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Feminist discourse on the Dutch feminist foreign policy: An exploration of stakeholder perspectives and feminist theory

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FEMINIST DISCOURSE ON THE DUTCH FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY

An exploration of stakeholder perspectives and feminist theory

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introducing feminist foreign policy

In October 2014, Margot Wallström - the Swedish Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time - first introduced a feminist foreign policy (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Sweden, 2019). Even before 2014, Sweden pursued gender equality in foreign affairs, for example, by focusing on issues of gender equality in development cooperation (OECD, 2021, June 30). So how did adding the label ‘feminist’ to their foreign policy make a change?

In her introduction of a feminist foreign policy, the Swedish minister committed to implementing a gender perspective in all foreign policies. In doing so, gender equality is not only a thematic area of focus but an inherent part of all policies developed and actions taken by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (OECD, 2021, June 30). Specifically, the Ministry promised to strive towards gender equality by taking into account three R’s: rights, representation and resources based on the reality of girls and women (Ministry for Foreign Affairs Sweden, 2019). The first R - rights - refers to the promotion and protection of the human rights of women and girls. The second R - representation - focuses on the participation of women in decision-making processes as well as the consultation of women by decision-makers. The third r - resources - includes allocating resources, so that gender equality is promoted and protected (Ministry for Foreign Affairs Sweden, 2019). In late 2022, the newly appointed Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Tobias Billstrom, announced that Sweden would no longer be conducting a feminist foreign policy (Thomas, 2022, October 19). Regardless, the policy has inspired governments worldwide to develop a feminist foreign policy (UN Women, 2022).

Canada was the first to follow in 2017 when the Minister of International Development and La Francophonie launched a feminist international assistance policy (Government of Canada, 2021). It focused on a more specific part of foreign policy, namely development cooperation. Next in line was France in 2019, which announced it would base its policy on a rights-based and gender-mainstreaming approach (French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, 2018). Mexico followed in 2020 as the first country in the Global South to have a feminist foreign policy. In 2021, Spain launched its feminist foreign policy (UN Women, 2022).

Now, the Netherlands, among other countries such as Belgium, Chile and Germany, is following their example by introducing its own feminist foreign policy (UN Women, 2022). The intention of the Dutch minister to develop a feminist foreign policy results from parliamentary questions posed by members of the Senate in early 2021. They requested that the ministry research what lessons can be drawn from countries that have already implemented a feminist foreign policy (Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, 2022, May 13). In response, the minister initiated an independent research, which was published in the spring of 2022. As the research showed positive effects of feminist foreign policy, revealing that countries with such a policy have higher levels of gender mainstreaming and policy coherence, the minister announced she would be developing a Dutch feminist foreign policy. With a feminist foreign policy, the Dutch government aims to build on existing efforts for gender equality (Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, 2022, May 13).

Stakeholders of the feminist foreign policy have a clear place in the development of the policy. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs consults them to give input on their perspectives on what the Dutch feminist foreign policy should entail. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has committed to a broad consultation of stakeholders (Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, 2022, May 13), which it aims to achieve via internet consultations, consultation sessions, participation in various events attended by stakeholders, and an expressed willingness to receive input on the matter. Therefore, the perspectives

of stakeholders on the Dutch feminist foreign policy are relevant to the process of development of the policy. The selected participants of this research have all contributed - in various ways - to delivering input to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on this matter.

As there are no definitive guidelines or standards for a feminist foreign policy, the content, scope and implementation of feminist foreign policies differ. Countries have not explicitly defined the type of feminism they base their policies on. However, different strands of feminism have different approaches to foreign policy, as we will illustrate in this paper. In this thesis, we will outline what a feminist foreign policy looks like from the perspective of five feminist strands: liberal-, socialist-, cultural-, intersectional- and postcolonial feminism. We will do so by exploring theoretical notions of the different feminisms and illustrating their place in feminist foreign policy with examples of the feminist foreign policies of Sweden, Canada, France and Mexico. This exploration will form the theoretical framework of our research. Using Q-methodology, we will present statements that reflect the different strands to stakeholders of the Dutch feminist foreign policy. Via factor analysis, we will use their responses to give an overview of the dominant feminist discourses amongst the consulted stakeholders. In doing so, we will aim to answer the question: *Which feminist discourses should influence the Dutch feminist foreign policy the most according to its stakeholders?*

1.2. Academic relevance

Feminist foreign policies are relatively new - as illustrated by the pioneering Swedish case in 2014 - however they can be placed in a framework of greater gender-awareness in international relations (Aggestam & True, 2020). Since 1975, the prominence of gender in international politics has continuously grown, starting with the World Conferences on Women, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) (Zilla, 2022). In light of these developments, a growing number of countries have committed to feminist foreign policies.

Due to the fairly new beginnings of feminist foreign policies, a limited amount of research is available. Previous research has focused on making an ethical case for feminist foreign policy (Aggestam & Rosamond, 2019; Robinson, 2021) and analysing feminist foreign policy documents (Thompson, et al., 2021; Thomson, 2020; Aggestam & Rosamond, 2016; Scheyer & Kumskova, 2019). This research aims to contribute to the growing body of feminist foreign policies by exploring the relationship between feminist strands and feminist foreign policy. In doing so, we aim to provide insight into the feminist discourses that underpin the participants' perspectives.

1.3. Societal relevance

Research performed by Ivens & Paassen (2021) shows the importance of clarifying the 'feminist' in Dutch feminist foreign policy. Well-defined terminology generates enthusiasm and shapes and executes the policy (Ivens & Paassen, 2021). This is reiterated by the criticisms of countries that are not perceived to clearly define feminism, such as Sweden (Thompson, et.al., 2021). While the need for a clear definition of the term does not necessarily imply that feminist foreign policy should be linked to certain feminist strands, it does show us that it is beneficial to examine what our idea of feminism entails. The feminist strands can be a solid basis for starting such an analysis.

This research puts the perspective of stakeholders at the forefront of its analysis. Their perspectives are key, as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has committed to several forms of consultations with stakeholders (Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, 2022, November 8). Ivens & Paassen (2021) and the Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy (2020) reiterate the importance of stakeholder consultation for ownership of the feminist foreign policy, as well as improving the inclusivity and efficiency of the policy. In light of their findings and the commitment of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the viewpoints of stakeholders are relevant to the development of the Dutch feminist foreign policy.

1.4. Methodology

We will use Q-methodology to answer the question: *Which feminist discourses should influence the Dutch feminist foreign policy the most according to its stakeholders?* The theoretical framework presents a framework for our research by presenting five feminist strands: liberal-, socialist-, cultural-, intersectional and postcolonial feminism. We selected 24 statements that reflect the different feminist strands. We presented these statements to twelve respondents. All respondents were selected based on their affiliations with the Dutch feminist foreign policy and their knowledge on the topic. Their responses were analysed using factor analysis. Factor analysis allowed us to determine the dominant discourse amongst the stakeholders of feminist foreign policy.

1.5. Outline of research

In the following chapter, we will present the theoretical framework. We will explore the aforementioned five feminist strands in terms of their perspectives on feminist foreign policy. We will enrich these theoretical perspectives with empirical examples of the feminist foreign policies of other countries. Based on this framework, we will present our expectations for the Dutch feminist foreign policy. In the third chapter, we will elaborate on the research design: Q-methodology. In the fourth chapter, we will present the analysis of the research results by describing the dominant viewpoint. Lastly, a conclusion will follow in which we will link the results of the analysis to the expectation for the Dutch feminist foreign policy, as raised in the theoretical framework

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter, we will present the theoretical framework. We will explore the concept of feminist foreign policy through the lens of five feminist strands: liberal-, socialist-, cultural-, intersectional and postcolonial feminism. We will introduce each strand, describe how it translates to a feminist foreign policy and link it to the feminist foreign policies of other countries. In doing so, we will consider the feminist foreign policies of Sweden, Canada, France and Mexico. In the second part of the theoretical framework, we will link these concepts of feminist foreign policy to the Dutch case. We will describe the progress and timeline of the Dutch feminist foreign policy. Lastly, we will present the expectations for the Dutch case.

2.1. Feminist foreign policy through five feminist lenses

Several countries have now developed or committed to developing feminist foreign policies. However, an explicit definition of what feminism entails for them is missing from these policies. In this chapter, we will introduce five strands of feminism - liberal-, socialist-, cultural-, intersectional- and colonialist feminism. Specifically, we will describe the implications of these strands of feminism for foreign policy. As we continue, the different strands of feminism will shine a light on the types of feminism on which the existing feminist foreign policies are built. This can give insight into the underlying assumptions of what feminism entails for the different policies.

2.1.1. Liberal feminism

As the name suggests, liberal feminism centres the attainment of liberal values - namely liberty and equality - for women. More specifically, it focuses on individual rights for women, such as the right to autonomy (Bailey, 2016). Liberal feminism has a long historical tradition in which liberal feminists in the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries advocated for equal rights for women to participate in public life. In doing so, they amended existing laws to fit liberal values of equality and individual freedom for women rather than just for men (Ackerly, 2001). The first wave of feminism is generally associated with liberal feminism.

Individual equal rights are the main focus of liberal feminism. Liberal feminists believe that such equal rights can be attained within the existing system by strengthening the legal position of women (Ackerly, 2001). The economic emancipation of women is one of the key areas of focus - including in foreign policy (Cottais, 2021). For example, liberal feminists emphasise the role that trade can play in improving women's lives. Trade can expand women's role in public life and the economy and therefore enhance their employment opportunities, facilitate economic growth and decrease gender parity - providing that trade policies are gender-sensitive. An important part of this is the representation and inclusion of women in trade missions (World Bank & World Trade Organisation, 2020). Moreover, addressing the domination of men in foreign relations, in general, is key. Liberal feminists argue for more representation of women in all foreign policy mechanisms - in trade missions, but also decision-making bodies and the military (Kinsella, 2017). They thus argue to add women to the existing frameworks of foreign policy to combat gender parity in the distribution of power, ensure the representation of women and improve foreign policy actions through the inclusion of women (Tickner, 2014) (Reuschlein, 2019).

Liberal feminism is often criticised for its lack of inclusiveness, as it is argued to be for white, middle-class, Western, heterosexual women (Ackerly, 2001; Bailey, 2016). According to critics, this is due to its focus on individual rights. The realisation of such rights is attempted through existing state-mechanisms rather than by addressing structural oppression (Bailey, 2016). Critics argue that liberal feminism is not fit to challenge racism or colonialism, as it does not grasp the complexity of gender inequality (Ackerly, 2001). This can be an issue, especially when liberal feminist values are the centre of foreign policy. Critics suggest that the Western-centric values of liberal feminism are not fit for development cooperation (Cottais, 2021). Additionally, critics find that civic and legal equality is not enough to achieve full gender equality (Cottais, 2021).

2.1.1.1. Liberal feminism in feminist foreign policies

Liberal feminist foreign policy principles underpin the feminist foreign policies of several countries, including Sweden (Zhukova et al., 2021). Its emphasis on gender-based violence, security and economic empowerment (Regeringskansliet, 2020) aligns with liberal feminist priorities, which promote a rights-, security- and market-based approach (Zhukova et al., 2021). Similarly, Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy is mainly characterised by liberal feminism (Zhukova et al., 2021). It has an economic and security focus, stating poverty reduction as its main goal (Thompson et al., 2021). Moreover, security and health are key objectives of the policy (Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy, n.d.). Such an emphasis on rights, security and economic empowerment again illustrates liberal feminist underpinnings (Zhukova et al., 2021). The focus on economic empowerment as the main driver of gender equality is also strongly present in the French feminist foreign policy (Zhukova et al., 2021).

Critiques of liberal feminism align with critiques of the Swedish, Canadian and French feminist foreign policies. The inability to address the complexity of gender equality through liberal feminism, both in terms of intersectionality and postcolonialism, becomes apparent from these critiques. The Swedish policy is criticised for its binary conception of gender and perceived lack of an intersectional perspective (Thompson et al., 2021) (Zilla, 2022). Moreover, critics argue that the Swedish policy is a manifestation of feminist imperialism. This implies that Sweden has not been able to take a critical look at its position in the global hierarchy and rather is imposing Western views in its international relations (Zilla, 2022). The Canadian Feminist International Assistance Policy has received similar critiques, addressing its perceived lack of focus on the colonialist underpinnings of the international order (Bouka, von Htalyk, Martel, Martin-Brûlé, de Almagro & Zahar 2021). Additionally, the policy is accused of being instrumentalist and aiming for economic stability and growth rather than seeing gender equality as a goal in itself (Bouka et al., 2021). The liberal feminist policy of the French ministry has received those same critiques. France has been criticised for a binary and heteronormative conception of gender as well as a continuation of colonialism and western-centric forms of development cooperation (Pallapothu, 2020).

2.1.2. Socialist feminism

Whereas liberal feminism was dominant in the first feminist wave, socialist feminism was the leading discourse during the second wave, which took place in the 1960s and 70s (Brenner, 2014). Socialist feminists argued that the accomplishments of liberal feminists during the first wave, which centred around individual rights, mainly benefited middle-class women (Brenner, 2014). Socialist feminist activists during the second wave advocated for the recognition of the (economic) value of their unpaid

care work rather than being obligated to work full-time jobs in addition to their caring responsibilities and for less pay (Brenner, 2014) (Shukla, 2021).

Socialist feminists focus on the relation between gender and class, and specifically how capitalist systems structure power dynamics in such a way that domination is based on class and gender (Brenner, 2014). According to socialist feminists, capitalism is based on structural inequalities in gender and class. They illustrate the link between patriarchy and capitalism, in which they stress that capitalism is inherently oppressive as it does not function without power asymmetry. The commodification of women's unpaid labour is seen as the foundation of capitalist societies. A woman's right to work is thus insufficient in addressing gender inequality, as women are paid less than men and are still expected to carry out unpaid work next to their paid jobs (Shukla, 2021).

For foreign policy to be socialist feminist, it has to address the capitalist intentions of such policy. According to some socialist feminists, trade policies are based on the capitalist focus of profit-making, which results in exploitative relations (Koehler, 2022, 18 July). Exploitation is exacerbated by gender inequalities, as women tend to be in the lower levels of supply chains (Shukla, 2021). Thus, to achieve a feminist foreign policy, the capitalist underpinnings of trade relations have to be transformed into a basis of human rights, labour standards and gender equality (Koehler, 2022, 18 July).

Like liberal feminism, socialist feminism has also been criticised for its ethnocentrism (Mirza, 1986). While addressing class, it has similar implications in other respects for foreign policy as liberal feminism, according to critics, as it does not address colonialism and racism (Ackerly, 2001).

2.1.2.1. Socialist feminism in feminist foreign policies

Economic empowerment is mentioned as a key priority in the feminist foreign policies of Sweden, Canada and France. However, these policies tend to focus on a woman's right to work and her participation in economic life. For example, France's policy includes "free and equal access of women to the labour market" (French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, 2018, p. 19), and Sweden mentions "women and men should have equal rights to work" (Ministry for Foreign Affairs Sweden, 2019, p.27). The link between capitalism and patriarchy that socialist feminism centres, is not made explicit in any of the policies. Rather, governments attempt to address economic inequalities while maintaining the capitalist system as is. The economic paragraphs of feminist foreign policies are thus mostly informed by liberal feminism rather than socialist feminism (Zhukova, 2021). Therefore, in the existing feminist foreign policies, there are no clear socialist feminist underpinnings. The capitalist underpinnings of foreign policy, problematised by socialist feminists, remain unaddressed.

2.1.3. Cultural feminism

At its core, cultural feminism focuses on the differences between men and women as a framework for explaining gender imbalances. Concepts of femininity and masculinity are leading in this - it is a feminism that ascribes certain traits to men or women as a general group (Wolff, 2007). Cultural feminism was introduced, amongst others, by Gilligan (1982) in her response to an experiment on moral judgement. In her article, she argues for the fundamental differences between a male and female approach to moral dilemmas - and how the female response is not subordinate to the male one. Early criticisms of this paper focused on its stereotypical view of men and women. Critics argue that reinforcing these stereotypes only reinforces the domination and subordination of men and women, respectively. Rather, cultural feminism should argue for more fluidity in stereotypical characteristics - specifically for more feminine characteristics (non-aggressiveness, cooperation, care, etcetera) in men

(Radin, 1993). Such critiques were key in shaping a movement of cultural feminism that focuses more on the centralisation of feminine characteristics in decision-making rather than a woman-centred approach.

What cultural feminists agree on is advocating for more feminine values in decision-making (Lewis, 2019). This implies cooperation, nurturing and caring, for example. Traditionally masculine values, such as aggressiveness, competitiveness and domination, are leading in patriarchal societies, whereas feminine values are undervalued (Hardhan, 2022). A masculine approach should no longer dominate decision-making processes. Rather, a feminine approach should be leading (Hardhan, 2022). Whether this implies more women in decision-making, as such values are inherent to biological sex, or whether this requires a shift in values among men is an unresolved question among cultural feminists (Lewis, 2019).

Cultural feminism translates to a feminist foreign policy when an ‘ethics of care’ is at the forefront (Aggestam et al., 2019). Such an ethic implies that foreign policy should be approached with moral ambition, in which meaningful inclusion of marginalised groups is key. An ethics of care suggests a shift from the focus on the right to intervene to the responsibility to protect (Aggestam et al., 2019). This results in the reconceptualisation of security, which centres diplomacy, democracy, health care and human rights (Hunt, 2021). In order to achieve such a policy, listening to voices that are not usually heard in foreign policies is the main change that cultural feminism wants to see in a feminist foreign policy. In such dialogues, empathy and sensitivity are key (Aggestam et al., 2019).

For essentialist cultural feminists, this directly translates to the domination of women in decision-making processes, as they inherently possess the suggested morality needed to act in line with an ethics of care (Aggestam et al., 2019). The participation of women in the design of foreign policy is thus key for them, as it is in liberal feminism. The difference, however, lies in the reasoning. For liberal feminists, the participation of women is a matter of equal rights; women should have the same right as men to participate in decision-making processes. For essentialist cultural feminists, women must be involved in such processes because they inherently possess feminine character traits that are needed to base decisions on an ethics of care (Aggestam et al., 2019).

Essentialist cultural feminists are often criticised for their essentialisation of women, as briefly explained earlier (Radin, 1993). Critics consider this an issue, as such essentialisation excludes trans women. In some cases, this extends into hostility towards trans women, as essentialist cultural feminists believe they do not belong in women’s spaces (Hines, 2017). Moreover, in the complete spectrum of cultural feminism, the generalisation of women and/or femininity is considered an issue. The binary gender system that lies at the root of cultural feminism is perceived not to consider other gender identities and experiences (Hines, 2017).

2.1.3.1. Cultural feminism in feminist foreign policies

Several feminist foreign policies focus on the representation of women in decision-making processes. Sweden, for example, prioritises representation as one of the ‘four R’s’, the leading principles for its feminist foreign policy. In the Swedish case, participation in decision-making processes is claimed to “benefit both society and individuals” (Ministry for Foreign Affairs Sweden, 2019, p.25). Including women in decision-making processes, and conflict resolution specifically, is seen as an asset to those processes. However, such representation is linked to the importance of having women’s voices heard as their experiences with conflict differ from the experiences of men. Addressing conflict-related sexual violence by including women in conflict resolution is a key argument here (Ministry for Foreign Affairs Sweden, 2019). While women’s participation is thus not exclusively argued from a liberal feminist perspective - i.e. a woman’s right to political participation - it does not explicitly

mention 'feminine' values as a key argument for women's participation. The Canadian policy, which also refers to women's participation in decision-making processes, argues its case from a mainly liberal point of view. It focuses on the access of women to leadership positions (Government of Canada, 2021). While several feminist foreign policies focus on the inclusion of women in decision-making processes, this is not necessarily a result of cultural feminist underpinnings as their reasoning shows mainly liberal feminist ideas.

Moreover, a shift of foreign policy to an ethics of care is not evident in the policy documents. Rather, feminist foreign policies tend to focus on including women in peace and security mechanisms as an indicator of gender equality. Canada's policy, for example, is criticised for its non-alignment with defence policies. Recommendations for the Canadian policy often include demilitarisation, peaceful conflict resolution and non-violence. While the Swedish policy does cover foreign policy as a whole, it is criticised for its continuation of arms trade (Thompson et al., 2021). France's focus on the representation of women touches upon equal rights but also on the importance of the viewpoint of women in foreign matters, as their experiences differ from that of men. However, it is not rooted in a sense of values of femininity/masculinity. Rather, France's policy addresses the harm of gender stereotypes. It thus does not necessarily align with cultural feminism (Pallapothu, 2020). In short, there were no clear indications of cultural feminist principles in the existing feminist foreign policies.

2.1.4. Intersectional feminism

As illustrated in the brief overviews of criticism on other strands of feminism, a lack of inclusivity is perceived as an issue - be it in terms of race, gender identity, or other characteristics. Intersectional feminism focuses explicitly on such characteristics - also including sexual orientation, weight and disability, for example - and the different ways in which they intersect with one's gender. Intersectionality was first introduced by Crenshaw, who focused on the intersection of gender and race (Crenshaw, 1991). It was taken up by feminists, resulting in the increasingly popular strand of feminism: intersectional feminism.

Intersectional feminists argue that the oppression of women is constructed by their multiple identities (Caratathis, 2014). The oppression that a white, able-bodied, cisgender, middle-class woman faces is different from the oppression that black, disabled, transgender and/or working-class women face. Recognising that other characteristics define oppression besides gender allows for a more inclusive feminism that does not generalise oppression through the lens of one specific group of women (Caratathis, 2014). Such feminism translates into foreign policy by addressing the complexity of the inequalities it aims to solve. For example, when addressing poverty, governments must ensure a comprehensive approach to the issue of poverty, in which they map and address all contributing factors and affected groups. According to intersectional feminists, a feminist foreign policy cannot focus on matters of gender alone. Rather, it has to consider all social categories to create a truly intersectional feminist foreign policy (Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy, 2020).

The concept of intersectional feminism has been criticised for becoming too general and depoliticized; critics argue it has become a catch-all theory with which feminists from all strands identify (Salem, 2018). This is seen as problematic, as intersectional feminism was intended to critique existing forms of feminism - and liberal feminism specifically - rather than to become an umbrella term that unites all feminists. When it loses this intention, it no longer serves as a radical critique of existing power relations and, therefore, no longer addresses them. According to critics, it is key that intersectional feminism functions as analysing and re-evaluating existing power relations and structural inequalities rather than just as the recognition that discrimination exists along several axes (Salem, 2018).

2.1.4.1. Intersectional feminism in feminist foreign policies

The Mexican feminist foreign policy has intersectional feminist underpinnings. In combination with addressing gender-based discrimination, it also explicitly focuses on other forms of structural discrimination that coexist with sexism. This includes racism, discrimination against migrant- and indigenous women and the differentiated effects of climate change (Zhukova et al., 2021). According to analyses of the feminist foreign policy documents, Mexico is the only one to have successfully incorporated an intersectional feminist lens. This is remarkable, as intersectional feminism is explicitly mentioned in other policy documents reviewed. Sweden mentions the term several times, stating that their gender equality analyses should “use an intersectional perspective that clarifies the fact that women and girls, men and boys have different identities, needs influences and living conditions” (Ministry for Foreign Affairs Sweden, 2019, p. 20). Moreover, it even mentions intersectionality as one of the core principles of a feminist foreign policy. Canada also explicitly expresses its aim for an intersectional approach, saying they will work on “recognizing that inequalities exist along intersectional lines” (Government of Canada, 2021). Regardless of the inclusion of the term in the policy documents, the respective governments are criticised for their lack of an intersectional lens (Thompson et al., 2021) (Zilla, 2022) (Bouka et al., 2021).

As mentioned earlier, the concept of intersectional feminism is prone to this issue. The generalisation and depoliticisation of the term have led to a loss of its original intention, which is criticising and addressing power relations (Salem, 2018). When this happens, intersectional feminism turns into the recognition that discrimination exists along several axes (Salem, 2018). This explicitly happens in the Swedish and Canadian policies, as illustrated by the citations above. The policy aims to recognise that different forms of discrimination intersect; however, they do not address power relations and structural inequalities. Employing the intersectional feminist lens to foreign policy entails analysing, mapping and addressing the different intersections of discrimination that exist (Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy, 2020).

2.1.5. Postcolonial feminism

Similar to intersectional feminism, postcolonial feminism also offers a response to the criticised ethnocentrism and eurocentrism of earlier feminisms (Mishra, 2013). In doing so, postcolonial feminists offer an alternative to the strands of feminism which homogenise the suppression of all women. Rather, the experience of women living in former colonies is vastly different, both from the experiences of Western women and from each other. Portraying women in former colonies as a homogenous group is dangerous, as it perpetuates colonialist discourse and oppression. Postcolonial feminists argue for being able to speak for themselves rather than having their experiences, needs, and views articulated by Western feminists (Mishra, 2013).

A postcolonial feminist approach to foreign policy focuses on recognising the continuing colonial relations between (former) colonies and colonists. Such colonial history cannot be set aside in shaping foreign policy, as it still underpins many of the decisions made in foreign policy today (Achilleos-Sarl, 2018). An example of this is development cooperation, which has a clear relationship with colonialist pasts. In its earliest stages, development cooperation emerged from the idea that non-European, ‘pre-modern’ peoples lagged in their development to become like Europeans; they were thought to be in an earlier stage of development. In combination with colonialism, development aid emerged from this ideology, creating a sense of European superiority and universalism (Six, 2009). According to postcolonial feminists, such history shapes how feminism and women’s rights are

shaped in current foreign policy; it is still based on the idea of European superiority and universalism. They ascribe this to the Western feminist underpinnings of such policies, which do not centre on the experiences of women living in former colonies (Achilleos-Sarl, 2018). Therefore, postcolonial feminists argue for the radical transformation of foreign policy and development cooperation specifically, in which they aim to decolonise such practices. Practices to do so vary - examples often include leadership of local organisations/individuals, use of inclusive language and shifts and adaptations in resources and grants (Partos, 2021).

Postcolonial feminism, and postcolonialism in general, have been criticised for its focus on the colonialist historical underpinnings rather than urgent matters of human rights, resources and globalisation (McEwan, 2001). In its focus on the past, critics state, it lacks a clear vision for the future and acute issues in the present. This goes hand in hand with criticism about its theoretical nature - critics argue that postcolonial feminism is not rooted in reality and material concerns (McEwan, 2001).

2.1.5.1. Postcolonial feminism in feminist foreign policies

Postcolonial feminist influences are evident in the critiques of feminist foreign policy documents. Specifically, Sweden, Canada and France have been criticised for their colonialist underpinnings. The Swedish policy has been accused of being a “manifestation of feminist imperialism” (Zilla, 2022). The lack of postcolonial feminism flows from the inability of the countries to take a critical look at their respective positions in the global hierarchy. Moreover, critics argue that with the feminist foreign policies, the countries are attempting to impose Western views in their international relations (Zilla, 2022; Bouka et al., 2021). For example, critics of the French policy mention that the policy is a continuation of colonialism and western-centric forms of development cooperation (Pallapothu, 2020). As explained earlier, postcolonial feminists centre the historical colonialist roots of development cooperation (Six, 2009). When former colonialists fail to address these roots, their foreign policies do not align with postcolonial feminism. Mexico stands out as it is the first country from the Global South and former colony to present a feminist foreign policy, making its relation with postcolonial feminism different from the other countries presented.

2.2. Expectations of the Dutch feminist foreign policy

2.2.1. A work in progress

In May 2022, Wopke Hoekstra and Liesje Schreinemacher - Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Trade and Development Cooperation, respectively - announced that the Netherlands would be conducting a feminist foreign policy (Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, 2022, May 13). The announcement followed the results of a research conducted by the Ecroys Consortium, which was done upon request of Members of Parliament from D66, the Dutch Democratic Party. The researchers looked into the implications and added value of a feminist foreign policy for the Netherlands, and their positive results encouraged the commitment to such a policy by the ministers (Ivens & Paassen, 2021). The policy document is still in development. What has happened since last May?

In October, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs hosted an internet consultation to which anyone could provide input. The input delivered in the online form is not public and therefore cannot be taken into account. Shortly after the internet consultation, the involved ministers sent a parliamentary letter updating members of parliament on the progress of the feminist foreign policy. In this letter, the

ministers define feminist foreign policy as focusing on people of all genders through an intersectional approach with specific attention to LGBTIQ+ people (Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, 2022, November 8). Participation of women and LGBTIQ+ people in decision-making is key in this, as well as the realisation of women's equal rights and strengthening their economic position. In doing so, it is following the concept of the Swedish feminist foreign policy, which also centralises rights, representation and resources to achieve this. Moreover, the inclusion of men in these efforts is mentioned as a priority (Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, 2022, November 8). The letter shows inspiration from the Swedish liberal feminist foreign policy. Where it differs is in its explicit focus on LGBTIQ+ people. At the end of 2022, the Ministry held several other in-person and online stakeholder consultations where civil society organisations could provide input. The policy is currently being developed further and will be launched in mid-2023 (Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, 2022, November 8).

2.2.2. Theoretical expectations in light of lessons learned from previous feminist foreign policies

As illustrated in the previous paragraph, the Dutch feminist foreign policy is still a work in progress. However, there are some indications as to which feminisms might become leading in the Dutch feminist foreign policy based on current Dutch foreign policy. In this paragraph, we will elaborate on the expectations of the perspectives of stakeholders on and the leading feminist strands in the Dutch feminist foreign policy.

Firstly, we can look at how gender equality is positioned within current foreign policy. The Dutch foreign policy focuses on equal rights and opportunities for women (Internationaal Onderzoek en Beleidsevaluatie, 2021). The main priorities in achieving those goals include participation in decision-making processes, women in leadership positions, economic empowerment and combating gender-based violence (IOB, 2021). In its efforts for gender equality, the Ministry has been criticised for having an 'add-women-and-stir' approach, which refers to enabling women's participation in existing mechanisms rather than transforming those structures (IOB, 2021). Such an approach, and the criticism of that approach, align with liberal feminist principles (Tickner, 2014; Reuschlein, 2019). The continuation of liberal feminist efforts to achieve gender equality can thus be expected to continue in the feminist foreign policy. However, Sweden, Canada and France are criticised for the liberal feminist underpinnings of their feminist foreign policies (Thompson et al., 2021; Zilla, 2022; Bouka et al., 2021; Pallapathou, 2020). The criticisms of their feminist foreign policies are similar to those of the current Dutch foreign policy by the IOB (2021). In light of the critiques of these policies - the Dutch as well as the Swedish, Canadian and French - we expect that stakeholders will rank liberal feminist statements low. If so, there could be a discrepancy between the expected liberal feminist underpinnings of a Dutch feminist foreign policy on the one hand and a negative attitude of stakeholders towards liberal feminism on the other hand.

Secondly, while existing Dutch efforts provide solid ground to start building a feminist foreign policy, it has opportunities for growth - especially in terms of intersectionality (IOB, 2021; Ivens & Paassen, 2021). As elaborated upon, a lack of an intersectional- and postcolonial-feminist approach to feminist foreign policies are among the most common critiques of other countries' efforts (Thompson et al., 2021; Zilla, 2022; Bouka et al., 2021). As we have seen, the intersectional approach proves to be difficult to realise in feminist foreign policy documents of Sweden and Canada, as well as in the current Dutch foreign policy (Thompson et al., 2021; Ivens & Paassen, 2021; IOB, 2021). One of the main recommendations in the evaluation of Dutch foreign policy is the consistent incorporation of an intersectional lens (IOB, 2021). Due to the critiques of Sweden and Canada in combination with the critiques of the current Dutch foreign policy, we can expect a high ranking of

intersectional feminist perspectives by stakeholders. Similarly to the aforementioned feminist foreign policy documents, current Dutch foreign policy documents also mention intersectionality but struggles to translate this into its policies (IOB, 2021). Therefore, the incorporation of an intersectional feminist lens may prove to be a challenge. If so, stakeholders may criticise the lack of an intersectional feminist perspective in the Dutch feminist foreign policy.

On the other hand, the Netherlands is often seen as a global frontrunner in terms of gender equality, both on a domestic- and foreign policy level (Ivens & Paassen, 2021). Several actions taken by countries, in light of their respective feminist foreign policies, have already been initiated in the Netherlands. Examples include sexual and reproductive health and rights and responsible business conduct policies. In its upcoming feminist foreign policy, the Netherlands can build on such existing initiatives and aim to maintain its frontrunner position on gender equality and human rights (Ivens & Paassen, 2021). In its current foreign policy document, sexual and reproductive health rights and gender equality are some of the Ministry's main priorities. They refer to their frontrunner position in this regard and aim to export their expertise in this regard (Ministerie voor Buitenlandse Handel en Ontwikkelingssamenwerking, 2022). The focus on sexual rights, specifically, aligns with the prioritisation of LGBTIQ+ people in the progress letter on feminist foreign policy sent earlier this year (Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, 2022, November 8). Thus, we expect the Dutch feminist foreign policy to build on existing efforts by having a clear focus on sexual and reproductive health and rights, specifically on the rights of LGBTIQ+ people. A focus on LGBTIQ+ people may present opportunities for a feminist foreign policy that has an inclusive conception of gender rather than a binary definition thereof. Such an inclusive definition is recommended by the critics of other feminist foreign policies (Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy, n.d.). Moreover, the explicit inclusion of other forms of structural discrimination and oppression, rather than a sole focus on gender, may provide opportunities for a more intersectional feminist approach. An explicit focus on other forms of discrimination - including gender identity and sexual orientation - is applauded in an intersectional feminist evaluation of the Mexican feminist foreign policy (Zhukova et al., 2021). If intersectional feminism is amongst the key perspectives of stakeholders - as we expect it to be - such an approach could be perceived positively.

Thirdly, the current Dutch foreign policy provides room for growth in terms of decolonisation (Ivens & Paassen, 2021). A lack of a postcolonial feminist perspective underpins Dutch foreign policy efforts, according to Wekker (2016). Such continuation of colonial pasts in foreign policy - especially in development cooperation - is also seen as an issue by stakeholders (Partos, 2021). Similar sentiments are expressed by stakeholders of the Swedish, Canadian and French foreign policies. Pallapothu (2020) expresses the continuation of colonialism in the French policy; Zilla (2022) describes the Swedish policy as a “manifestation of feminist imperialism”. Thus, there is a perceived lack of postcolonial feminism in current Dutch foreign policies, a call for decolonisation in Dutch civil society and a perceived inability of other countries to address the issue in their feminist foreign policies. In light of this, we can expect a high ranking of postcolonial feminist statements by stakeholders and a lack of postcolonial feminism in the Dutch feminist foreign policy. Such a lack of incorporation of postcolonial feminism might not be satisfactory to stakeholders.

In conclusion, we have outlined three expectations for the Dutch feminist foreign policy. Firstly, we expect that the Dutch feminist foreign policy will mainly be based on liberal feminist principles. Secondly, similarly to Canada and Sweden, intersectionality is expected to be mentioned in the document. However, translating the concept into the policy and implementation may present a challenge, but an explicit focus on LGBTIQ+ identities provides an opportunity for an intersectional feminist approach - if incorporated well. Thirdly, the lack of a postcolonial feminist approach is often criticised in other countries, as well as in the current Dutch context. This might result in a lack of postcolonial feminism in the feminist foreign policy. As we continue, we will map if and how these

expectations align with the views of stakeholders regarding what the Dutch feminist foreign policy should look like.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

As explored in the previous chapter, the underlying feminist strands of existing feminist foreign policies are rarely made explicit. However, by cross-referencing the policies with the theoretical framework and through using evaluations of and responses to the policies, we have identified some of the main feminist perspectives present. Some strands are prominent in policy documents, such as liberal feminism. Other strands appear to be priorities for other stakeholders and critics, such as intersectional and postcolonial feminism. They criticise the documents for lack of such perspectives. Whilst not all feminist strands have a clear place in the policies, stakeholders do not always miss them. Principles of cultural and socialist feminism, for example, do not manifest clearly in feminist foreign policies nor in stakeholder critiques.

Via Q-methodology, we aim to map those relations between feminist strands and stakeholders in the Dutch context. This is an attempt to contribute to a definition of feminism in the Dutch feminist foreign policy, as the lack of definition or meaning of the term feminism is seen as an issue in other feminist foreign policies (Thompson et al., 2021). So, where do the priorities of stakeholders of the Dutch feminist foreign policy lie? And how do those priorities relate to the aforementioned feminist strands?

In order to map this, we consulted twelve stakeholders to give their perspectives on what the leading feminist principles of the Dutch feminist foreign policy should be. In this chapter, we will present the research design. Firstly, we will explain and justify the choice of methodology, namely Q-methodology. Secondly, we will elaborate upon the research process.

3.1. Choice of method: Q-methodology

As explained, this exploratory research aims to contribute to the mapping of the perspectives of stakeholders of Dutch foreign policy. Research has been done on the Dutch feminist foreign policy, which focused on the added value of a feminist foreign policy in the Dutch setting (Ivens & Paassen, 2021). Moreover, several stakeholders have published contributions on their vision of what a Dutch feminist foreign policy should entail (Mama Cash, 2022; Wo=Men, 2022). This research explores the relationship between those stakeholder perspectives and strands of feminist theory. Rather than analysing policy briefs and other stakeholder contributions, which are often written on behalf of several partners, this research aims to look beneath and analyse the subjective views of individual stakeholders. This provides a different lens on the feminist foreign policy which takes into account individual subjective views of what feminism is.

In order to map such human subjectivity, we make use of Q-methodology. Q-methodology measures human subjectivity by making use of a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis. The research method is designed to map and analyse overlap and divergence between the perspectives of respondents. Its exploratory nature allows for the centralisation of participants' perspectives at the heart of the analysis (Brown & Good, 2010). In the case of feminist foreign policy, Q-methodology has several advantages over R-methodology. Firstly, the Dutch feminist foreign policy is still being designed, and its contents have thus not yet been established nor made public. Q-methodology allows us to map the existing perspectives on the policies among relevant and knowledgeable stakeholders. It makes use of smaller sample sizes which contain participants who are knowledgeable on the subject (Silvius et al., 2017). R-methodology, on the other hand, seeks to research the level of support of certain perspectives among the relevant population. It makes use of a larger sample which contains a representation of the general population (Silvius et al., 2017). For this case, Q-methodology is thus a more appropriate method than R-methodology. As the feminist foreign policy document is not yet

published, it is illogical to ask the general population for their perspective on the matter as they do not yet have something to comment on. Stakeholders, however, are involved in the development feminist foreign policy as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs consults them to give input for the policy. Therefore, they are able to share their perspectives on the matter. Secondly, Q-methodology makes use of a Q-grid. Participants sort the statements through forced distribution, forcing them to make choices and prioritise (Brown & Good, 2010). This is advantageous over R-methodology for this specific case, as it forces respondents to make decisions as to which feminist principles should be leading in foreign policy. This is key to enabling us to map which feminist principles are priorities to stakeholders.

Q-methodology has been used in similar fields of research. Cuppen et al. (2010) have used the method to map and analyse the divergence and overlap between stakeholder perspectives to allow for more successful stakeholder dialogues with the Dutch government. Similarly, Mattinga et al. (2014) have used Q to explore stakeholder perspectives on EU-foreign policy. Karaksis (2019) also employed Q-methodology to perform a foreign policy analysis, as he explained Turkey's foreign policy in the Aegean in 2017 from a Greek point of view. Moreover, Howard et al. (2016) have used Q to analyse the different perspectives of the concept of fairness in terms of fair trade policies, as we will attempt with the term feminist in feminist foreign policy.

3.2. Research process

The process of Q-methodology unfolds in four steps: (1) gathering the concourse, which entails collecting all relevant statements surrounding feminist foreign policy, (2) reducing the concourse to the Q-set, which implies the reduction of the bulk of statements into a manageable number by cross-matching them with strands of feminism, (3) selecting the participants (P-set) and Q-sorting, in which the participants sort the Q-set via forced distribution and (4) conducting factor analysis. We will continue this chapter by elaborating on these four steps.

Step 1: Concourse - collecting statements

Concourse refers to the 'universe' of statements on a certain topic. This can include opinion articles, speeches, high-level discourse, blogs, etcetera (Brown & Good, 2010). In the first step of the research design, we explored the concourse on the relevance and aspects of a feminist foreign policy. In doing so, we collected 100 statements from the concourse on feminist foreign policy. These statements were gathered from a range of sources, including newspapers, statements by public officials and politicians, policy documents, civil society publications and academic papers. For example, the feminist foreign policy documents of Sweden, Canada and France were consulted. Moreover, civil society commentaries on the (Dutch) feminist foreign policy were included, including pieces by the Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy, Wo=Men and Amnesty International. Moreover, academic research on feminist foreign policy was included in the resources, as well as opinion pieces in Dutch and other newspapers and magazines, such as the *New Yorker* and 'Financieel Dagblad'. These statements touched upon what the Dutch feminist foreign policy should entail, what its added value to Dutch foreign policy (or lack thereof) is and the implications it can have for foreign relations. Some statements referred to the Dutch foreign policy specifically, while others addressed feminist foreign policy as a concept or referred to the feminist foreign policies of other countries. We have chosen to include the concourse on feminist foreign policy in general, rather than limiting it to the concourse on Dutch feminist foreign policy. We have done so as the Dutch policy is still in development and statements on the matter are thus limited. By selecting statements on feminist foreign policy in a broad sense, we are able to use examples from other governments and academic statements on what it

should include. As we continue, we will use such statements to map the views of stakeholders of the Dutch feminist foreign policy.

Step 2: Determining the Q-set

After gathering the concourse of statements, statements were selected from the concourse to form the Q-set. There are no standard rules on how to make such a selection to determine the Q-set. The researcher has to make sure it is a comprehensive sample (Good & Brown, 2010). In this case, as we are focusing on what certain feminist strands imply for a feminist foreign policy, we selected an array of statements that represent different strands of feminism, as explored in the theoretical framework. Thus, the Q-set consists of statements that can be categorised as (1) liberal feminist, (2) socialist feminist, (3) cultural feminist, (4) intersectional feminist or (5) post-colonial feminist. Moreover, some statements in the concourse expressed negative attitudes to the concept of feminist foreign policy. In order to represent the concourse properly, a selection of these statements were included in the Q-set as well. We categorise these statements as (6) anti-feminist.

Considering that the Netherlands will be aiming for a feminist approach to all of foreign policy, the Q-set addresses different areas of feminist foreign policy. Such areas include development cooperation, defence, trade, diplomacy, international organisations and ways of working within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The statements were thus selected to develop a Q-set that represents the included feminist strands and the scope of foreign policy.

After considering the criteria for selecting the Q-set, we determined its boundaries. Q-sets can consist of two to five dozen statements (Davis & Michelle, 2011). Considering time limitations in both the duration of the research as well as of the respondents, 24 statements were selected. By setting the Q-set at 24 statements, we kept the maximum duration of the Q-sort to 45 minutes. This allowed respondents to be able to participate without it taking up too much of their time. After having set the criteria and boundaries for selection, the concourse was reduced to form the Q-set. The Q-set can be found in annexe 1.

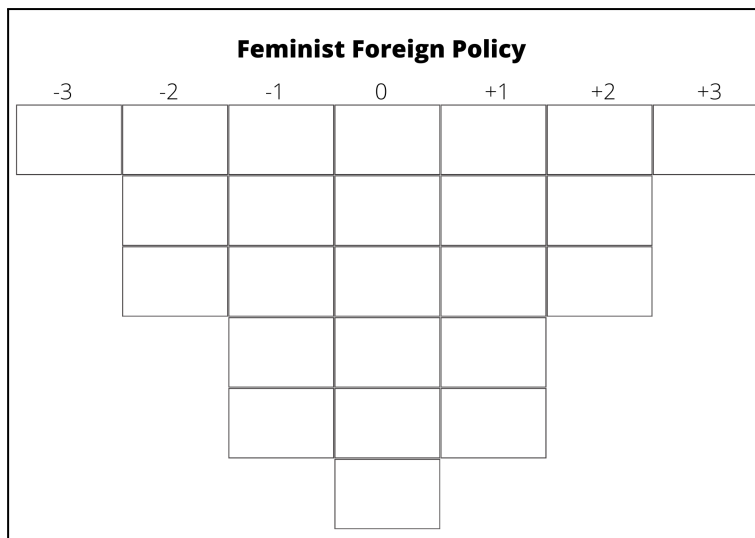
Step 3: The P-set and Q-sort

After we established the Q-set, the participants (P-set) were selected and recruited. The P-set consists of a relatively small group of participants that are not necessarily representative of the population (van Exel & de Graaf, 2005). Rather, the participants are purposefully chosen based on their demonstrated knowledge on the topic (Brown, 1980). Regarding feminist foreign policy, stakeholders were consulted from various perspectives on the matter. In selecting these stakeholders, we used two criteria. Firstly, all respondents engage in developing the feminist foreign policy in different capacities. They participate in discussion sessions on the matter, deliver input to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and/or monitor the process. Secondly, all respondents have a background in dealing with Dutch foreign policy and feminism/gender equality. Their views are important, as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs arranges several consultation sessions with stakeholders and frequently consults them for input on the feminist foreign policy (Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, 2022, November 8). All respondents selected have thus made contributions to the Dutch feminist foreign policy - in various ways - and have contact with the Ministry on Foreign Affairs on the matter. After careful selection, twelve respondents were selected to participate in the sorting of the Q-set (see annex 1). The research deals with stakeholder perspectives on the matter. Whilst civil servants are responsible for developing

and eventually executing the feminist foreign policy, their individual, subjective views on the matter are less relevant for the scope of this research.

The participants were then asked to perform the Q-sort. They placed the 24 statements from the Q-set - each on a distinct card - in individual cells of the Q-grid (see figure 1). The Q-grid thus consists of 24 cells on a 7-point scale. The scale ranges from -3 to +3, representing most disagreement and most agreement, respectively. The participants had to sort their statements in a forced distribution, one statement per cell.

Figure 1. Q-grid as presented to respondents



The Q-sorting took place both in person and digitally, depending on the respondent's physical location and schedule. The process, however, was the same. First, we explained to the respondents what the research entails and what was expected of them. After the introduction, the respondents were given time to read through the statements and divide them into two piles: agree or disagree. Once the respondents familiarised themselves with the statements and sorted them into two piles, they were asked to start the Q-sort. The Q-grid was presented to them, either digitally or on paper. The participants had to match each statement to one of the cells, depending on their attitude towards the statement (Brown, 1980). Respondents were asked to describe their thought process throughout the sorting of the statements. After they completed the Q-sort, they elaborated on their choices for the -3 and +3 statements. The meetings took between 30 and 45 minutes each.

Step 4: Factor analysis

After the Q-sort was complete, we processed the outcomes with factor analysis through the software 'Ken-Q-Analysis'. Factor analysis shows how people group together by virtue of similar ranking (Bryman, 2008). In Q-methodology, such variables are provided by the Q-sorts: the ranking of statements by our respondents. In doing so, the goal is to uncover the viewpoints of stakeholders regarding feminist foreign policy through the correlation between the Q-sorts. Thus, factor analysis enabled us to identify the overlaps between perspectives on the Dutch feminist foreign policy, and answer the question: *Which feminist discourses should influence the Dutch feminist foreign policy the most according to its stakeholders?*

Through Ken-Q software, we used the centroid method and varimax rotation. We deemed these methods the most suitable, as they are most common in and suitable for Q-methodology (Watts & Stenner, 2012). In the next step, we had to decide on the amount of extracted factors. Q-methodology does not provide us with strict rules on how many factors to extract - rather, it allows us to make a decision based on the criteria we presume to be the most fitting for this research (Watts & Stenner, 2012). We decided upon the extraction of one factor for several reasons. Firstly, the eigenvalue can be used as an indicator for factor extraction. It is deemed useful to extract a factor if its eigenvalue is higher than one (Watts & Stenner, 2012). In this case, the eigenvalue of additional factors did not surpass one. Moreover, we based our decision on the factor loadings. For a factor to be extracted, it is recommended that it has at least two significant loadings. There are two criteria for significance. Firstly, a loading is significant when it is higher than the significant value, which is calculated by: $2.58 \times (1 / \sqrt{Q})$, with Q representing the number of statements. In this case, the significant value is thus 0.5266. Secondly, a loading is significant when its cross-product is higher than twice the standard deviation - as stipulated by Humphrey's rule. The standard deviation is calculated by: $1 / \sqrt{Q}$ (Watts & Stenner, 2012 ; Brown, 1980). For this analysis, twice the standard deviation is rounded off to 0,4. When extracting a second or third factor, none of the loadings on these additional factors met these criteria. Lastly, the correlation between factor 1 and 2 was rather high, at 0,702. Q-methodologists suggest using simplicity and distinctiveness as two of the main criteria for factor extraction. With this, they refer to the preference for fewer factors to clarify viewpoints and a low correlation between factors to avoid too much similarity between those viewpoints (Damio, 2018; Webler et al., 2007).

In addition to the abovementioned quantitative criteria, we employed qualitative criteria to determine the number of factors extracted, as Brown (1980) suggests. In their ranking of the statements, respondents elaborated on their perspectives. While they made different choices in their Q-sorts, their viewpoints were rather similar. The vast majority had high rankings for postcolonial and intersectional feminist strands on the one hand, and low rankings for anti-feminist liberal feminist statements on the other hand, as we will explain later on. Their similar lines of thought and argumentation for rankings also becomes clear when we attempt to extract more factors. While there is some difference between the composite Q-sorts of extracted factors, the differences are mainly within feminist strands rather than between. For example, two statements on liberal feminism would be interchanged. While there is difference within feminist strands, of course, the provided explanation for placing certain statements was too similar to distinguish two or more distinct viewpoints. Considering these quantitative and qualitative criteria, we thus decided upon the extraction of one factor. This factor provides a shared viewpoint of the consulted respondents, which we will present in the next chapter.

Table 2. The P-set and the factor loadings for factor 1.

Participant number	Institutional affiliation	Location	Factor loading
1	NGO - public sphere	NL	0,774
2	NGO - public sphere	NL	0,8892
3	Academic sphere	NL	0,4997
4	NGO - public sphere	Abroad**	0,657
5	NGO - public sphere	Abroad**	0,715
6	Consultancy/research	NL	0,7651
7	NGO - public sphere	NL	0,7532
8	NGO - public sphere	NL	0,4942
9	NGO - private sphere	NL	0,7562
10	NGO - private sphere	NL	0,771
11	Consultancy/research	NL	0,1644
12	NGO - public sphere	NL	0,7651
Explained Variance			48*

*: This number represents the proportion of explained variance expressed as a percentage.

** : Respondents located 'abroad' are stakeholders in the Dutch feminist foreign policy, as their respective countries and organisations have partnerships with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. For the sake of anonymity, their location is not specified.

Table 3: Factor Scores with Corresponding Ranks in Factor 1

Statement	Factor 1 Z-score	Factor 1 Rank
1. The main element of developing meaningful and effective foreign policy responses is the confrontation with the power structures established by patriarchy.	1,33	4
2. A liberal cosmopolitan approach to feminist foreign policy reproduces existing relations of power, including gender power relations and Western liberal modes of dominaton.	-0,41	15
3. A feminist foreign policy cannot come to be within the existing structures of MoFa. MoFa cannot use the 'add-women-and-stir' approach, which focuses on adding/including women into existing structures and policies.	0,52	9
4. Addressing racism is the main aspect of feminist foreign policy. Countries looking to adopt a FFP must be cautious not to reinforce enduring blind spots within the field and practice of international relations by ignoring race.	0,6	6
5. The highest priority for MoFa should be ensuring that their FFP is based on an intersectional understanding of gender, which recognises and addresses intersecting discriminations based on gender, age, ability, race, sexuality and class	1,54	2
6. Powerful states tend to invoke their own experiences as best practices to tackle the issue of gender-based discrimination elsewhere, while failing to consider seriously the impact of the racialised legacies of colonialism that led to conditions of gender discrimination in the Global South.	0,56	7
7. An FFP has to deliberately take a step back in the position of power of the Global North, which is not the same as decreasing support and resources. It does, however, imply the radical change of existing mechanisms of financing.	1,62	1
8. Southern leadership should be the main aspect of FFP. A FFP must amplify the voices of women's rights activists in the Global South not because they are perceived as victims or as marginalized, but because they demonstrate political agency even when Western eyes are not looking at them.	1,5	3
9. Strengthen the legal position of women. This has great societal and economic benefits for the world, and is thus the main aspect of FFP.	-0,39	14
10. To overcome the gendered barriers of international organizations and institutions, FFP must add women to existing frameworks. FFP's key element is law changes that would allow the acces of women to all international organizations and institutions of international governance.	-0,93	21
11. FFP must not abolish the military in general, but rather integrate women into those institutions. To allow women in combat is an indicator for gender equality.	-0,45	18
12. The most important aspect of FFP is the need to step up efforts to ensure that trade policy and trade promotion activities benefit women and men equally.	-0,26	13
13. An FFP must, most importantly, include specifically striving for gender equality and diverse representation within the ministry and in outgoing delegations.	-0,55	19
14. More equitable sharing of positions of power between women and men is the most essential part of a successful FFP.	-0,45	17
15. It is the most important part of FFP to address the underlying causes of women's under-representation in political processes and bodies, such as women's traditional main responsibility for unpaid housework and caring.	0,16	10
16. Commodification of women's labour is at its peak courtesy the unequal power structures normalised by capitalism.	-0,42	16
17. The abolition of capitalism is a necessary means to accomplish the emancipatory goal of feminism - abolishing every form of domination between the sexes.	-0,72	20
18. A FFP must reconceptualise security away from weapons and deterrence towards what actually makes individuals safe - such as diplomacy, human rights, democracy, international assistance, health care and economic justice.	1,05	5
19. It is only by destroying deeply-seated cultural norms and representations of the feminine and the masculine that women (and men) can be liberated.	0,53	8
20. Traditional male behaviours, including aggressiveness, competitiveness and domination are harmful to society and to particular fields within society, including politics. Instead, emphasizing caring, cooperation, and egalitarianism would make a better FFP.	0,08	11
21. In order to credibly fulfil an international leadership role, the government first has to advance gender equality and women's rights at the national level.	0,06	12
22. A feminist perspective on foreign affairs is idealistic, naive - and potentially even dangerous - in the realpolitik power struggles between nations.	-2,38	24
23. The most important goal of a FFP is helping to eradicate poverty and vulnerability around the world to enhance our own safety and prosperity.	-1,2	22
24. Not all conflicts are driven or shaped by gender imbalances. By demanding that gender empowerment be baked into every part of foreign policy, governments and donors may be chasing unrelated problems and getting in the way of their efforts to stop violence.	-1,38	23

4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Analysis

Extracted factors group respondents together based on their similar rankings of the statements (Brown, 1980). After running the factor analysis, we were able to determine that one factor - and thus one shared viewpoint - could be extracted from the dataset. This viewpoint was shared amongst eleven out of twelve respondents. Their composite Q-sort revealed a prioritisation of collaboration and inclusion within the Dutch feminist foreign policy.

4.1.1. Shared stakeholder viewpoint: A collaborative and inclusive feminist foreign policy

The extracted factor showed high factor loadings for eleven out of twelve respondents, thus representing all included institutional affiliations and physical locations. One respondent, with a consultancy background, is not significantly represented by this viewpoint. As presented in table 3, the most agreed-upon statement was statement 7: *“An FFP has to deliberately take a step back in the position of power of the Global North, which is not the same as decreasing support and resources. It does, however, imply the radical change of existing mechanisms of financing.”*. This statement was classified as postcolonial feminist. The second highest-ranking statement was number 5: *“The highest priority for MoFa should be ensuring that their FFP is based on an intersectional understanding of gender, which recognises and addresses intersecting discriminations based on gender, age, ability, race, sexuality and class”*. The other statements that were ranked highly agreeable (ranking 3, 4, 5 and 6) also included postcolonial- and intersectional feminist statements, as well as cultural feminist perspectives.

The perceived importance of postcolonial feminism in the Dutch feminist foreign policy is highlighted by stakeholders, stating that there is a power imbalance in development cooperation in favour of the donor. In a feminist foreign policy, this needs to change, according to stakeholders. They suggest that this requires participatory decision-making in which mechanisms of financing and resourcing are key. In their ranking of postcolonial feminist statements, respondents argue that the Dutch feminist foreign policy cannot “be a policy of white feminism” and that “resourcing is key in reforming North/South relations”. If a feminist foreign policy does not address such relations, a stakeholder argues, “having a feminist foreign policy means nothing”. Several respondents mention equal partnerships between the Dutch government and Southern partners as a key aspect of addressing such power dynamics. One respondent argues:

“In having a feminist foreign policy, the Dutch government has to be a passive actor first and listen, rather than acting immediately, to allow for better decision-making. A feminist foreign policy should be in service of the other, rather than the self.”

Secondly, respondents argue the importance of intersectional feminism, one defining it as “the power of feminism”. Intersectional feminism allows for a gender-transformative approach, which is key in addressing power imbalances in a patriarchal system, several stakeholders explain. Some cultural feminist arguments also shine through here in the focus on patriarchy and the importance of changing values. Respondents reiterate the importance of value change through feminist foreign policy. However, the majority criticises cultural feminist values when they perceive them as essentialist. They reject the idea of addressing certain qualities to either men or women, reiterating that the feminist foreign policy should “avoid a binary approach” and “present the policy as inclusive of and beneficial to all gender identities, including men and boys”.

The most disagreed-upon statements were either anti-feminist or liberal feminist. Starting with the lowest ranking, these statements included statement 22: *“A feminist perspective on foreign affairs is idealistic, naive - and potentially even dangerous - in the realpolitik power struggles between nations.”* and statement 24: *“Not all conflicts are driven or shaped by gender imbalances. By demanding that gender empowerment be baked into every part of foreign policy, governments and donors may be chasing unrelated problems and getting in the way of their efforts to stop violence.”*. Liberal feminist statements followed at the lower end of the ranking.

All respondents strongly disagreed with anti-feminist statements. They focused their arguments against a feminist foreign policy as naivety and chasing unrelated problems by explaining that “not every conflict is caused by gender, but every conflict has a gender aspect”. Most of the lowest-ranked feminist statements can be attributed to liberal feminist statements. A stakeholder mentions that “equal access is often not the issue”. Rather, other stakeholders argue, “legal aspects should be the outcome of norm changes”. Respondents acknowledge the importance of legal change, however argue that it does not always lead to practical change. In explaining her low ranking of a liberal feminist statement, a stakeholder states:

“Feminism cannot be watered down to women’s empowerment. Women’s representation within existing frameworks is what other feminist foreign policies often focus on - but having a transformative approach is key. It is not just about equality, but about addressing unequal power imbalances and how they perpetuate in foreign policy.”

4.2. Discussion

The analysis shows us that the large majority of the respondents (eleven out of twelve) share the presented viewpoint, regardless of their institutional affiliation. Postcolonial- and intersectional feminist perspectives are well represented amongst the respondents, as they rank statements affiliated with the respective strands on the highest. They highlight the importance of both feminist thoughts in their descriptions of “intersectionality as the power of feminism” and postcolonial feminism as leading in addressing power relations - which they perceive to be one of the main aspects of a feminist foreign policy. As the theoretical framework explains, these feminist strands are the most recent of the five strands presented. Moreover, the criticisms of the feminist foreign policies of other countries are majorly based on these strands. For example, critics argue that the Swedish policy fails to address the colonial underpinnings of international relations and intersectional forms of discrimination (Thompson et al., 2021; Zilla, 2022). France and Canada have received similar critiques, especially in

terms of lacking a postcolonial feminist perspective (Bouka et al., 2021; Pallapothu, 2020). Such criticisms suggest the popularity of postcolonial- and intersectional feminist thought amongst stakeholders in the respective countries. Therefore, the preference of the consulted Dutch stakeholders for these strands is not surprising, as it aligns with the stakeholder perspectives presented in the theoretical framework.

Respondents strongly disagree with anti-feminist statements, reiterating the added value of a feminist foreign policy for the Dutch context. The overall lowest-ranking feminist theory is liberal feminism. Arguments of respondents suggest that, due to its focus on equal opportunities and legal rights, the perspective is no longer suitable to address the most pressing issues. Such arguments fit with the criticisms of liberal feminism as presented in the theoretical framework, in which we highlight critiques of liberal feminism being inadequate in addressing complex issues of gender equality, especially in settings of development cooperation (Ackerly, 2001; Cottais, 2021). Moreover, the explanations given by respondents are similar to the critiques of the liberal feminist foreign policies of other countries. Here we find a link with the call for more postcolonial- and intersectional feminism at the heart of feminist foreign policy. Those who criticise Sweden, Canada and France for a too narrow focus on liberal feminism often refer to a lack of intersectionality and a continuation of Western dominance (Zilla, 2022; Bouka et al., 2021, Pallapothu, 2020).

In short, the responses of the consulted stakeholders of the Dutch feminist foreign policy express similar sentiments to those presented in the theoretical framework. The low ranking of liberal feminist statements is justified by similar points of criticism to those raised by Ackerly (2001), Bailey (2016) and Cottais (2021) in their analysis of liberal feminist theory. Moreover, the argumentation aligns with that of the critics of the liberal feminist foreign policies of Sweden, Canada and France (Thompson et al., 2021; Zilla, 2022; Bouka et al., 2021; Pallapothu, 2020). The low ranking and the argumentation for doing so are thus in line with the expectations presented in the theoretical framework.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1. Which feminist discourses should influence the Dutch feminist foreign policy the most according to its stakeholders?

With this research, we attempted to answer the question: *Which feminist discourses should influence the Dutch feminist foreign policy the most according to its stakeholders?* In the theoretical framework, we identified five feminist strands that would provide the framework for such a feminist discourse: liberal-, socialist-, cultural-, intersectional- and postcolonial feminism. Through Q-methodology, we selected twelve stakeholders of the Dutch feminist foreign policy to sort statements. These statements described suggestions for the Dutch feminist foreign policy through the lens of those five feminist strands. After using factor analysis to analyse the Q-sorts and evaluating the qualitative data obtained during the session, we identified a shared viewpoint between the respondents: a collaborative and inclusive feminist foreign policy.

Such a feminist foreign policy is rooted in intersectional- and postcolonial feminism. Respondents prioritise statements that expressed such perspectives, elaborating that intersectionality is “the power of feminism” and that the policy has to address unequal North/South relations in order to be meaningful. What respondents also have in common is their low rankings of statements that expressed anti-feminist and liberal feminist sentiments. All respondents argue for the added value of a feminist foreign policy to the Dutch context, in their strong disagreement with anti-feminist statements. The least popular feminist strand is liberal feminism. They argue that such an approach might cause “a watering down of feminism to women’s empowerment”. The viewpoint of the Dutch stakeholders shows a resemblance to the criticisms of feminist foreign policies of other countries. In those criticisms, a lack of a postcolonial- and/or intersectional perspective is often brought forward as the main issue. Moreover, the liberal feminist underpinnings of the Swedish, Canadian and French policies are seen as problematic by critics.

In the theoretical framework, we expressed three expectations for the Dutch feminist foreign policy: (1) a focus on liberal feminism, (2) a challenge, but also an opportunity to implement an intersectional feminist lens and (3) a lack of postcolonial feminism. We will discuss the implications of our research for each of these expectations.

5.1.1. A liberal feminist foreign policy

Current efforts of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs are mainly underpinned by liberal feminist thought. It focuses on equal rights and opportunities for women, for which main priorities include more women in leadership positions, decision-making, and economic empowerment. Such a perspective is also at the heart of the Swedish, Canadian and French feminist foreign policy. In terms of an expected continuation of liberal feminist efforts, such an approach can be expected to receive criticism from the respondents. The critiques of liberal feminist underpinnings of a feminist foreign policy in other countries point to this. The liberal feminist foreign policies of Sweden, Canada and France received criticism for their liberal underpinnings. Critics denounced the perceived lack of ability of liberal feminism to address matters of intersectionality and postcolonialism. Rather, they stated, it allowed for policies to become instrumentalist. Moreover, through our analysis, we find that liberal feminism is the feminist strand that receives the least support from the consulted stakeholders.

They express concerns similar to those of critics of existing feminist foreign policies. If the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs develops a mainly liberal feminist foreign policy, it can thus be expected that the consulted stakeholders will criticise such a policy.

5.1.2. An intersectional feminist foreign policy

Other feminist foreign policies, as well as the current Dutch foreign policy, are criticised for a lack of an intersectional perspective. Different from other feminist strands, policy documents often include explicit mentions of intersectionality. However, the same policies receive criticism for a lack thereof. Critics of intersectional feminism offer an explanation for this, in stating that the concept has become too general and politicised. In the theoretical framework, we briefly argue that intersectionality can quickly become a ‘catch-all’ term for all feminists, with which it loses its intention. Its intention lies in analysing and re-evaluating existing power relations and structural inequalities rather than just recognising that discrimination exists along several axes. The development of an intersectional feminist foreign policy can prove to be a challenge for the Dutch ministry, as it has been for the Dutch, Swedish, Canadian and French ministries. This may be an issue, considering that intersectional feminism is one of the two dominant strands among the consulted stakeholders. Respondents repeatedly argue for intersectional underpinnings of the Dutch feminist foreign policy.

However, we also shine a light on an opportunity for the incorporation of an intersectional perspective. The Dutch feminist foreign policy is expected to build on existing priorities of LGBTQI+ matters, gender equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). In its current foreign policy, its efforts for SRHR are a priority, and the Ministry refers to its ‘front-runner position’ concerning SRHR and LGBTQI+ matters. The expectation that they will continue such efforts are supported by the parliamentary letter on the progress of the feminist foreign policy, which includes several references to LGBTQI+ people, specifically. The explicit focus on LGBTQI+ is an opportunity for intersectional feminism, if incorporated properly. The incorporation of other forms of structural discrimination, rather than on (a binary conception of) gender alone, has received praise in the Mexican feminist foreign policy. It is important to note that the explicit inclusion of structural discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation as an intersection of gender-based discrimination is not sufficient for an intersectional feminist perspective. However, it does provide an opportunity in the sense that other forms of discrimination may explicitly be taken into account.

5.1.3. A postcolonial feminist foreign policy

The current Dutch foreign policies are criticised for a lack of a postcolonial feminist lens. Similarly, the feminist foreign policies of Sweden, Canada and France have been criticised for an inability to address the impact of colonialism on current foreign relations. This leads us to the expectation that the incorporation of a postcolonial feminist perspective in the Dutch feminist foreign policy may prove to be a challenge. This can be an issue, as the incorporation of a postcolonial feminist lens is called for by respondents of this research, as well as in other research and papers on Dutch foreign policy. The continuation of colonial pasts in current foreign policy is seen as problematic, and addressing North/South relations is perceived to be essential to a successful policy by respondents. The call for addressing these unequal power dynamics by respondents as well as in Dutch civil society requires a postcolonial feminist lens in the Dutch feminist foreign policy.

5.2. Limitations and further research

While the findings presented above were determined with great care, there are some limitations to this research. Firstly, the statements in the Q-set were cross-referenced with the theoretical framework to categorise them within one of the five feminist strands. The cross-reference with the strands of feminism is not absolute. There is always overlap between feminisms, as it is an ever-growing and developing concept that often builds on one another. While the categorisation of statements is thus not black and white, for the sake of analysis it is necessary to distinguish between the different strands. In doing so, the priorities of the feminisms were leading. For example, while addressing the effect of capitalism on women may arise in other feminisms, it is one of the leading themes in socialist feminism. Therefore, statements on such are categorised as socialist feminist. As the ranking of all statements contributed to determining what feminist strands are dominant in the perceptions of stakeholders, this may affect the internal validity. In order to preserve the internal validity, non-ambiguity of statements was an important criterion in selecting the Q-set. In doing so, we aimed to establish a Q-set that exists of statements in which one of the feminist strands is clearly dominant.

Secondly, in terms of external validity the size of the P-set may present limitations. The P-set consists of a relatively small group of participants that are not necessarily representative of the population (van Exel & de Graaf, 2005). Rather, the participants are purposefully chosen based on their demonstrated knowledge on the topic (Brown, 1980). The P-set consisted of twelve respondents, within which individuals working at civil society organisations based in the Netherlands were overrepresented. The findings of this research cannot be generalised to represent all stakeholders of Dutch foreign policy, which includes all individuals and organisations who have relationships with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In order to improve external validity, we aimed to include respondents from different types of organisations as well as respondents based outside of the Netherlands.

Thirdly, the use of Q-methodology has limitations for the reliability of our findings. The discussions with respondents informed our findings. As is the case with such qualitative research, these discussions may have been held and interpreted differently by other researchers. However, as we are using Q-methodology, there is a quantitative aspect to the study as well. This limits such subjectivity in interpretation of discussions, as these discussions were accompanied by the ranking of the statements on the Q-grid and factor analysis. The interpretations of the discussions align with the ranking of the statements.

Lastly, in our theoretical framework we described the expectations of the Dutch feminist foreign policy. These findings are based on current foreign policy efforts, progress on the feminist foreign policy and the policies of other countries. However, these expectations could not be confirmed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. We reached out to the Ministry, however, as the feminist foreign policy is still a work in progress, civil servants cannot comment on the underlying feminist principles of the upcoming policy. Their perspectives could therefore not be used to confirm the hypothesis.

With these findings, we have aimed to contribute to the understanding of the feminist theory that underpins stakeholder perspectives of the Dutch feminist foreign policy. In doing so, this was exploratory research which aimed to map those perspectives. Having identified intersectional- and postcolonial feminist theory as leading - both through our empirical findings and those presented in the theoretical framework - it may be useful to focus future research on the elaborate implications of those theories on the Dutch feminist foreign policy. Moreover, after the publication of the feminist foreign policy document, further research can be done. The framework of feminist theory - specifically of liberal, intersectional and postcolonial feminism - can be used to analyse the feminist underpinnings of the final feminist foreign policy document, as well as the responses of stakeholders.

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ANNEX 1: The Q-set

Statement no.	Statement
1	The main element of developing meaningful and effective foreign policy responses is the confrontation with the power structures established by patriarchy.
2	A liberal cosmopolitan approach to feminist foreign policy reproduces existing relations of power, including gender power relations and Western liberal modes of domination.
3	A feminist foreign policy cannot come to be within the existing structures of MoFa. MoFa cannot use the ‘add-women-and-stir’ approach, which focuses on adding/including women into existing structures and policies.
4	Addressing racism is the main aspect of feminist foreign policy. Countries looking to adopt a FFP must be cautious not to reinforce enduring blind spots within the field and practice of international relations by ignoring race.
5	The highest priority for MoFa should be ensuring that their Feminist Foreign Policy is based on an intersectional understanding of gender, which recognises and addresses intersecting discriminations based on gender, age, ability, race, sexuality, and class .
6	Powerful states invoke their own experiences as best practices to tackle the issue of gender-based discrimination “elsewhere ” while failing to consider seriously the impact of the racialized legacies of colonialism that led to conditions of gender discrimination in the Global South.
7	An FFP has to deliberately take a step back in the position of power of the Global North, which is not the same as decreasing support and resources. It does, however, imply the radical change of existing mechanisms of financing.
8	Southern leadership should be the main aspect of FFP. A feminist foreign policy must amplify the voices of women’s rights activists in the Global South not because they are perceived as victims or as marginalised, but because they demonstrate political agency even when Western eyes are not looking at them.
9	Strengthen the legal position of women. This has great societal and economic benefits for the world, and is thus the main aspect of FFP.
10	To overcome the gendered barriers of international organisations and institutions, FFP must add women to the existing frameworks. FFP’s key element is law changes that would allow the access of women to all international organisations and institutions of international governance.
11	FFP must not abolish the military in general, but rather integrate women into those institutions. To allow women in combat is an indicator for gender equality as men and women are being viewed as equally suitable to serve in the military.
12	The most important aspect of FFP is the need to step up efforts to ensure that trade policies benefit women and men equally.

Continues on next page

- 13 An FFP must, most importantly, include specifically striving for greater gender equality and diverse representation within the ministry and in outgoing delegations, promoting women's entrepreneurship in trade and international cooperation.
- 14 More equitable sharing of positions of power between women and men is the most essential part of a successful FFP.
- 15 It is the most important part of FFP to address the underlying causes of women's under-representation in political processes and bodies, such as women's traditional main responsibility for unpaid housework and caring.
- 16 Commodification of women's labour is at its peak courtesy the unequal power structures normalised by capitalism.
- 17 The abolition of capitalism is a necessary means to accomplish the emancipatory goal of feminism.
- 18 A feminist foreign policy must reconceptualise security away from weapons and deterrence towards what actually makes individuals safe - such as diplomacy, human rights, democracy, international assistance, health care and economic justice.
- 19 It is only by destroying deeply-seated cultural norms and representations of 'the feminine' and 'the masculine', that women (and men) can be liberated.
- 20 Traditional male behaviours, including aggressiveness, competitiveness, and domination, are harmful to society and to particular fields within society, including politics. Instead, emphasising caring, cooperation, and egalitarianism would make a better FFP.
- 21 In order to credibly fulfil an international leadership role, the government first has to advance gender equality and women's rights at the national level.
- 22 A feminist perspective on foreign affairs is idealistic, naïve—and potentially even dangerous—in the realpolitik power struggles between nations.
- 23 The most important goal of a FFP is helping to eradicate poverty and vulnerability around the world to enhance our own safety and prosperity.
- 24 Not all conflicts are driven or shaped by gender imbalances. By demanding that gender empowerment be baked into every effort to end wars, governments and donors may be chasing unrelated problems, and getting in the way of their efforts to stop violence.