity'<sup>36</sup> outside the Western periphery have led to ongoing instability in areas defined as sources of threat to the West, often justified with arguments referring to 'culture', underpinned by racism.

Therefore, the question of **who** gets to define security needs to be extended and thought about in terms of **what** these states define as security and **what is excluded from this definition**. The feminist trailblazer Cynthia Enloe has called for feminist curiosity<sup>37</sup> to rethink concepts such as security, stability, violence and crisis beyond the dominating interpretations. This allows researchers and practitioners alike to escape narrow, exclusionary and misdirecting concepts.<sup>38</sup>

### **A Feminist Way Forward for Global Security**

Security is a complex and a feminist issue, especially because the perception of threat is dependent on a variety of rational and emotional factors. This makes the prevalence of **empathetic reflexivity** all the more relevant to reflect on the scope of a crisis and the interventions needed from an **intersectional perspective**. An intersectional perspective is necessary to understand the effects of people's (in) security within established partnerships and the divergent ramifications for different groups. For instance, the EU-Turkey deal of 2016 aiming to regulate migration into the EU is a cooperation agreement with leaders that ignore principles of human rights and violate international law and integrity for certain groups of people, in this case the affected migrants.

Nonviolent actions and the formation and strengthening of pro-peace channels can create mutual trust allowing actors to redefine security as an **active peace process** to be mainstreamed into conflict resolution and transformation. Coupled with an additional layer of reflexivity, policy decisions could be approached through deconstructing bias and thereby avoiding harmful stereotyping of different regions of the world such as Western

Asia (often referred to as the "Middle East") or groups such as "Arabs" which are by no means a homogenous group, however all together negatively perceived in security discourses (particularly since 9/11). Peace discourses entail the deconstruction of perceptions and ascriptions while understanding the harmful nature of securitization and bias on several levels to global security.

To enable a level playing field, **substantive representation** is key. Negotiations in situations of security issues, conflict or reconciliation are a sensitive matter which makes it all the more important to enable a safe space to participate for groups traditionally left out of negotiations. Political economy and technological or military capacity should not define a state's or group's power or political weight on security matters.

Being accountable in terms of the security of people can be measured by looking at the (in)security of women, as this has been identified as an early warning mechanism to conflict<sup>39</sup>. Looking at the effects on women's safety and security and other marginalized people helps assess decisions regarding the practices of security.

<sup>34</sup> Barry Buzan, "Will the 'global war on terrorism' be the new Cold War?" (2006)

<sup>35</sup> Nicola Pratt. "Reconceptualizing Gender, Reinscribing Racial-Sexual Boundaries in International Security: The Case of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on "Women, Peace and Security" 1: Reconceptualizing Gender, Reinscribing Racial-Sexual Boundaries." (2018)

<sup>36</sup> Specifically in reference to the US' answer to global threats, foreign policy advisors have defined specific states that bear threats and allies that can help the US and the West to address these threats; the term refers to a US-centered view on as hostile perceived states and regions <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2006/04/states-of-insecurity/304673/>

<sup>37</sup> Expressed through the question: "Where are the women?"

<sup>38</sup> Cynthia Enloe. "Bananas, Beaches and Bases, Making Feminist Sense of International Politics" (2014):16; See also Valerie M. Hudson, Bonnie Ballif-Spanvill, Mary Caprioli, Chad F. Emmet, "Sex and World Peace" (2014); J. Ann Tickner. "Gendering World Politics" (2001). Agathangelou, A. "From the Colonial to Feminist IR: Feminist IR Studies, the Wider FSS/GPE Research Agenda, and the Questions of Value, Valuation, Security, and Violence." (2017).

<sup>39</sup> Jacqui True. The political economy of violence against women. (2012).

### 3.3 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE JUSTICE IN PRACTICE

#### What makes climate and environmental policy a feminist issue? What are the intersectional impacts of the global climate emergency?

Climate activism has a female face – and in fact women and marginalized people are those most severely affected by the climate crisis<sup>40</sup>. Women are already disproportionately impacted by poverty and their hardship grows with extreme weather conditions due to climate change. This has resulted in “higher workloads for women, occupational hazards indoors and outdoors, psychological and emotional stress, and higher mortality compared to men”<sup>41</sup>. Resisting against lacking climate justice policy and action, this year indigenous groups in Brazil have taken to the streets against reprisals by the police to protest deforestation threatening not only the global climate, but their direct livelihoods and rights<sup>42</sup>.

Nevertheless, even “green” policy does not necessarily equal ethical policy. Conservation policy that is designed to preserve vulnerable ecosystems has been criticised by indigenous groups and BIPOC activists<sup>43</sup>. Conservation policy has led to ambitious plans for the establishment of environmental protection zones but remains ignorant of territorial rights of

indigenous people who have inhabited (and protected) these valuable ecosystems for centuries. There cannot be sustainable development if justice at large is not considered<sup>44</sup>.

#### The Feminist Way Forward for Climate and Environment Policy

In recent months and years, many policies have been treated with a fresh green coat of paint and, given an honest ambition to align with these goals, there is much to celebrate about this trend. However, just because something aims at sustainability in an environmental sense, does not make it equal and fair without discrimination. In fact, environmental and climate policy illustrates the importance of (re)thinking foreign policy and the everyday dimension of policy making and how these interconnect. The recognition of everyday impacts of the climate crisis should be reflected in the representation of voices within strategic planning.

Conservation policy succinctly shows the need for an **intersectional analysis** in identifying how to include those most affected from climate change in policy making and understanding who suffers disproportionately from the (unintended) consequences of unjust policies. Indigenous advocacy groups and activists have long

demanded justice and access to decision making regarding native land and natural reserves<sup>45</sup>. Overall, the environmental movement does not lack advocates and outspoken activists.

**Substantive representation** means to really consider the voices, advocacy groups and public protest for policy making through inclusive consultation and decision-making structures. This includes indigenous voices when their native land is concerned, low-income families when green housing policy is debated or Fridays for Future activists to consult on city traffic plans.

An **empathetically reflexive** approach can lead policy makers towards acknowledging and responding to past (colonial) injustices and their legacies that continue to this day, but also to reflect on the impact of today’s activities and policy decisions for generations to come. This could mean acknowledging the unequal effects and impact of environmental devastation on the global South and on less developed and low-income countries and communities.

**Accountability** is therefore key to acknowledging the role and responsibility all actors play in fighting the global climate emergency for which especially movements like Fridays For Future remain a great partner for monitoring and holding actors accountable.

<sup>40</sup> Ginette Azcona and Antra Bhatt, “Inequality, gender, and sustainable development: measuring feminist progress” (2020).

<sup>41</sup> “Understanding Why Climate Change Impacts Women More Than Men” (March 5, 2020), commentary at <https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/how-climate-change-affects-women/>

<sup>42</sup> Urgent Appeal by The Articulation of Indigenous People From Brazil to the UN (06.07.2021) on the Threat and prevention of demarcations of indigenous lands and approved territories, and the destruction of constitutional rights of indigenous peoples in Brazil [https://apiboficial.org/files/2021/07/Urgent-Appeal\\_Brazil-Draft-Bill-490.pdf](https://apiboficial.org/files/2021/07/Urgent-Appeal_Brazil-Draft-Bill-490.pdf)

<sup>43</sup> “Erster Kongress zur Dekolonialisierung des Naturschutzes schließt mit Forderung nach menschenrechtsbasiertem Ansatz” (September 6, 2021), commentary at <https://survivalinternational.de/nachrichten/12648>; congress webpage at <https://de.ourlandournature.org/>

<sup>44</sup> “Environmental justice is the intersection of both social justice and environmentalism, where the inequity in environmental degradation is also considered.” says activist Leah Thompson: <https://www.thegoodtrade.com/features/environmental-justice>. See also e.g. the Indigenous Youth Declaration for Climate Justice by Seed, Australia’s first Indigenous youth led network: [https://www.seedmob.org.au/indigenous\\_youth\\_declaration](https://www.seedmob.org.au/indigenous_youth_declaration)

<sup>45</sup> If not us then who; “Indigenous demands” <https://ifnotusthenwho.me/about/demands/>

### **3.4 FEMINIST DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION IN PRACTICE**

#### **In which ways is international development cooperation limited by prevailing practices? How do (pre-)existing power dynamics undermine meaningful action and further harmful power hierarchies?**

International development features as a central pillar in foreign policy. As exemplified by Canada and its focused Feminist International Assistance Policy, development has become a key site of feminist intervention. One proclaimed core goal of international development cooperation is the eradication of poverty<sup>46</sup>. This is reflected throughout the programming of activities and approaches to create livelihood and income opportunities (e.g. business creation) for disadvantaged groups and working towards reducing inequalities with a growing focus on gender inequality, whereby gender is used as a marker to measure gender inclusivity whilst often staying limited to solely mentioning women's empowerment.

In recent years there has been a growing concern over the historically embedded power dynamics that underlie international development cooperation. The patronizing nature of development and humanitarian aid cooperation has been criticised amongst others by postcolonial feminists such as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak<sup>47</sup> for dictating a way forward that leaves little or no say to recipients

and where the experience of non-White and non-Western women is often appropriated for the aims of a Western development agenda<sup>48</sup>.

Most notably, the aid sector has witnessed a large number of scandals with regards to sexual exploitation of mainly local employees by structurally stronger non-local, mostly white colleagues<sup>49</sup>. This intersectional power dynamic replicates colonial practices and demonstrates the violent ways in which power imbalances can manifest in the everyday. These unequal social positionings and their real-world consequences are rampant in development cooperation practices. Unless this structurally perpetuated power imbalance is addressed, the potential of international development to generate lasting change through meaningful action is inherently undermined.

**A feminist way forward for development cooperation** includes structural macro and micro analysis into different aspects:

**Empathetic reflexivity** can allow us to understand individual and sectorial practices and their meaning for those they seek to address. Unequal distributions of wealth globally (as well as domestically) continue despite huge resource allocations towards development projects. Access to, as well as the possession of, economic resources as determinants of development still define power hierarchies, individual

and collective interests, and political presence and standing. This is reflected in the adversarial partition of the world into “developed” and “developing” countries – a concept that is often excluded and ignored in day-to-day discussion, planning, implementation, and evaluation.

**Accountability** can look different depending on whether, for example, a programme is designed to meet a specific donor's agenda or has a more independent scope. It matters whether a programme is designed for continuity or to embrace (value-driven) change. This means that accountable action needs to be considered from the perspectives of not only donors but those affected. Designing mechanisms of accountability including **substantial representation** of those involved, i.e. through human rights organisations in development cooperation, to name just one example, go beyond results-based programming and ensures cooperation and the flattening of hierarchies.

An intersectional approach can work to generate a more in-depth context analysis of which groups need specific assistance, such as LGBTQI communities or different ethnicities etc. Including an intersectional perspective can bring forward more inclusive practices in development assistance as it steps away from a one-size-fits-all approach and supports cooperation at eye level.

<sup>46</sup> See e.g. the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

<sup>47</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. “Can the Subaltern Speak?” (2003)

<sup>48</sup> Chandra Mohanty. “Under Western eyes: Feminist scholarship and colonial discourses.” (1988).

<sup>49</sup> Particularly evidence from the Democratic Republic of the Congo sheds a shadow on sincerity of relief programming, see commentaries at e.g. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-58710200> and <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/2021/05/12/exclusive-new-sex-abuse-claims-against-ebola-aid-workers-exposed-congo>

An **active peace commitment** for development projects can foster long term and sustainable projects that help to foster social justice and gender equality, as this lays the foundation to (positive) peace.

### 3.5 FEMINIST TRADE POLICY IN PRACTICE

**What impact do international trade agreements have on women and marginalized groups? Who can take advantage and who might be disadvantaged?**

Trade is a highly political topic and needs to be understood as a main source of actionable power in foreign policy. As a key instrument of globalized capitalism to benefit the most powerful, trade policies and especially trade agreements often perpetuate existing social, economic and cultural inequalities in societies<sup>50</sup>. Free trade agreements such as NAFTA or TTIP create further insecurities and inequalities, such as pushing/keeping women in the low-paid sector or fostering poor working conditions, contributing to price dumping so companies cannot afford social security, and failing to hold companies accountable to respect human rights<sup>51</sup>. Additionally, prevalent injustices in the formal and informal economy, such as racist structures of the international division of labour or unpaid care work are usually reproduced in

trade agreements. Feminist economists have highlighted the “potential for trade agreements to undermine civil, cultural, economic, political and/or social rights enshrined in legally binding instruments, including commitments made to support gender equality” especially when trade agreements are driven by economic growth as the only goal<sup>52</sup>. Traditionally, trade agreements benefit larger firms or corporations in high-trading sectors like manufacturing or technology, sectors in which women are structurally underrepresented and have little access<sup>53</sup>. The service sector, on the other hand, is dominated by women lacking social security and safe working conditions, though often not the focus of trade deals<sup>54</sup>. Furthermore, trade agreements can open national or local markets to foreign competitors with which small, female (or BIPOC) owned businesses cannot compete. Growing inequalities are hence the result.

#### **A Feminist Way Forward for Trade Policy**

Acknowledging the gendered realities of economic systems could be a first step towards a more **accountable trade policy**. Trade negotiations with underlying goals to improve social security, the environment, human rights and gender equality would be

accountable to different parts of society. Trade agreements need to prioritize social reproduction as a main purpose and replace purely economic profit making with monitoring and evaluation systems that include human rights and women’s rights as economic success<sup>55</sup>.

An **intersectional** feminist trade policy should acknowledge that women and other marginalized groups already play a crucial, yet often invisible role in keeping societies and economies running during normal times and times of crisis. Including an intersectional analysis of the causes of such gender gaps can help make visible injustices and assess the formulation of new inclusive, just and representative trade policies.

Different groups face different barriers to their participation in the recognized economic life of a country, such as the different representations of genders across sectors, the unproportional weight of (unpaid) care work and social reproduction on the shoulders of women, discriminatory education systems, missing social security and persisting gender pay gaps. These need to be actively acknowledged to enable **substantive representation**, for example during trade negotiations, in sectoral evaluation processes and

<sup>50</sup> Gregg Erauw, “Trading Away Women’s Rights: A Feminist Critique of the Canada-Colombia Free Trade Agreement.” (2010)

<sup>51</sup> Molly Gene, “How to Rethink International Trade: A Feminist Intervention” (2017), accessed at <https://centreforfeministforeignpolicy.org/journal/2017/1/11/how-to-rethink-international-trade-a-feminist-intervention>

<sup>52</sup> Erin Hannah, Adrienne Roberts and Silke Trommer “Towards a feminist global trade politics” (2021): 70.

<sup>53</sup> Government of Canada: Trade and Gender Connections (2021). ([https://www.international.gc.ca/trade-commerce/gender\\_equality-egalite\\_genres/trade\\_gender-commerce\\_genre.aspx?lang=eng](https://www.international.gc.ca/trade-commerce/gender_equality-egalite_genres/trade_gender-commerce_genre.aspx?lang=eng)).

<sup>54</sup> Pamela Coke-Hamilton, executive Director of the International Trade Centre, made a distinctive case for feminist trade policy for small, or economically vulnerable, states: “We all know that the economies and exports of many small states are dominated by services. Those services sectors – especially travel and tourism – primarily employ women, and in many cases female single heads of household. Then why wouldn’t your trade policy – your tariffs, your licensing requirements, your procurement rules – be directly focused on supporting those women? Wouldn’t it make sense?” (<https://www.intracen.org/news/Should-Small-States-Embrace-Feminist-Trade-Policy/>).

<sup>55</sup> Erin Hannah, Adrienne Roberts and Silke Trommer “Towards a feminist global trade politics” (2021).

during the development of (protective) regulations.

A feminist trade policy preconditions an **empathetically reflexive** approach to gender equalities within the own economic system. Who negotiates trade deals and who sets priorities? Furthermore, asymmetric relations between small and big states – sometimes rooted in colonial history – lead to unequal negotiating power between parties which should be considered.

**Active peace commitment** means the engagement to develop economic structures that benefit everyone and prioritize human rights and environmental protection. The impact of trade agreements/ deals on marginalized groups, power sharing within states and (in)stability always needs to be factored in. This is especially crucial for the global arms trade. People's wellbeing needs to be prioritized over business interests.

### **3.6 FEMINIST MIGRATION POLICY IN PRACTICE**

#### **What drives migration? How do global inequalities and injustice impact today's migration policy?**

Migration is an ongoing hot topic in global politics. As in the case of the previously discussed policy areas, it is interconnected with a variety of global policies and/ or inequalities. Western migration policies tend to present themselves as value-driven and Western governments or institutions uphold a status of normative superiority (such as

the “EU as normative global power”<sup>56</sup>). However, the Western world has failed to recognize the role it has played in the perpetuation of drivers of migration.

The narrative around the male migrant is very harmful to migrant communities. The arrival of the male migrant requires the protection of “our (white) women” which is equated with protecting our “Western” values. Non-white men are stereotyped as more aggressive, hyper-sexual, violent and unworthy of having their rights protected (as defined under the 1951 Geneva Convention on Refugees). Women from migrant communities are victimized in their new host communities and perceived as needing protection from men in general, while facing different forms of oppression (e.g. cultural, social, economic etc.) in their places of origin<sup>57</sup>.

The differentiation between political and economic reasons for migration reflects negatively on the perception of migration and its solutions. The narrative that is constructed by only showing the act of migration in terms of movement (e.g. drowning boats in the Mediterranean) fails to illustrate the drivers that go far beyond political and economic crises and/or the devastation of war.

#### **A Feminist Way Forward for Migration**

A feminist understanding of migration requires first and foremost the recog-

nition of migration as a ubiquitous human phenomenon rooted in different drivers such as war, conflict, economic despair and discrimination. Further, it is crucial to realise that physical state borders are not naturally given but a development in human history. On the contrary, state borders manifest hierarchies between inhabitants of different world regions. Rigid border regimes continuously put the lives of vulnerable people in danger whether it be a physical “border to Mexico” as pronounced by the former US administration, or a metaphorical “fortress Europe” at EU external borders.

**Empathetic reflexivity** opens possibilities for receiving countries to assess their connection to global migration drivers and root causes and enables these countries to inform the public and change the narrative and their actions regarding border control and asylum policies. This connects to all fields of foreign policy discussed above such as the effects of unjust climate action in the past, exclusionary trade policy or harmful development cooperation<sup>58</sup>.

By demonstrating an awareness for their role and position, countries and individuals can take responsibility and show a sense of **accountability** towards migrants and asylum seekers and consult with this community in the host country regularly. Accountability also means pursuing documented human rights or law viola-

<sup>56</sup> Ian Manners. “Normative Power Europe” (2002)

<sup>57</sup> Katarzyna Wojnicka, Magdalena Nowicka. “Understanding migrant masculinities through a spatially intersectional lens.” (2021).

<sup>58</sup> Lucy Hovil. “Telling Truths about Migration, International Journal of Transitional Justice” (2019)



tions such as illegal push-backs (as is the case e.g. at EU borders<sup>59</sup>) and grant migrants their right to dignity and protection.

A feminist approach towards migration considers **intersecting** vulnerabilities (e.g. gender, LGBTQI+, urban-rural, ethnic and sectarian affiliations) and the reasons for their leaving their countries but also, it considers how people have different vulnerabilities and needs when migrating and applying for asylum.

Further, the experience of migration does not end once the destination has been reached. Therefore, it is important for countries to ensure that basic services such as food, hygiene, shelter, access to income and necessary language skills are provided for. This involves adopting a self-critical and **empathetically reflexive** approach that would also include various social policies and initiatives to combat discrimination against migrants (e.g. facilitate anti-racist approaches in schools and the health sector).

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<sup>59</sup> Sarah Schröer López, Véronique Gantenberg. "Illegale Pushbacks: Was macht die EU?" (March 15, 2021) <https://www.tagesschau.de/ausland/europa/eukommission-frontex-pushbacks-101.html>

4

# *Guiding Questions for Practicing Feminist Foreign Policy in the Everyday*

We understand feminist foreign policy as a value-driven and context specific practice that can help enable better decision making, as well as deconstruct and reconstruct power relations and hierarchies. We acknowledge the need for incremental changes when trying to ameliorate the systemic hierarchies embedded in the international political system. Therefore, we suggest understanding feminist foreign policy as an approach to international politics that can grow and advance over time. To help initiate this process, we have included a list of guiding questions that invites individuals from policy-making and international organisations to reflect upon current practices in foreign policy.

## **1. INTERSECTIONALITY IN ANALYSIS, REPRESENTATION AND DECISION-MAKING**

When making decisions think about the context and be context-specific through an intersectional analysis of the power hierarchies in your department/country/topic:

- » Who do the people that make decisions about peace/security in a specific context represent?
- » What are the backgrounds/contexts/experiences of the people in my own team/my partners?
- » Is there an asymmetrical power relationship between the partner country/actor/organisation through North/South hierarchies, different access to resources, power position in the global community that need to be considered?
- » Who is not represented in decision-making processes? Why is this the case and what hinders their participation?
- » What impacts/effects/consequences do the decisions have on different groups of people with regards to their position/gender/ethnic background?
- » Have impacted groups been consulted, integrated and heard?
- » What groups need specific focus and assistance?

## **2. EMPATHETIC REFLEXIVITY IN DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTING POLICY**

When designing and making decisions regarding specific foreign policies, reflect on the power hierarchy, country-specific challenges and historical circumstances:

- » What is your own role in the group/partnership/collaboration or decision?
- » Are there any past experiences/trauma that you are implicated in and which need to be considered (e.g. colonial history, conflict, etc.)?
- » How can you engage in an empathetic relationship between partners, reflecting on your own role and position of power?
- » Are there dependencies between the partners that create hierarchies and what is your own role in this?
- » How can that asymmetrical power hierarchy be minimized/addressed, or does it need a healing/forgiveness/reconciliation or conflict transformation process?
- » Do policies reinforce or activate any past and ongoing traumas/conflicts or power hierarchies?
- » Are the goals of the partnership honest, empathetic and mutually empowering?
- » How can the relationship be built on trust and partnership?

## **3. SUBSTANTIVE REPRESENTATION**

- » When forming a project team, a department or appointing a new leadership position, consider if and how the individuals selected substantively represent all groups involved (e.g. in a country or an organisation or a peace process). Referring to (1) Intersectionality, an analysis is needed to map groups that need to be represented in the context-specific team:
- » What is the topic and who are the affected groups of people not only according to gender, but sexuality, religion, ability, class and/or ethnic backgrounds?
- » Are representatives from non-state actors or from civil society organisations included?
- » Are the processes inclusive of people affected/involved and do they allow them to be heard and contribute, or do they lack access beyond listening at the table?
- » Are there structural/cultural/political barriers of power inequalities that need to be overcome? How do they manifest (e.g. is there a sense of entitlement shown by some over others)?
- » Are there control mechanisms, such as trustful voting processes, equal set speaking limitations, moderation, or consultation processes in place?

#### **4. ACCOUNTABILITY**

- » When designing a foreign policy process or making decisions, a system of accountability and reporting needs to be in place
- » Who am I/are we accountable to?
- » What is the actual goal of the policy and who benefits?
- » What are the structural possibilities and barriers for people to report or evaluate whether foreign policy has been in their interest?
- » Who drives the evaluation and monitoring processes? Between donors and recipients, who decides on the distribution of funds or measures?
- » How can success be defined or measured? Are my milestones realistic?
- » How do I ensure that my actions are implemented in the interest of recipients and that my policy goes beyond rhetoric?
- » What impact has been made at a qualitative level (e.g. encouraging ethnographic, surveys, individual stories) research outside of quantitative figures, quotas, measurable outcomes?

#### **5. ACTIVE PEACE COMMITMENT**

Foreign policy should be guided by peace and harmony, non-violence and trust.

##### **1. Conflict analysis that includes root causes:**

- » Are there structural forms of violence causing conflict (e.g. poverty, gender inequality, racist and ethnic discrimination) and what lines of oppression exist?
- » What groups of people are involved in the conflict and how can approaches to solving or preventing violence amongst divergent positions be mediated?
- » Who are the people that are left behind in decision-making processes and how can their voice be included?
- » How can vulnerable groups of people in conflict be protected without purely victimizing them?

##### **2. Peaceful actions:**

- » What peaceful/non-militarised/non-armament methods can be adopted in order to alleviate conflict?
- » Are there professional mediation teams/conflict specialists to assist in a mediation process?
- » How can we foster discussions and actions based on peace instead of conflict? How can we approach peace without the use of violence and arms?

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