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## **Feminist Foreign Policy - A Transformative Policy Framework or an Empty Label?**

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Universiteit  
Leiden

**Master Thesis**

**Feminist Foreign Policy – A Transformative Policy  
Framework or an Empty Label?**

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**MA International Relations – Global Conflict in the Modern Era**

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# Table of Contents

<b>1. Introduction .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2. Literature Review .....</b>	<b>7</b>
2.1 Attempts to Define FFP as a Concept.....	7
2.2 Attempts to Identify the Feminisms Present in FFP .....	8
2.3 Attempts to Define Governmental FFPs.....	9
2.4 The Research Gap.....	11
2.5 The Research Question .....	11
2.6 Relevance of the Research .....	12
<b>3. Methodological Framework.....</b>	<b>13</b>
3.1 Case Selection.....	13
3.2 Methodology .....	14
3.2.1 Material Analysed .....	15
<b>4. A Discourse Analysis of Feminist Foreign Policies .....</b>	<b>17</b>
4.1 Argentina.....	17
4.2 Canada.....	18
4.3 Chile.....	19
4.4 France.....	20
4.5 Germany .....	21
4.6 Luxembourg .....	22
4.7 Mexico.....	23
4.8 Scotland .....	24
4.9 Spain .....	25

<b>5. Discussion .....</b>	<b>27</b>
<i>5.1 Redressing Power Systems, Structures and Relations .....</i>	<i>28</i>
5.1.1 Considering Colonial and Imperial Legacies.....	28
5.1.1.1 Development Aid and ‘Women Over There’ / The Others .....	29
5.1.2 Considering Capitalism.....	30
5.1.2.1 A Focus on Women’s Empowerment .....	31
5.1.2.2 A Focus on Representation and Visibility .....	32
5.1.2.3 Gender Equality as a Means, Rather Than as a Goal .....	33
5.2 Inclusivity.....	33
5.2.1 A focus on Women and Girls as the Main Subjects .....	33
5.2.2 Intersectionality.....	35
5.4 Instrumentalization .....	35
5.4.1 FFP as a Tool to Signal Adherence to the International Liberal Order .....	35
5.4.2 FFP as a Tool for Regional and International Power and Influence .....	36
5.5 Applying the Principle of Nothing About Us Without Us .....	37
5.6 Discussion of the Results .....	38
<b>6. Conclusion .....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>43</b>

## 1. Introduction

Almost ten years ago, the Swedish government announced, in a radical step, the adoption of a Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP). Back then, this departure from conventional foreign policy frameworks was met with varying levels of surprise, scepticism, or even sneers (Silverman, 2016). But currently, FFP is on the rise; several states, such as Germany, the Netherlands, Mexico, Chile, or Canada have officially declared their foreign policy feminist. Others have announced their intent to do so, among them Mongolia, Slovenia, Liberia, Brazil, or Belgium (Thompson et al., 2023). Even the European Parliament and the US Senate have debated the possibility of a feminist foreign and security policy (Thompson et al., 2021). Yet, despite the growing international prominence of FFP, the concept has also been met with some problems. Not only has the pioneer, Sweden, abandoned its FFP again after a new government came into power in 2022 (Walfridsson, 2022). But also, a great deal of criticism about FFP has been voiced by academia and civil society alike.

Firstly, the idea of a foreign policy that is feminist has been widely questioned. Feminist IR is deeply suspicious of foreign policy, criticizing it as being dominated by, and contributing to, the reproduction of masculinist norms and hierarchies (Aggestam et al., 2019). This suspicion stems from the feminist view that states and statist institutions are defined by patriarchal and oppressive power structures (Enloe, 2017) or as institutions where such structures are upheld (Kantola & Squires, 2012). As such, the ability of states to promote feminist principles has been put into question. Furthermore, the typical state-centrism of traditional foreign policy neglects non-state actors such as transnational networks and civil society, which feminist scholars argue to be key sites for transformation (Aggestam & Bergman-Rosamond, 2019). Hence, the employment of feminism by states is contested, especially for policies that seemingly aim at closing the gender gap or that focus on development aid to ‘empower’ women. Feminism, then, becomes a ‘handmaid of capitalism’ focusing on the individual instead of the collective and neglecting structural issues (Fraser, 2013). Or it empowers women and girls for the sake of economic efficiency rather than to dismantle structural inequalities (Calkin, 2015).

Secondly, a growing chorus of academics have voiced criticism pertaining to the feminisms behind FFP and to the ways in which FFPs have been employed by governments. It is for example suggested that FFPs “...maintain global hierarchies, due to their colonial underpinnings and universalisms” (Rivera Chávez, intro., 2022), contribute to existing power

balances in international relations due to their liberal nature (Thomson, 2022 / Robinson, 2021), or risk reproducing eurocentrism and white supremacy (Wright et al., 2020). FFP is further criticized as being a project of the Global North, neglecting perspectives from outside this region. African feminists, for example, have suggested that there is a reluctance to fully interrogate existing global hierarchies and historic power structures in global politics. As a result, current applications of FFP are “antithetical to the aims of radical policy changes informed by feminism” (Debating Ideas, para.5, 2023).

One overarching question seems to stand out in many of the criticisms, whether they are pertaining to the content and aim of the policies or to the authors of the policies and their values. The question, which this thesis will focus on, is whether a foreign policy that is feminist can challenge and transform the underlying structures, systems, and power relations that enforce and uphold gender and other inequalities? In other words, can FFPs be transformative?

In tracing the development of FFP, the answer seems to be that it has a transformative potential. Its roots lie in the longstanding discussions of the position of women and of gender equality within international relations, for example in connection to development policies or to national strategies for gender equality. They have manifested for instance in the UN Conferences on women (1975, 1980, 1985, 1995), the Beijing Declaration affirming that “women’s rights are human rights” (United Nations, 1995) or the Sustainable Development Goal 5, aiming at achieving gender equality by 2030. Yet, the notion of feminism has been employed very little in connection to states’ foreign policy (Thomson, 2020a). With the work surrounding the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda, states and civil society alike have slowly changed that. WPS was established through United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 in 2000. This resolution reaffirms the importance of women in conflict prevention and resolution as well as the peacebuilding and peace-keeping processes, urges actors to increase women’s participation in peace and security efforts, and to take special precautions to protect women and girls in conflicts (UNSCR 1325, 2000). WPS has since developed into a broader framework that encompasses issues such as the combat of sexual violence in conflict or the increase of political participation (Achilleos-Sarll, 2018). What is more, UNSCR 1325 has been the impetus for governments to adopt more feminist and pro-gender norms in their foreign policies (Aggestam et al., 2019). FFP, it is argued, is an attempt to further the WPS agenda by bringing the gender-security nexus to the forefront of international relations (Aggestam &

Bergman-Rosamond, 2019). Judging by this, it seems as though FFP is not only aiming at improving the position of women and girls in foreign policy, but at dismantling global systems of hierarchy and oppression. This indeed reflects current transformative intentions of feminism, which focus on equality for all marginalized groups and on ending all types of oppressions, whether based on gender, race, class, sexual orientation, or other characteristics (Stienstra, 2022).

And despite widespread criticism, interest in FFP from governments, academia, and civil society alike continues to be significant. In 2024, FFP can be considered as a legitimate and established policy framework, not only because the group of states adopting FFP is steadily growing, but also because it is diversifying. Currently, the number of countries that have announced FFPs is balanced between the Global South and North (Thompson et al., 2023). Additionally, international organizations, such as UN Women, and civil society organizations, such as the Germany-based Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy (CFFP), the Feminist Foreign Policy Collaborative in the US, or The Gender Security Project based in India are continuously working towards the proliferation of FFP internationally. While this could indicate that FFP is not just an empty label, but rather a serious transformative project, several scholars maintain that, at least in their current forms, FFPs do not fully commit to transformative change in international relations (Rivera Chávez, 2022/Thomson, 2022/Robinson, 2021/Wright et al., 2020). So, the question remains: Is FFP truly the transformative project it promises to be?

This thesis aspires to contribute to answer this question by analysing the values incorporated in practical implementations of FFP by governments, henceforth called governmental FFPs. In doing so, we will take a closer look at which feminisms are incorporated into FFPs, to what extent they are incorporated and whether they adhere to transformative ambitions of feminism.

## 2. Literature Review

Almost a decade after Sweden first announced its FFP, academic writing on the topic is steadily growing and includes normative as well as empirically focused studies. Since FFP as a policy framework is a newer phenomenon, most of the current literature concerns itself with one of two aspects of FFP: Either, with the conceptualization, definition, and underlying norms of FFP, or with the analysis of its implementation and impact in the form of various case studies.

### 2.1 Attempts to Define FFP as a Concept

Much of the current literature on FFP centres around establishing a commonly agreed upon definition and understanding of FFP. Scholars have been approaching this task by drawing from feminist theories in IR and by tracing the roots of FFP. As a result, key principles, such as the promotion of gender equality and women's rights, the participation of women in decision-making processes, and the recognition of intersecting forms of discrimination are suggested (Oas, 2019). Aggestam & Bergman-Rosamond posit that the WPS agenda acts as a normative framework for feminist-informed foreign policies, therefore echoing the previously stated principles (2016). But even though the WPS agenda offers some guidance, an officially agreed-upon treaty or resolution on FFP, forming the basis for feminist policymaking, does thus far not exist.

Additionally, civil society organizations are also informing and shaping FFP. The CFFP perceives traditional foreign policy as deeply rooted in patriarchal values and as intertwined with systems of capitalism, imperialism, and colonialism. This, the CFFP argues, creates oppression based on gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, and other characteristics. FFP is understood as a framework that enables the fight against these power inequalities and for the wellbeing of marginalized people. It puts into question inherent hierarchies in foreign policy and offers an alternative, intersectional, understanding of security (CFFP, n.d.). The International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) argues that FFP prioritizes equality and the human rights of women and marginalized groups in interactions between states, disrupting patriarchal power structures on all levels of foreign policy (Achilleos-Sarll et al., 2023). As these examples underline, non-state actors are campaigning for an intersectional FFP that includes marginalized groups beyond women and that understands gender equality beyond binary terms (Achilleos-Sarll et al., 2023).



However, emphasis is also put on the fact that the current application of FFP may not align entirely with such feminist principles and values. Accordingly, it is argued that FFP is still open to interpretation and change (Achilleos-Sarll et al., 2023). A variety of actors are defining, conceptualizing, and mediating FFP, therefore, different understandings of what it entails, what it should aim for, why it should be adopted, and what makes it feminist exist. This is not necessarily surprising, considering that there is not a single, monolithic feminism. Instead, many feminisms exist and are continuously re-discussed. Yet, it is frequently criticized that many applications of FFP are heavily influenced by Western feminism and do not fully challenge issues of power and inequality. Some argue, however, that this is an issue within feminist movements in general and that the transformative potential remains despite that (Achilleos-Sarll et al., 2023). Nevertheless, one indispensable requirement for a fully transformative FFP is a rigorous implementation of a postcolonial and intersectional approach (Achilleos-Sarll, 2018).

## 2.2 Attempts to Identify the Feminisms Present in FFP

The fact that the norms and values present in FFP largely reflect liberal Western ideas is widely criticized in academia. This approach is seen as reinforcing existing power dynamics and Western hegemony in international relations. Often referred to as a global justice approach, in which governments enforce liberal norms for ‘the benefit’ of the racialized other, it ultimately perpetuates a neo-colonialist agenda (Robinson, 2018). A white liberal understanding of feminism perpetuates the stereotype of the Global North ‘saving’ women in the Global South. Instead of disrupting eurocentrism and notions of white supremacy, they are then reproduced and reinforced. A simple ‘add women and stir’ approach, which FFP currently employs, cannot break such patterns of oppression and hierarchy (Wright et al., 2020).

Yet here again, a variety of implementations exist. Sweden, for example, centred its feminist approach to foreign policy around the so-called three R’s: rights, representation, and resource. The Swedish government understood “...feminist foreign policy as a goal in and of itself”, which is in line with Sweden’s long-term feminist engagement (Thomson, 2020b, p.426). Canada initially had adopted a “Feminist International Assistance Policy”, thus only implementing a feminist approach on the international development aid level, with a focus on economic empowerment of women (Thomson, 2020b). Mexico, the first country of the Global South to adopt a FFP, has chosen a comprehensive feminist approach to all areas of foreign

policy. However, the government has been criticised due to its failure to address gender issues within its borders (Doumon, 2021). While all three countries have included aspects of trade into their respective FFPs, France and Spain, on the other hand, have not. These are just a few examples of FFPs, none of which are identical to the other.

Scheyer & Kumskova argue that while the commitment that many states are making to FFP is laudable, their practices often “do not reflect an authentically feminist approach” (2019, p. 57). That is because FFPs frequently neglect issues of race, class, or sexuality, limiting their ability to bring about transformative change (Scheyer & Kumskova, 2019). A narrow understanding of gender, failing to account for the diversity of experiences and identities of women around the world, limits the potential to eliminate structural differences and promote equality. The current eurocentric and colonial framework of FFP is therefore more harmful than helpful. FFP should instead be based on an inclusive approach that recognizes ‘pluriversality’ (Rivera Chávez, 2022). Or it should be based on a critical feminist ethic of care that challenges binary gender norms (Robinson, 2021). Either way, the tenor is that if a commitment to feminist principles of intersectionality could be guaranteed, FFPs would have the potential to be transformative (Seelow, 2022). African feminists agree that the prioritization of intersection and equality are central in feminist informed policies. The voices and experiences of women and marginalized groups should be prioritized in policymaking so that patriarchal and colonial structures that perpetuate inequality can be dismantled (Debating Ideas, 2023).

### 2.3 Attempts to Define Governmental FFPs

A large part of the academic literature analyses the implementation of FFPs by countries that have adopted it. Yet, even in such empirical studies, many of the previously mentioned criticisms are reiterated.

The Feminist Foreign Policy Collaborative has attempted to create a practical definition of FFP by analysing governmental FFPs in several editions. The first edition analysed only the policies of Sweden, Canada, and France, concluding that there are varying interpretations of FFP that leave room for improvement. It is suggested that an intersectional approach as well as gender equality as the principal goal of FFP could lead to improvements (Thompson & Clement, 2019). The 2021 update encompasses more countries, but similar criticisms. Policies either had a too narrow and binary focus on women, lacked full implementation in all areas of foreign policy,

or ignored domestic issues of gender-based violence (Thompson et al., 2021). The most recent update declares FFP officially a trend, with a bigger and more diverse group of countries than ever before having adopted such a foreign policy. Despite that, there is still a discrepancy between the Collaborative's own definition of FFP and the actual policies implemented by different countries. Intersectionality and gender mainstreaming continue to be an issue, as well as the allocation of enough resources, the lack of engagement with feminist activists and movements from civil society, and the limited ambitions to disrupt power structures (Thompson et al., 2023).

There is a lack of clarity in the definition of what FFP means, leading to a variety of implementations that do not fully represent the feminist intention for transformation. A discourse analysis on Sweden and Canada's FFPs concludes that their understanding of what FFP means, in terms of policy strategy and what the central issues are, is quite different. While Sweden's efforts to combat gender inequality were quite comprehensive, Canada's commitment remains vague and unspecified (Thomson, 2020b). Consequently, the ambiguous definition and understanding of feminist values present in Canada's FIAP hinders it from reaching its fully transformative potential (Rao & Tiessen, 2020). However, Sweden's FFP did not remain without criticism. Nylund et al. argue that Swedish FFP discourse was often essentialist and reproduced colonial power relations, constructing Sweden and other Northern European countries as superior to the 'others' from the Global South (2023). The reception of Sweden's FFP reflected that, being mostly perceived as a Western imposition that reproduced power dynamics (Zhukova, 2023).

Furthermore, the current norms that underly governmental FFPs are also widely criticised. One study that examines the FFPs of Sweden, Canada, France, and Mexico argues that gender equality is a liberal value supported by states who adhere to the liberal international order. However, liberal norms often sustain hierarchies in international relations and reinforce existing power imbalances (Thomson, 2022). Liberal feminist approaches are further criticised for exacerbating, rather than reducing, gender inequalities for marginalized groups due to a failure to address structural inequalities (Morton et al., 2020). As such, FFP's are also perceived negatively, especially in non-Western contexts. Sweden's FFP, for example, tended to be viewed as a form of Western imperialism (Sundström et al., 2021). The pan-African feminist collective AfricanFeminism proclaims that current FFPs are a liberal feminists dream. African

knowledge and scholarship had been deliberately excluded from the discourse, leading to a policy that perpetuates colonial structures of power and knowledge creation. If FFP does not challenge “the white supremacist-colonial-patriarchal power” it will just be a label without real transformative effects (AfricanFeminism, 2023).

## 2.4 The Research Gap

Even though scholarship on FFP is relatively young, an extensive research body on what defines FFP and what it can potentially achieve already exists. Within this research body, a large chorus argues that, at least in its current form, FFP struggles to achieve its transformative potential. Several explanations for the failure of FFP to be transformative are proposed. Some argue that the lack of definition of FFP itself as well as of the feminisms incorporated in FFP leads to this failure. Others posit that FFP represents mostly liberal norms and values and as such, reinforces Western hegemony rather than challenging systems and structures of dominance, power, and oppression. Finally, it is often argued that the lack of an intersectional approach has also led to a limited transformative potential of FFP.

But while many potential reasons are proposed, several questions also remain open. Almost no comprehensive studies of the feminisms employed in the conceptualization of FFP by governments have been conducted. Most studies focus on either the theoretical aspect of FFPs or include a limited number of cases. The case selection in research on FFP is mostly limited to Western countries and among them primarily Sweden, France, and Canada. This is partly because those countries have had a FFP for the longest since many of the newer countries adopting a FFP have done so very recently. This, however, results in fewer studies on governmental FFPs implemented in the Global South, and even fewer that provide an overview or a comparison of FFPs both from the Global South and the Global North. This presents a serious gap in the research on the transformative potential of FFPs, especially because an important argument against FFPs’ transformative potential states that FFP is a concept by and for the Global North.

## 2.5 The Research Question

This thesis aims at filling this research gap by conducting a comprehensive study of the transformative potential of governmental FFPs. To better understand the potential to challenge

and transform underlying structures, systems, and power relations that enforce and uphold gender and other inequalities, the (feminist) values, the characteristics, and the emphases of FFPs will be identified in this research. This research project can therefore contribute to answering the question of whether FFP is truly the transformative project it promises to be, or whether it is more of a strategic, but empty, label. In analysing all current governmental FFPs, both from the Global South and the Global North, this research offers a particularly comprehensive answer to that question. The following research question has therefore been formulated:

***RQ:*** *Which (feminist) values and characteristics shape governmental Feminist Foreign Policies?*

## 2.6 Relevance of the Research

The focus of this thesis on FFP is not only timely but also addresses critical gaps in the current scholarly landscape. FFP, as an emerging concept, has garnered significant attention in recent years. However, as demonstrated through the literature review, several questions remain unanswered or partially answered, which merits further exploration and analysis. The implications of FFP on International Relations (IR) and its underlying ideologies remains unclear, creating room for meaningful contributions to current scholarship. By building upon existing research, this thesis project aims at providing more concrete answers, offering a nuanced understanding of how FFP intersects with issues of power and hegemony. Most importantly, this thesis can contribute to identifying limitations and opportunities for improvement for FFP. As such, this critical analysis not only contributes to the academic discussion but can also inform practical policy implementations. Ultimately, this thesis can also contribute by bridging the gap between theoretical debates on feminism and the practical implications of this theory in policy contexts. Through an interdisciplinary approach, the research intends to foster a better understanding of FFP and its potential role in shaping a more equitable and just global order.

### 3. Methodological Framework

#### 3.1 Case Selection

The aim of this research is to gain a comprehensive understanding of the transformative potential of FFP. To do so, it is important to analyse as many different cases, or as many governmental FFPs, as possible. As governments continue to announce their interest, the adoption, or even the abandonment of a FFP, the potential cases for analysis change over time. However, the case selection for this thesis has been completed at the end of November 2023, and as such, changes after 30 November 2023 have not been considered. In the following section, the countries affiliated with FFP, possible cases, will be outlined and the selection criteria applied in this research will be explained.

Since 2014, when Sweden announced its adoption of a Feminist Foreign Policy, several other countries have followed. These countries are Argentina, Canada, Chile, Colombia, France, Germany, Liberia, Libya, Luxembourg, Mexico, Mongolia, the Netherlands, Scotland, Slovenia, and Spain. The government of Brazil and Belgium are currently exploring the possibility of labelling their foreign policy feminist. The Government of Catalonia is another actor interested in promoting FFP, although at the sub-national level (Thompson et al., 2023). Additionally, the member-states of the so-called Feminist Foreign Policy Plus Group (FFP+ Group), an alliance of countries engaged on the topic of FFP, are potential cases. This group has come together during the 78<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly to reaffirm the commitment of its member-states to “take feminist, intersectional and gender-transformative approaches to [their] foreign policies” (Government of the Netherlands, 2023). The members of the FFP+ Group are comprised of Albania, Argentina, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, France, Germany, Israel, Luxembourg, Mexico, Mongolia, the Netherlands, Rwanda, Spain, Sweden, and Tunisia (The Gender Security Project, 2023). The here mentioned states are all potential cases for analysis for this research. However, not all of them are equally suitable.

The research question aims at better understanding the (feminist) values and characteristics that shape governmental FFPs. All the above cases have thus far generated information that could offer insight into this. However, a substantial number of governments have only announced plans to adopt a FFP and have not yet officially done so. Such cases will not be included in this

research since the policy-making process has not yet been concluded. As such, their incorporation into this research could lead to an inaccurate understanding of the values and characteristics behind FFPs, since the concrete policies could still be subject to change or may not materialize at all.

Moreover, some potential cases also consist of countries that have officially declared the adoption of a FFP, but without offering substantial details regarding the content of their policies. In these instances, the discourse mainly consists of the announcements, but further verbal discourse is sparse and written documents outlining or explaining a FFP are virtually non-existent. Such cases will also not be considered for this thesis, as the absence of substantive information doesn't allow for meaningful analysis.

To summarize, this study will analyse cases of FFPs that have been officially adopted at the end of November 2023 and for which enough discourse has been produced. This will provide an accurate overview of which (feminist) values and characteristics are implemented in governmental FFPs and more broadly, of the transformative potential of current FFPs. The following cases fulfil these criteria: Argentina, Canada, Chile, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Mexico, Scotland, and Spain.

### 3.2 Methodology

To better understand which (feminist) values shape governmental FFPs, the methodology of a discourse analysis will be employed. Discourse analysis is a popular method to identify and understand values within a text or document. Written texts are considered to "...contain representations and intentionality. There can be underlying (and to some extent hidden) prevailing perceptions, opinions and understandings that are baked into the text." (Kivle & Espedal, 2022, p.171). As such, a discourse analysis is not simply aimed at analysing the text, but the "established and obvious narrative" within the text (Kivle & Espedal, 2022, p.171). In other words, written texts reflect societal desires and values, which can be considered part of the discourse. Through discourse analysis, these underlying meanings and values within the text can be identified. Discourse analyses are therefore intended to "spell out the *sensed* yet not directly accessible structures of power and knowledge within specific talk and texts." (Kivle & Espedal, 2022, p.173). A written text, such as a policy paper conveying the outlines of a FFP,

is intended for communication, and, therefore, for meaning making (Neumann, 2021, as cited in Kivle & Espedal, 2022). In analysing such a text and the choice of words and phrasings within the text, world views, power structures, and social codes can be identified. A discourse analysis therefore lends itself to better understand the underlying (feminist) values and characteristics in governmental FFPs, as it can identify specific values within a written text.

Discourse Analysis is often divided into different sub-categories or traditions. For this thesis, the approach of a critical discourse analysis (CDA) has been chosen. It is considered critical because it questions the structures of societal inequality (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002). As such, CDA is mostly used to analyse structures of power, dominance, and discrimination within language (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000). Language, in this approach, “is considered a material form of ideology” (Sowińska, 2013, p.793) and its role as a power resource is emphasized (Mullet, 2018). CDA thus also specifically focuses on the role of discourse in constructing the social world. It offers insight into how values are executed through language, but also into how discourses construct, maintain, and legitimize social realities. Language, in this theory, is a form of social practice that can reproduce or contest existing social relations (Janks, 1997). As such, CDA is a useful tool to realize the goal of better understanding the transformative potential of FFPs. It can help to identify which (feminist) values the discourse refers to, constructs, maintains, or enforces. It reveals whether existing social relations, and as such also structural and systemic inequalities, are contested or reproduced through the discourse.

### 3.2.1 Material Analysed

The discourse within official policy documents, generated by the government or the ministries of foreign affairs to explain and outline their FFP, will be analysed. As such, only written discourse will be considered. Some countries possess only one document explaining their FFP, others have several documents that emphasize different aspects of the FFP. For this thesis, the most representative documents, meaning those that contain the most comprehensive information, have been selected. This normally includes at least one specific policy document explaining the government’s approach to FFP, sometimes also legal decrees or official announcements. For each country, the choice of documents, as well as the contents of the documents, will be more closely explained in the analysis section below.



The discourse in the selected documents will be analysed for three different aspects. Firstly, the general discourse will be assessed, meaning the texts that introduce and explain the FFP. Secondly, the discourse outlining concrete policy actions is assessed. And lastly, the discourse is analysed for what it does not address. For each aspect the language, phrasing, and framing is considered. Through this process, the (feminist) values and characteristics underlying each country's FFP can be identified. A specific focus will be put on identifying values and characteristics that either enhance or limit the transformative potential of FFPs.

If possible, the discourse analysis will consistently be conducted on documents in the official language of the country under investigation. This practice is deemed to be beneficial because examining documents in their original language ensures a more accurate and nuanced understanding of linguistic subtleties, idioms, and specific expressions that defy complete translation. The consideration of tone, style of communication, and cultural references further contribute to a more comprehensive and precise analysis. However, to be able to accurately do this, a certain level of proficiency of the language is necessary. I am fluent in German, my native language, as well as English and French. Consequently, documents originally published in any of these three languages will be analysed in their original form. For documents in languages other than these, the approach involves either relying on official translations to English, or, if unavailable, utilizing online translation tools to produce an English version. The results of the analysis will be documented in English.

## 4. A Discourse Analysis of Feminist Foreign Policies

In this section the results of the discourse analysis, which can be found in its entirety in the annex, are summarized. As noted before, while conducting the discourse analysis, a specific focus has been put on (feminist) values and characteristics that hinder a fully transformative FFP. Therefore, the summary for each of the nine governmental FFPs highlights the absence or presence of such characteristics and (feminist) values. In the discussion section that follows the summaries, it will be explained why the absence or presence of certain characteristics and values can enhance or hinder the transformative potential.

### 4.1 Argentina

Argentina officially adopted a FFP from January 2023 onward. The official government decree announcing the adoption outlines Argentina's commitment to a 'feminist international policy' and explains measures to be taken. Additionally, the government has developed an 'agenda for the progressive institutionalization of FFP in Argentina', or Agenda 2023, which details the axes of Argentina's FFP and concrete actions to be taken. These are the two documents chosen for the discourse analysis. As the documents are only available in Spanish, they were translated to English.

The discourse reveals that a central theme in Argentina's FFP discourse is the emphasis on women's empowerment and their role as agents of change. Additionally, the policy is geared towards fostering the participation and representation of women in various spheres. However, the policy neglects to address root causes of gender inequality and does not address necessary systemic and structural changes to achieve gender equality. Moreover, the discourse neglects the profound impact of colonial and imperial legacies and fails to engage with the complexities stemming from capitalism. Despite that, the policy demonstrates a dedication to achieve gender equality, positioning this as a fundamental goal in itself.

Furthermore, the discourse exhibits a limited incorporation of an intersectional approach. Although 'in all their diversity' is sometimes added, women and girls remain the main subjects of the policy. While LGBTQIA+ rights, the rights of indigenous, afro, displaced, and disabled persons are mentioned, it is only done so in connection to activism. Otherwise, intersecting forms of discrimination and oppression are not integrated into the policy framework. What is

more, the Argentinian approach falls short in applying the important feminist principle of ‘nothing about us without us’. Already having neglected to incorporate grassroots and civil society movements into the policy-making process, it also fails to provide those actors the necessary resources and platforms they require to function properly.

In conducting a discourse analysis of Argentina’s FFP, it becomes clear that Argentina’s adoption of a FFP is intended to signal adherence to the international liberal order and its values. Argentina’s commitment to international law, human rights, and democracy are continuously highlighted. As such, Argentina’s FFP mostly focuses on practical application within multilateral fora and international initiatives.

## 4.2 Canada

Canada first adopted a Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP) in 2017. It was subsequently announced that the FIAP would be completed with a FFP, for which a government-internal policy paper was drafted in 2021, but never publicly distributed (Thompson et al., 2023). While the Canadian government continues to refer to its foreign policy as feminist, stating for example that “Canada’s Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP) is a key pillar of Canada’s broader feminist foreign policy”, its FFP has never been further articulated or defined (Global Affairs Canada, n.d., p.3). Thus, only Canada’s paper on FIAP, published in 2017 and officially available in English, is analysed.

Canada’s FFP exhibits a distinctive focus on women’s empowerment, particularly directed towards the ‘poorest and most vulnerable’ women and girls in the ‘poorest most fragile’ states. In emphasizing empowerment, women are positioned as agents of change, in charge of their own fate and of shaping societal progress. As such, women’s participation and representation are central themes in the policy. Additionally, Canada’s FFP is solely focused on development aid. Consequently, the issue of gender equality is framed as something only concerning ‘women over there’ and as a means to various ends, such as to eradicate global poverty, to foster economic growth, to protect the environment, and to establish longer-lasting peace. Hence, FFP is utilized as a vehicle to incorporate private sector interests into Canada’s development policy, framing feminism as an economic argument.

Canada's FFP discourse neglects to address the systemic and structural aspects of gender equality and of the oppression of marginalized groups. Furthermore, the inherent challenges posed by capitalism as well as the legacies of colonialism are not addressed. This is particularly regretful due to the historical injustice of indigenous genocide in Canada. The neglect of indigenous lives continues to limit the impact of Canada's FFP, specifically in its implementation of an intersectional lens. Although the FFP claims to apply an intersectional lens, incorporating not only gender and sex, but also sexuality, race, religion, migrant or refugee status and many other characteristics as distinct and intersecting forms of oppression, the forms of oppression that indigenous peoples in Canada, and elsewhere, have endured and continue to endure are neglected. The inclusivity of Canada's FFP is further limited by its neglect of the principle of 'nothing about us without us', indicating a strong need for more inclusive decision-making processes.

Finally, the discourse within Canada's FFP reveals its strategic employment as a tool for positioning on the international stage, projecting the country as a leader in humanitarian assistance and signalling a clear adherence to the international liberal order.

### 4.3 Chile

After the general elections in 2021 the new government of Chile officially announced the adoption of a FFP in February 2022. With this, Chile became the first country in South America, and the second in Latin America, to adopt a FFP. The government has published a comprehensive plan for a FFP in June 2023, simply titled Feminist Foreign Policy. The discourse analysis is carried out on this document, which is officially available in English.

Chile's FFP is rooted in a commitment to combat sexual and gender-based violence, along with addressing discrimination across various spheres, including the workplace and care work. It also places a strong emphasis on fostering the participation and representation of women. However, the policy is also qualified by a reluctance to confront systemic and structural causes of gender inequality, as the discourse avoids addressing and challenging deeper roots of gender disparities. Similarly, the policy lacks consideration of colonial and imperial legacies, neglecting historical injustices that continue to impact gender relations. The impact of capitalism on gender dynamics also remains unexplored in Chile's FFP, highlighting a gap in understanding the broader economic forces at play.

While Chile's FFP employs a robust intersectional lens, acknowledging the interconnected nature of various forms of oppression, there is a notable gap concerning the consideration of indigenous peoples. The policy falls short in addressing the specific challenges faced by indigenous communities, revealing a need for a more comprehensive approach to inclusivity. Furthermore, the principle of 'nothing about us without us' is not applied, indicating that decision-making processes remain non-inclusive.

The discourse within Chile's FFP document reveals that a FFP is mostly viewed as a tool for enhancing Chile's international and regional standing. It projects Chile as a regional leader of gender equality and attempts to bolster its international image, aiming at improving its middle power status. Furthermore, it is understood as a tool that contributes to an improved national economy for Chile. Despite that, it is also acknowledged that FFP is an ongoing project and a living document, highlighting a commitment to adapt and evolve the FFP to changing circumstances or feedback.

#### 4.4 France

In 2018, France adopted what has been called a Feminist Diplomacy by government officials, until then-Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Jean-Yves Le Drian, and then-Minister of State for Gender Equality, Marlène Schiappa, published an op-ed calling France's foreign policy feminist (Le Drian & Schiappa, 2019). Despite that, no comprehensive FFP document has been released, although a handbook had initially been announced for 2022. Instead, France's International Strategy on Gender Equality, the op-ed, and a brief explainer titled 'what is feminist foreign policy', published by the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of France, serve as the basis of this analysis. The documents have been analysed in their original language, French.

France's FFP manifests as a commitment to women's empowerment, positioning women as crucial agents of change, in charge of shaping more equitable societies. The policy further underscores a strong focus on fostering the participation and representation of women in various spheres. In France's discourse gender equality is viewed as a vehicle to help fulfil development goals, such as sustainable development and poverty reduction, but also, by economically empowering women, to achieve a larger work force. As such, gender equality is not understood as a goal worthy of attaining in itself, but rather as a means to achieve broader objectives. What

is more, a feminist lens is primarily applied to development aid and diplomatic efforts. This limited scope implies that solely ‘women over there’ need more gender equality.

France’s FFP addresses systemic and structural root causes of gender inequality and other oppressions in a limited way. Firstly, it incorporates the role of men and boys as an inherent part of promoting gender equality, which is a crucial first step to address and transform structurally rooted inequalities. Secondly, it has adopted a three-level approach to address power relations within society, tackling them at once at an individual, community, and socioeconomic level. However, the policy exhibits a notable gap in addressing colonial and imperial legacies, overlooking historical injustices that continue to impact gender dynamics. Similarly, the influence of capitalism on gender relations remains unexplored within the discourse.

Furthermore, France’s FFP only incorporates a limited intersectional lens. While intersectionality is alluded to, it is not thoroughly elaborated on, and the discourse mainly refers to women and girls as the main objectives of the policies. As such, it leaves room for improvement in acknowledging and addressing the unique challenges faced by various marginalized groups. Furthermore, the principle of ‘nothing about us without us’ is not fully applied, indicating a need for more inclusive decision-making processes within the development and implementation of France’s FFP.

Finally, France’s FFP discourse also signals strong adherence to the international liberal order, aiming at positioning France as a strong leader of gender equality policies and as such, to improve France’s international image.

#### 4.5 Germany

Germany’s current government first announced a FFP in its Coalition Agreement 2021-2025. This followed a process of development and consultation, after which Germany’s official guidelines ‘Shaping Feminist Foreign Policy’ and ‘Feminist Development Policy’ were published in March 2023. Both documents have been utilized for the discourse analysis and analysed in their original language, German.

Germany's FFP discourse stands out with an explicit acknowledgment of feminist values at the centre of its policy, specifically proclaiming the adoption of a non-white, non-Western feminism, with that reflecting a commitment to an inclusive and diverse approach to FFP. While the policy puts a focus on equal rights for women and girls on one hand, on the other it also emphasises more representation and visibility of women and girls. While gender equality is recognized as a goal in itself, it is also portrayed as a means for other goals, such as for stable and peaceful societies. This emphasis is also reflected in Germany's strong focus on development aid within its FFP, positioning gender equality as pivotal for achieving sustainable societal progress.

Germany's FFP highlights the importance of addressing and redressing power structures and systemic causes of gender inequality. This is highlighted by its attention to entrenched power relations, root causes of oppression, and the colonial past. In Germany's discourse, FFP is envisioned as a cultural shift with the goal to develop a 'feminist reflex' within all foreign policy fields. Furthermore, the discourse exhibits a strong application of an intersectional lens, specifically proclaiming the incorporation of post-colonial and anti-racist perspectives. Nevertheless, there is a notable absence of consideration for the dynamics of capitalism on inequality.

As an applied policy, Germany's FFP actively respects the principle of 'nothing about us without us', ensuring the inclusion and empowerment of diverse voices in decision- and policy-making processes.

Interestingly, Germany's FFP claims a 'pragmatic' stance on militaristic issues, refraining from an outright antimilitaristic position and instead adopting a 'gender-sensitive' approach to such topics. Nevertheless, its FFP is also understood as a 'living document', implying that it is open to change and feedback.

#### 4.6 Luxembourg

In announcing a FFP in the 2018-2023 Coalition Agreement, Luxembourg became the third country to adopt a foreign policy that is feminist. The first few thematic priorities for Luxembourg's FFP had been outlined in that Agreement. The government offered further details on its efforts for a FFP in June 2021 at the Generation Equality Forum, promising the

development of an Action Plan on Feminist Foreign Policy. As of now, this Action Plan has not been published. The discourse analysis on Luxembourg's FFP is therefore conducted based on the Coalition Agreement, the information available from the Generation Equality Forum, and its Aid and Development strategies, which outline feminist approaches to aid and development policy. The documents are analysed in one of the official languages of Luxembourg, German.

Luxembourg's FFP positions women's empowerment as well as their participation and representation at the forefront. Furthermore, gender equality is understood as a means to various ends, such as for eradicating global poverty and fostering economic, social, and environmental sustainability. As such, gender is treated through the frame of socio-economic integration of women. The policy generally neglects to redress systemic and structural causes of inequality but mentions a transformative approach for its humanitarian strategy. However, this leads to a false understanding that systemic and structural causes of inequality are only an issue 'over there'. Furthermore, the consideration of colonial legacies and of capitalism remain absent from Luxembourg's FFP.

Finally, the incorporation of an intersection approach within Luxembourg's FFP is very limited, being only briefly mentioned in its humanitarian strategy, again with an implication of only being necessary 'over there'. Additionally, civil society and grass-roots movements have neither been included in the policy-making process, nor as agents that are empowered by the FFP.

#### 4.7 Mexico

In January 2020 Mexico became the first country of the Global South to officially announce a FFP. While there is no specific document outlining Mexico's approach to FFP, there are several announcements and documents drafted by government employees, which offer insight into Mexico's FFP. As such, the official government announcement, as well as a document on Mexico's FFP, drafted by Martha Delgado Peralta, Undersecretary for Multilateral Affairs and Human Rights in Mexico's Ministry for Foreign Affairs, will be analysed. Additionally, an overview document, created by the office of the Secretary of Foreign Affairs, is also incorporated into the analysis. Two of those documents, the first and the last, are available in an official translation to English, whereas the second document had to be translated to English first.



The discourse of Mexico's FFP proclaims feminism to be a core value of the state. As such, the policy emphasizes addressing structural differences, gender gaps, and inequalities, reflecting a commitment to reducing systemic barriers to gender equality. However, it views the responsibility of addressing systemic and structural inequalities to be solely with the state, suggesting a reliance on institutional efforts to achieve change. Additionally, a significant aspect of Mexico's FFP also focuses on the improvement of participation and representation of women.

Mexico's FFP adopts an intersectional lens, specifically stating its aim to amplify voices and realities of the people from the Global South. With that, it acknowledges the diverse experiences and challenges faced by individuals in different regions, a valuable dimension of the policy framework. Despite many progressive elements, Mexico's FFP discourse neglects colonial and imperial legacies and does not explicitly address the influence of capitalism on inequalities. Additionally, Mexico has failed to incorporate the principle of 'nothing about us without us', leading to an exclusion of activists, grass-roots movements, and civil society organizations in the policy-making process as well as from any policy goals.

The discourse within Mexico's FFP strongly highlights strategic advantages of adopting an FFP, especially on the international and regional stage. By emphasizing that Mexico is 'the first country of the Global South' to adopt an FFP, it aims at positioning the country as a regional leader as well as a firm member of the international liberal order. At the same time, the policy also highlights a willingness of Mexico to learn from other countries, especially those of the Global North that have adopted a FFP before, and to share knowledge with those adopting one after Mexico.

#### 4.8 Scotland

Scotland first announced its commitment to FFP in September 2021 and officially adopted it in November 2023 by publishing a position paper on the Scottish approach to FFP, or as Scotland calls it, a feminist approach to international relations (FAIR). Additionally, a background note that had been published after Scotland's announcement also serves as a basis of analysis. All documents have been analysed in their original language, English.

Scotland's FFP is the most recent one and as such, does not have a lot of information available yet. Nevertheless, its discourse implies a FFP characterized by a commitment to feminist principles and anti-racism. Its main focus lies on international development and humanitarian aid. Furthermore, the policy intends to address root causes of inequality and oppression, specifically by incorporating, and leading from, the Global South. As such, the policy intends to effect systemic change and to challenge power structures. Nevertheless, it neglects to consider the effects of capitalism.

In its application, the Scottish FFP has adopted a highly intersectional lens, acknowledging the importance of post-colonial and anti-racist perspectives. This inclusive approach reflects an understanding of the interconnected nature of various forms of oppression and a commitment to addressing them comprehensively. Additionally, the principle of 'nothing about us without us' has been applied during the decision-making processes but also in its explicit support of grassroots movements and women's organizations.

Lastly, Scotland's FFP discourse implies the strategic advantages of a FFP. It is considered to be a tool for enhancing Scotland's international standing, with the country aspiring to be a strong and respected voice in the world as well as a good global citizen. Scotland, with its FFP, seems to seek to distinguish itself from the British Government and to be viewed as a more independent actor, despite the British Government ultimately deciding on all foreign affairs matters.

#### 4.9 Spain

Spain adopted a FFP in March 2021. With the adoption, the government released its policy paper for FFP titled Guide to Feminist Foreign Policy, characterized as an operational guide to practically implement the FFP, which serves as the basis for the discourse analysis. The document has been published both in Spanish and in English, thus no further translation has been necessary for the analysis.

Spain's FFP, in contrast to the other variations, is mainly motivated by the international conflict between a rising political right and a diminishing political left. It focuses on advancing women's rights and closing existing gaps as well as combatting democratic backsliding. As such, it is committed to foster gender equality on a global scale. A large focus is also on women's

empowerment and their crucial role as agents of change. The participation and representation of women and girls is also emphasized. Gender equality, in Spain's iteration, is a goal in itself but also a means to reach other goals, such as building better societies, more sustainable economies, and sustainable peace.

While Spain acknowledges the need for structural change, this aspect is not elaborated on. Additionally, the policy lacks an explicit consideration of colonial and imperial legacies as well as the influence of capitalism on inequalities and oppressions. The policy does consider multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, but the discourse largely focuses on 'women and girls'. However, Spain is applying the principle of 'nothing about us without us' with that committing to an inclusive and diverse policy.

Finally, Spain's discourse on FFP also implies its strategic use as a tool for enhancing Spain's international standing, portraying the country as a long-standing leader of equality policies. As such, the country wishes to be recognized as a prominent advocate for gender equality initiatives globally.

## 5. Discussion

After having summarized the main characteristics of each governmental FFP, this section proposes an explanation of why the absence or presence of those characteristics, or values, offer an insight into the transformative potential of governmental FFPs. During the discourse analysis, twelve characteristics have been identified that we will take a closer look at, which are listed in the following table, indicating also for each case the absence or presence of those characteristics or values.

<i>Characteristics / Country</i>	Argentina	Canada	Chile	France	Germany	Luxembourg	Mexico	Scotland	Spain
Redressing power systems, structures, and relations	No	No	No	Limited	Yes	Limited	Yes	Yes	Limited
Considering colonial and imperial legacies	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
A focus on development aid and 'women over there'	No	Yes	No	Yes	Limited	Yes	No	Limited	No
Considering capitalism	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
A focus on women's empowerment	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Limited
A focus on representation and visibility	Yes	Yes	Limited	Yes	Limited	Yes	Limited	No	Limited
Gender equality as a means, rather than as a goal in itself	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes (& No)	Yes	No	No	Yes (& No)
A focus on women and girls as the main subjects	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
An intersectional lens	Limited	Limited	Limited	Limited	Yes	Limited	Yes	Yes	Limited
FFP as a tool to signal adherence to the international liberal order	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
FFP as a tool for regional and international power and influence	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Applying the principle of 'nothing about us without us'	No	No	No	Limited	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes

*Table 1: Results of the discourse analysis - 12 characteristics identified*

## 5.1 Redressing Power Systems, Structures and Relations

Only three governmental FFPs outright address the underlying systems, structures, and power relations that are the root causes of oppression, marginalization, and inequality, while three address the topic in a limited way. The absence, or limited inclusion, of such an approach indicates that FFPs, at least currently, do not have a truly transformative potential. However, the current governmental FFPs are not simply binary in their inclusion of transformative characteristics and aspects, either absence or presence thereof. Rather, the inclusion and exclusion are mixed, with most FFPs having at least some other transformative characteristics. As such, a more nuanced analysis is merited, which will be carried out throughout the following sections.

Nevertheless, the absence of a willingness to fulfil the promise of a FFP, which “should be about looking into the structures, addressing gendered power relations, building gender inclusive institutions and pursuing policies that incorporate the interests of and seek to benefit all” indicates a vast gap in achieving a truly transformative policy (Scheyer & Kumskova, 2019, p.65). Other attempts to try and achieve full equality are not enough, as they do not address the root causes that have led to inequality. Instead, they address the symptoms of gender and other discriminations, while continuing to uphold the structural determinants of that inequality (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, n.d.). Only approaches that promise to redress the structures and systems that uphold unequal power relations are sustainable, long-lasting, and fully inclusive (Harvey & Safier, 2021).

As such, a substantive FFP must challenge patriarchy at its root, not only through legal and policy changes, but by a fundamental shift in cultural values and attitudes (Becker, 1999).

### 5.1.1 Considering Colonial and Imperial Legacies

In their current iterations, only two governmental FFPs, those of Germany and Scotland, address colonial and imperial legacies. However, those legacies and organising logics are enduring and continue to uphold structural and systemic inequalities and power relations, with that, underpinning global inequalities and determining relations between states. To address root causes of oppression and inequality, it is crucial to address the “continuing colonial legacies of the colonizer’s relations with the colonized, showing the relevance of the past not only for the present but also for its implications for the future” (Agathangelou and Ling, 2009, p.5). As such,

the absence of consideration of colonialism within most governmental FFPs indicates that those policies are not truly transformative.

#### *5.1.1.1 Development Aid and 'Women Over There' / The Others*

One of the most salient ways in which colonialism continues to underpin international relations is within development aid. Currently, five policy frameworks embrace a focus on development aid. Especially Canada, France, and Luxembourg posit this as their sole focus, whereas Germany and Scotland view development aid as one of several axes of their FFP. However, no governmental FFP of the Global South embraces such a focus.

A focus on development aid produces a 'women over there' discourse, meaning only women over there, in the Global South, are affected by inequality and oppression. However, such approaches can contribute to reproducing harmful North-South hierarchies. Feminist activities are then outsourced to the Global South, whereas potential domestic gender-specific issues and inequalities are neglected. As such, a neo-colonial hierarchy is reproduced, wherein the Global North saves and teaches the Global South.

The idea of different levels of development, with the Global North being at the most superior level, has been justified with the notion of cultural difference. While we will later highlight the importance of considering cultural difference to avoid gender essentialism, Narayan argues that in doing so, there is a danger of essentialising such cultural differences (1998). This becomes a problem when this cultural essentialism "replicates problematic and colonialist assumptions about the cultural differences between 'Western culture' and 'Non-western cultures' and the women who inhabit them" (Narayan, 1998, p.87). While differences need to be acknowledged within historical and political contexts, it should nevertheless be avoided that difference is equalized with the notion of inferiority, a typical strategy of legitimization during the colonial era (Narayan, 1998).

FFPs that reproduce a discourse of geographical hierarchy or segregation cannot be fully transformative. Such spatial hierarchies are gendered and racialised and produce binary oppositions. The 'developed' Global North is implicitly understood as the masculine, white superior whereas the Global South is the feminine victim and 'other' (Achilleos-Sarll, 2018). As such, it reproduces, instead of dismantles, hierarchies and power relations rooted in colonial

and imperial practices. A discourse that frames the Global North as having a duty to build capacity in the Global South additionally creates the distorted image that the Global North is free of any issues of oppression and inequality, as such also ignoring the root causes of inequality within the Global North. As such, the development aid discourse does not only produce an inadequate image of gender inequality, but it also reproduces and reinforces racialised and colonial power relations and hierarchies.

For a FFP to be truly transformative, it must challenge dominant hierarchies and binaries, such as the masculine/feminine, the civilized/barbaric, or the saviour/victim binary. Without challenging power relations, be it patriarchal, colonial or supremacist, FFP will be unable to achieve material change for those most affected by systems of oppression.

### 5.1.2 Considering Capitalism

Currently no governmental FFP mentions capitalism and efforts to redress its organizing structures and systems. However, those organizing structures are defining root causes of gender and other inequalities. As such, a transformative FFP must be anti-capitalist to be fully transformative (Militaru, 2023).

Capitalism has violent roots within slavery, racism, and patriarchy, exposed by its main organizing principle, exploitation (Militaru, 2023). As such, capitalism is a root cause of the oppression of women, arguably initiating it by its devaluation of social reproductive labour. Federici, for example, argues that the primitive accumulation of capital is directly linked to a profound change of the social position of women, wherein women have been subjugated to the role of labour reproduction (2004). As such, capitalism is directly responsible for relegating women to a lower hierarchical position, with “the roots of women’s present social status [lying] in this sex-ordered division of labor.” (Hartmann, 1976, p.137). The advent of capitalism, defined by a process of accumulation of exploitable workers, was accompanied by a process of ‘accumulation of difference’, for example on the basis of gender, but also race and other social characteristics, to guarantee continuous exploitation (Federici, 2004).

While some FFPs have included the important aspect of recognizing the value of care work, especially those in the Global South, not one policy truly addresses the root causes of why care work is deemed women’s work and although indispensable to society, usually goes unpaid.

Additionally, no policy aims for a true shift in organizing labour, reorienting it towards a community-oriented mindset wherein wealth is shared between peoples, not concentrated in the hands of a few elites and corporations, and wherein governments serve to distribute this wealth, instead of facilitating the concentration (Militaru, 2023).

However, a FFP can only be truly transformative if it addresses the structural oppressions resulting from capitalism. That is because “the patriarchy lends itself to the capitalist system to maintain male domination over women, while the capitalist system lends itself to the patriarchy to expand its reproduction (Duan, 2022, p.70). Hence, capitalism and patriarchy, as well as other forms of oppression, are inseparably linked and uphold each other. Approaches to FFP that ignore those links, the root causes of oppressions, are therefore not fully transformative.

#### *5.1.2.1 A Focus on Women’s Empowerment*

Instead of focusing on the root causes of inequality and oppression, many FFPs incorporate liberal feminist instruments to try to achieve gender equality. However, such liberal feminist instruments ignore the intertwined root causes of inequality, such as patriarchy, colonialism, racism, and capitalism.

A typical liberal feminist goal is women’s empowerment. Five FFPs incorporate the value of women’s empowerment into their policy, and Argentina, Canada, France, and Luxembourg view women’s empowerment as the main objective of their policy. However, women’s empowerment does not equal gender equality. While it focuses on the individual agency and processes of women to harness and mobilize various resources to better their position in society, it neglects the structural causes for the lack of empowerment of women. Instead, an emphasis on gender equality, which focuses on these structural causes and on structural change, would be preferred (Cadesky, 2020).

In its approach, women’s empowerment, and liberal feminism in general, pursues equal rights for women within the existing system. It deals with the effects, or the symptoms, of gender inequality, but not with the causes. Additionally, the concept of empowerment hinges on the idea that giving women the same opportunities as men is equal to liberation. However, marginalized and oppressed people cannot live freely in the system that is fundamentally oppressing them. Instead, such systems must be dismantled (Allan, 2021). Additionally, the



women's empowerment approach can shift the focus from tackling structural issues to improving the individual. As such, the causes for the lack of empowerment are not considered at all (Cadesky, 2020).

Hence, a focus on women's empowerment is hindering FFPs from being truly transformative. However, it is important to note that women's empowerment is not necessarily wrong, as women, girls, and other marginalized and oppressed people do need to be empowered. But if FFP is *solely* focused on empowerment, with that neglecting to redress entrenched hierarchies and to dismantle institutions, systems and structures that uphold such hierarchies, it is not enough to be considered transformative.

#### *5.1.2.2 A Focus on Representation and Visibility*

Another liberal feminist approach is a focus on the representation and visibility of women, be it in politics, diplomacy, in peacebuilding, in economic positions or in other institutional sites of decision making. All except for one FFP have incorporated this within their framework. However, only Argentina, Canada, France, and Luxembourg have an especially strong focus on representation, leading to a neglect of other approaches to gender equality.

Similarly to the idea of empowerment, the mere presence or visibility of women is not enough, as it does little to transform power structures. Eisenstein explains: "inclusion allows the partial renegotiation of the gendering and racing of power, but not a power shift. Exclusions expose the need for a power shift" (2007, p.94). Representation and visibility are not enough because although the sex or gender of the person changes, the gendered power structures remain the same (Eisenstein, 2007).

Instead of just aiming for more visibility for women, a truly transformative FFP should intend to change the institutions and structures within which it is making women more visible, rebuilding those as more inclusive and benefitting for all (Scheyer & Kumskova, 2019). For this, women's meaningful participation is necessary. A study by UN Women on the participation of women in peace negotiations has shown that while the presence of women at the negotiating table does increase opportunities for peace, it does not necessarily assure better outcomes for women. Instead, the level of influence that women have is determining

(Paffenholz et al., 2016). As such, a policy that is mainly focused on increasing representation is not truly transformative.

#### *5.1.2.3 Gender Equality as a Means, Rather Than as a Goal*

Four FFPs have positioned gender equality as a means to reach other goals, rather than as a goal in itself, while two have constructed it as a goal and as a means at the same time. Such goals include the eradication of poverty, the boosting of the economy, more peaceful societies, sustainable development, or migration prevention.

In this approach, FFPs position women as powerful agents of change. It is related to ‘women’s empowerment’, wherein women gain agency and tools to better their situation, and at the same time the situation of the community or society that they live in. As such, gender equality is instrumentalized as a tool. Women, then, become ‘conduits of policy’, and the responsibility for bringing about change rests on their shoulders (Cadesky, 2020). While women and other marginalized groups can play an important role in achieving goals such as more sustainable development or more peaceful societies, efforts should not end with the achievement of those goals. They should end with the achievement of more equality and the end of oppressions. Additionally, women should not be ‘responsibilized’ for positive development (Cadesky, 2020).

A truly transformative approach views gender equality as a goal and does not instrumentalize it to achieve broader goals in the interest of governments.

## *5.2 Inclusivity*

### *5.2.1 A focus on Women and Girls as the Main Subjects*

A common aspect of FFPs is a tendency to focus on women and girls as the main subjects of FFP, or the main category of analysis. As such, five governmental FFPs adopted this approach. The criticism of this tendency, which does not only happen within FFP but within feminist movements in general, has mostly been formulated by postcolonial feminists who have argued that this is a common theme within Western feminism, which neglects the broader spectrum of gender identities and roles and instead views women as one monolithic category. In other words, such an approach essentializes gender to mean women and girls.

In her landmark critique of Western feminism, Mohanty argues that it produces women as a homogenous group, assuming a shared gendered oppression and a universal circumstance of patriarchal oppression for all women. This, however, diminishes the diversity and complexity of women's circumstances, which in turn "produces the image of an "average third-world woman" (Mohanty, 1988, p.65). When women are understood as a monolithic category, with the assumption that women everywhere, regardless of any other characteristics such as class, ethnicity, geographical location etc., suffer from the same male domination, they are reduced to mere victims. This, as a result, leads to a binary understanding of power: powerful versus powerless (Mohanty, 1988). Women are then solely defined by their differences relative to men. A discourse reproducing gender essentialization can be found within current FFPs, wherein the insistence of women as the main category of analysis reduces them to mere victims without agency.

Moreover, a binary is produced between the 'third world' woman and her supposed opposite, the liberated Western woman. It is further argued that the generalization of women as a category is usually based on assumptions of privileged, western, white, and heterosexual women. Through that, the realities of women that are faced with structural oppressions based on other characteristics besides gender, such as race, class, ethnicity, or sexuality, are often neglected (Narayan, 1998).

To avoid the assumption of a sisterhood of oppression, as Mohanty calls it, she highlights that feminism should analyse women based on their specific contexts and categorize only by considering variations and diversities to avoid an essentialization of women into one homogenous category (1988). 'Women' is not the correct category of analysis, as not the social construct itself should be the focus, but rather the social constitution of gender and other categories that maintain power imbalances (Cadesky, 2020).

If gender essentialism is not explicitly avoided in FFP, its ability to be transformative is limited. Root causes of oppression cannot be addressed and dismantled without scrutinization of how multiple social categories have been constructed and how they influence power relations (Achilleos-Sarll, 2018). This is not because essentialism leads to overgeneralizations, but rather because it reproduces a hegemonic discourse wherein the issues of privileged, often white, straight, Western women, are the issues of all women (Crenshaw, 1991a). Consequently,

women who face intersecting forms of oppression are further marginalized and their concerns are not addressed (Narayan, 1998).

### 5.2.2 Intersectionality

To avoid essentialization, the incorporation of an intersectional lens is proposed (Crenshaw, 1991b). Currently, all FFPs claim to have incorporated such a lens, but 6 have done so only in a very limited approach. The concept of intersectionality has its origin in Black feminist thought but has quickly been embraced by feminist theory more broadly (Crenshaw, 1991b). Intersectional feminism acknowledges the fact that gender, as a category of oppression, is located at the intersection of various forms of oppression. Women's experiences are as diverse as their contexts and intersectional feminists believe that the patriarchal domination of women by men should always be considered with regard to other factors of oppression, such as race, ethnicity, sexuality, class, and many more. Instead of only focusing on the axis of difference of gender, multiple axes of difference are considered, with that trying to ensure that everybody's unique struggle is taken into account (True, 2010). Without an intersectional approach, the issue of essentialization, as discussed above, tends to be exacerbated.

Not only can gender never be understood in isolation, but it should also not be privileged before other social categories (Achilleos-Sarll, 2018). Instead, all social factor that contribute to hierarchical structures of power need to be addressed. Finally, the intersecting social categories will also have to be situated within diverse historical, social, political, economic, and geographical contexts (McClintock, 1995).

An intersectional approach is necessary for a truly transformative FFP. That is because hierarchical power structures are never solely determined by gender but are rather co-constituted by other hierarchical categories (McClintock, 1995). By adopting an intersectional approach, power relations and systemic and structural factors leading to oppression can be not only better understood, but also better redressed.

## 5.4 Instrumentalization

### 5.4.1 FFP as a Tool to Signal Adherence to the International Liberal Order

The discourse of six FFPs highlights a strategic employment of FFP for positioning on the international stage. Governments highlight not only their longstanding adherence to the liberal

order and its values but also position themselves as leaders in advocating for this order. As such, FFP is employed a tool to signal adherence to the international liberal order and its institutions as well as to highlight countries roles as ‘good’ international actors or good global citizens.

In this practice, FFP is not necessarily applied for its content and for what it can achieve in terms of policy impact, but rather for how it can be used as a signal (Thomson, 2022). Consequently, FFP becomes a tool for norm entrepreneurship, used mostly by middle power countries to improve their international relevance and position (Thomson, 2022). In becoming a tool for countries to position themselves on the international stage, however, FFP loses its salience as a signal that governments are pursuing gender equality in a more advanced and transformative way.

Additionally, the idea that states who have adopted a FFP can be considered as ‘good’ and others who have not as ‘bad’ generates comparative judgment and reproduces hierarchies and binaries, rooted in colonial thinking (Thomson, 2022). States that have adopted a FFP, signalling with that adherence to liberal values and good global citizenship, reproduce the idea of ‘civilized’ states and ‘barbaric’ states in need of education (Thomson, 2022). Feminism then acts as a signifier for ‘superior’ states, as such becoming a tool for (neo-)colonial thinking, instead of standing for transformative change.

#### 5.4.2 FFP as a Tool for Regional and International Power and Influence

In addition to FFP being used as a tool to signal adherence to the international liberal order, it is used as a tool with another function on the international stage. The discourse of 6 countries indicates that FFP is also understood as a tool to gain international and regional power and influence. This is evident in discourse that for example highlights when a country is the first in a region to adopt a FFP, or when regional or international leadership on feminist values is emphasized.

The problem with such a discourse is, however, that it once again relates to the positioning of countries in international hierarchies. Not only do countries position themselves as superior if they have adopted the label of FFP, but they also create competition between countries that have adopted FFP. Zhukova, for example, argues that states are ranking themselves, and each other, “based on their perceived performance on gender equality” (2023, p.1). Through such a

competition between FFP-countries, FFP becomes a tool that reproduces hierarchical world orders, based on patriarchal, racist, capitalist, and colonial structures, instead of redressing them, for example through mutual solidarity and respect for existing differences (Zhukova, 2023). That is because in pointing out their superiority inferred from their engagement in gender equality and with FFP, states masculinize themselves, and feminize those that have, supposedly, not exhibited the same engagement. It is telling that it is generally middle power countries who have adopted FFP, who use it as a tool to position themselves as a “gender equality superpower” (Zhukova, 2023). Additionally, the binary of ‘civilized-barbaric’ is inferred, with countries positioning themselves as leaders, capable of teaching others. Through this, (neo-)colonial differentiations and hierarchies are reproduced.

Consequently, when FFP is used as a tool for positioning on the international stage, either to signal adherence to the liberal world order or to signal power and influence, it cannot fulfil its transformative promise.

### 5.5 Applying the Principle of Nothing About Us Without Us

While three FFPs have implemented the important principle of ‘nothing about us without us’ fully and one has done so in a limited way, five have not considered it at all. The principle, in essence, demands that no policy should be decided without the participation of those affected by the policy. This is particularly important for women and women of ‘multiply-marginalized identities’. Approaches that do not include the voices of those affected by the policy, and that do not provide them with a platform to voice their needs and inputs, risk perpetuating systems of oppression and inequalities (Thompson & Clement, 2019).

Additionally, foreign policy has been criticised by feminist scholars as being too narrowly focused on the state as the main unit of analysis, ignoring other international actors such as grassroots and civil society organisations and transnational networks. However, it is exactly those spaces that are key for transformation (Aggestam & Bergman-Rosamond, 2019). Therefore, a FFP that does not include the principle of nothing about us without us risks perpetuating hierarchies between political elites and civil society movements. An approach to FFP that aims to be transformative, however, must consider the voices, stories, and lived experiences of women and other marginalized groups (Aggestam & Bergman-Rosamond, 2019).

## 5.6 Discussion of the Results

The discussion of the results of the discourse analysis have highlighted that current governmental FFPs fulfil the promise of a transformative project only in a limited way. In answering the research question, the reason for that is, that FFPs are largely shaped by (feminist) values and characteristics that are not necessarily transformative.

Firstly, radical feminist approaches, aiming at dismantling the underlying structures, systems and power relations that enforce and uphold gender and other inequalities are mostly *not incorporated* into FFPs at all, or only in a limited way. As the table below highlights, such approaches are rarely strongly incorporated and mostly not incorporated at all into current governmental FFPs.

<i>Radical Approach / Incorporation in # FFPs</i>	Strong Incorporation	Limited Incorporation	No Incorporation
Redressing power systems, structures, and relations	3	3	3
Considering colonial and imperial legacies	2	0	7
Considering capitalism	0	0	9

Table 2: Results of the discourse analysis - radical feminist values

Secondly, liberal feminist approaches, that do not consider the root causes of inequality and do not aim at dismantling hierarchies and power relations, but rather deal with the effects of those and try to pursue equal rights within the existing system, are *widely focused on* in FFPs. While ‘women’s empowerment’ can just as much be the main focus as no focus at all, ‘visibility & representation’ and ‘gender equality as a means’ are most often the main or a partial focus of governmental FFPs. The table below illustrates that.

<i>Liberal Approach / Focus in # FFPs</i>	Main Focus	Partial Focus	No Focus
A focus on women’s empowerment	4	1	4
A focus on representation and visibility	4	4	1
Gender equality as a means, rather than as a goal in itself	4	2	3

Table 3: Results of the discourse analysis - liberal feminist values

Thirdly, the presence or absence of inclusive characteristics within governmental FFPs *is varied*. While women and girls are most often the main category of analysis within governmental FFPs, many also claim, at least to a limited extent, an intersectional lens. However, the principle of ‘nothing about us without us’ is most often absent in current FFP iterations.

<i>Inclusive Characteristic / Observed in # FFPs</i>	Strongly Observed	Limitedly Observed	Not Observed
Women and girls as the main subjects	5	0	4
Lack of an intersectional lens	0	6	3
Lack of application of principle of ‘nothing about us without us’	5	1	3

Table 4: Results of the discourse analysis - inclusive characteristics

And finally, governmental FFPs *often incorporate* characteristics that contribute to, and reinforce, global hierarchies based on gender, race, and geography, instead of implementing approaches that dismantle such hierarchies. The table below illustrates that especially the use of FFP as a tool to position oneself higher within the current global hierarchy is widespread.

<i>Hierarchy Characteristic / Observed in # FFPs</i>	Strongly Observed	Limitedly Observed	Not Observed
A focus on development aid and ‘women over there’	3	2	4
FFP as a tool to signal adherence to the international liberal order	6	0	3
FFP as a tool for regional and international power and influence	6	0	3

Table 5: Results of the discourse analysis - hierarchy characteristics

To summarise, radical feminist approaches are either only incorporated in a limited way or largely absent and characteristics that contribute to and uphold hierarchies and power relations are often present within current governmental FFPs. This indicates that FFPs do not hold a truly transformative potential. Instead, liberal feminist approaches prevail within many FFPs. However, liberal feminist approaches cannot be considered transformative, as they do not aim for systemic and structural change. Inclusive characteristics could also be more strongly present within current FFPs, although the fact that all FFPs have at least a limited intersectional lens



can be viewed as a positive sign. Nevertheless, the overall conclusion is that FFPs have a very limited transformative aim and potential, leaving room for much improvement.

While both FFPs from the Global South and from the Global North exhibit a lack of a radical feminist approach, a prevalence of a liberal feminist approach, and a varied level of inclusive characteristics, there are some differences when it comes to characteristics that reproduce gender, racial, and geographical hierarchies. All countries from the Global South, Argentina, Chile, and Mexico, have emphasized the utility of FFP as a tool to signal adherence to the international liberal order, whereas countries from the Global North present a more mixed image. On the other hand, no country from the Global South has emphasized development aid as one of the main axes of their FFP, whereas almost all countries from the Global North, except for Spain, have incorporated this aspect at least in a limited way.

In contrast, the difference between newer and older FFPs can be noticed more strongly than the difference between FFPs from the Global South and the Global North. Germany and Scotland are the newest additions to the FFP group, and both present radical feminist values, strong inclusive characteristics and a more limited incorporation of characteristics that reinforce hierarchies and power relations. This could indicate that the criticism voiced against FFP is heard and improvements are being made. As such, the possibility that FFPs eventually become more transformative is intact.

## 6. Conclusion

At the start of this thesis, it was highlighted that while the international prominence of FFP has been growing and FFP can now be considered as an established policy framework, the project was also met with a certain level of criticism. This criticism strongly focused on the transformative potential of FFP, specifically putting into question whether a foreign policy that is feminist can fulfil the transformative aspirations of said feminism. The literature review revealed that although scholarship on FFP is already extensive, no comprehensive studies on governmental FFPs, incorporating all current policy frameworks, and their transformative potential have been conducted. As such, this thesis set out to fill this gap, aiming at gaining a deeper understanding of the (feminist) values and characteristics that shape governmental FFPs.

In conducting a discourse analysis of nine governmental FFPs, twelve values and characteristics have been identified that are considered to define the transformative potential of FFPs. It was possible to organize these twelve values into four distinctive groups, through which the assessment of the transformative potential of FFPs was facilitated. It was highlighted that, in general, current governmental FFPs incorporated radical feminist approaches limitedly, instead strongly depending on liberal feminist values. This reduces the transformative potential of FFPs strongly. Additionally, it was found that characteristics that reproduce hierarchies and power relations are widely present within FFPs, whereas the presence of inclusive characteristics was rather varied. The analysis therefore revealed that the transformative potential of FFPs is currently very limited.

Nevertheless, the research also indicates that newer iterations of FFP are more transformative than older ones. Additionally, several FFP documents have highlighted that FFP is a ‘living project’ as such also subject to change or improvement in the future. Therefore, even though FFPs are not necessarily transformative at the moment, there is potential for more transformative policy frameworks in the future.

Yet, it is important to conduct further research into the transformative potential of FFPs. While this research has analysed this potential based on the written policies, it has not considered the actual implementation of the FFPs. Thus, the question of whether the implementation of governmental FFPs adheres to the written proposals thereof remains open.

This research has also shown that more insight could be gained into this topic by more closely analysing the link between the motivation to adopt FFP and the transformative potential of FFP. While the discourse of some governments mostly hinted at strategic reasons for adoption, which oftentimes correlated with less transformative policies overall, other governmental discourse indicated more genuine desire for gender equality, as such also resulting in more transformative approaches.

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## Annex

### 1. Discourse Analysis

#### 1.1 Argentina

**The general discourse emphasizes the following aspects:**

- *Values*: women's rights as human rights (reproductive rights), (economic) empowerment of women, women as agents of change, gender equality & parity, non-discrimination, non-violence, autonomy (physical, economic, political), solidarity-based
- *International liberal order*: international law, multilateral and regional institutions, international organizations, human rights, regional and international frameworks and commitments, democracy
- *Cross-cutting*: gender mainstreaming on all policy levels (local, provincial, national, international), on all cooperation levels (bilateral, sub-regional, regional, global), in all government and administrative institutions, coordination of external action and internal policies
- *Intersectional*: women and girls in all their diversity, the LGBTQIA+ community, indigenous, afro, displaced persons, disabled persons (only in relation to climate change activists)
- *Representation/visibility*: strong focus on institutional representation in all action areas
- *Institutionalization*: institutional policies to strengthen coherence and foster consistency between national levels and external action, special representative for FFP (REPEF)

**Actions planned on the following topics:**

- *Improvement of*: representation/visibility of women (in economy, politics, diplomacy, law, science, innovation, conflict-related issues, mediation, arms control issues, climate change negotiations), recognition of care work as human right, economic autonomy (empowerment, closing the gap, international financing structures), access to decent work and other resources, protection and promotion of activists (women, indigenous, LGBTQIA+, displaced persons, people with a disability), democracy (rule of law, human rights, humanitarian law), participation in international initiatives for gender equality, women's rights and FFPs, status of transgender people, sustainable development, non-violence (arms trade and disarmament)

- *Gendered lens on:* international financial architecture, international environmental initiatives, scientific innovation (e.g., AI), disarmament, international justice system, genocide,
- *Fight against:* sexual and gender-based violence related to conflict, hate speech, discrimination, democratic backsliding, regression in human rights (e.g., reproductive rights, LGBTQIA+-rights)

**The discourse does not address:**

- Transformative change: systemic and structural change, root causes of gender inequality, violence against women etc.
- Lack of consideration of colonial/imperial legacies
- Lack of consideration of capitalism
- ‘Nothing about us without us’ is not applied.
- Specific topics: immigration, peace & security (conflict situations, militarization), trade and economic issues, education
- Accountability framework
- Budgets & gender budgeting
- Definitions

**The emphases in Argentina’s discourse indicate a FFP shaped by the following aspects:**

- A focus on women’s empowerment
- women as agents of change
- A focus on participation/representation of women
- A signal of the adherence to the international liberal order
- Gender equality as a goal
- A cross-cutting implementation of FFP (all policy levels, all cooperation levels, all state institutions, ...)
- A limited incorporation of an intersectional approach:
  - o Strong focus on ‘women and girls’ (although ‘in all their diversity’ mentioned)
  - o LGBTQIA+ rights, rights of indigenous, afro, displaced and disabled persons mentioned in connection to activism only.
- Other: mostly application in multilateral fora

## 1.2 Canada

### **The general discourse emphasizes the following aspects:**

- *Values*: gender equality, women's rights as human rights, sexual and reproductive rights, human dignity, the SDGs, accountability, empowerment of women and girls
- *Strategic Advantages*: women and girls as agents of change, promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls to eradicate poverty, economic prosperity, environmental protection and sustainable development, fighting conflict, Canada as a leader in humanitarian assistance.
- *Intersectional*: All marginalized groups, all forms of discrimination (sex, race, ethnicity, place of birth, colour, religion, language, sexuality, gender, age, ability, migrant/refugee status)

### **Actions planned on the following topics:**

- *Areas of focus*: human dignity (health & nutrition, education, humanitarian action), economic growth and decent work, environment and climate action, inclusive governance (human rights, rule of law, political participation), peace and security (safety in conflict, peacebuilding)  
→ gender equality and empowerment of women and girls as core of it all
- *How*: improve representation in all areas (decision-making, workforce, politics), allocating resources, advocating for gendered lens on issues and policy-making, awareness and improvement of sexual and reproductive health, support of local organizations, ensure and support equal access to resources and education, awareness raising and advocacy efforts, support policy-reforms, engage in international initiatives, fight sexual and gender-based violence, support governments in policy-making and other efforts and give provisions in policy-making, evidence-based decision making, protect women's human rights defenders and activists, research and reporting, engaging men and boys
- *For whom*: the poorest and most vulnerable, women and girls
- *Where*: fragile states, the poorest countries, middle-income countries with particular challenges, developing countries

### **The discourse does not address:**

- Transformative change: systemic and structural change, root causes of gender inequality, violence against women etc.

- Lack of consideration of colonial/imperial legacies
- Lack of consideration of capitalism
- Lack of consideration of indigenous peoples
- Not cross-cutting/gender-mainstreaming
  - Domestic situation (Indigenous genocide)
  - Limited to development aid
  - Limited to 'women over there'
- 'Nothing about us without us' is not applied.
- Specific topics: immigration, democratic backsliding, peace & security (conflict situations, militarization, weaponization, arms trade), care work
- Accountability framework
- Definitions

**The emphases in Canada's discourse indicate a FFP shaped by the following aspects:**

- A focus on women's empowerment
  - The poorest and most vulnerable women & girls / countries
- Women as agents of change
- A focus on participation/representation of women
- Gender equality as a means for something, not as a goal in itself
  - To eradicate global poverty
  - To achieve economic growth
  - To better protect the environment
  - To achieve longer lasting peace
- FFP as a tool for positioning on the international/regional stage
  - Canada as a leader in humanitarian assistance
- A signal of the adherence to the international liberal order
- Intersectional lens (except for indigenous peoples)

### 1.3 Chile

#### **The general discourse emphasizes the following aspects:**

- *Values*: women's rights as human rights, gender equality & parity, democracy, empowerment, non-discrimination, participatory, economic autonomy
- *International liberal order*: international law, multilateral and regional institutions, international organizations, human rights, regional and international frameworks and commitments, democracy
- *Cross-cutting*: across the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, aligned with national policies.
- *Intersectional*: women and girls in all their diversity, the LGBTQIA+ community, inequality shaped by a variety of factors
- *Representation/visibility*: strong focus in all areas of the policy, FFP as a participatory project
- *Strategic advantages*: boost for the national economy, next step in role as regional leader and within longstanding commitment to gender equality, boost for Chile's international image, status, and recognition.
- *Institutionalization*: within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and all its agencies, across all foreign policy areas (multilateral, bilateral, regional) and topics, and within international economic relations, through the creation of a Gender Affairs Division within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

#### **Actions planned on the following topics:**

- *Improvement of*: representation/visibility of women and LGBTQIA+ people (in international spaces, economy, politics, diplomacy, peace and security issues, education, science, technology, innovation, environmental issues, culture), the implementation of the WPS agenda, access to resources (economic, technological, ), economic autonomy, the care system and status of care work, gender budgeting, trade and international economics, empowerment and representation (economy, politics, science, technology, innovation), gender gaps in a variety of areas, visibility of FFP on multilateral stage, institutional culture and structures.
- *Gendered lens on*: all international issues, such as conflict, actions to address climate change, economy, trade policies, digital technologies, culture, development.
- *Fight against*: gender-based violence
- *Additional*: FFP policy paper as a 'living document'

**The discourse does not address:**

- Transformative change: systemic and structural change, root causes of gender inequality, violence against women etc.
- Lack of consideration of colonial/imperial legacies
- Lack of consideration of capitalism
- Lack of consideration of indigenous peoples
- 'Nothing about us without us' is not applied.
- Specific topics: immigration, democratic backsliding, peace and security (conflict situations, militarization)
- Not cross-cutting/gender mainstreaming
  - o only within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
  - o Domestic situation and implementation of feminist policies thus also not mentioned.
- Accountability framework
- Definitions

**The emphases in Chile's discourse indicate a FFP shaped by the following aspects:**

- A focus on participation/representation of women
- FFP as a tool for positioning on the international/regional stage
  - o Regional leader
  - o International image
  - o Boost for national economy
- A signal of the adherence to the international liberal order
- An ongoing project
- Intersectional lens (except for indigenous peoples)
- FFP policy is a 'living document'.
- Other: mostly application in multilateral fora

## 1.4 France

### **The general discourse emphasizes the following aspects:**

- *Values*: gender equality, women's rights, empowerment of women, transparency, accountability, human rights, rule of law,
- *Cross-cutting*: within the foreign ministry (setting an example), throughout foreign policy gender mainstreaming, engagement of men and boys, in all diplomatic efforts, all external action and all phases of the policy-cycle.
- *Intersectional*: all discrimination and inequality (economic, social, generational, cultural, ethnic, religious, political) and between Global South and North
- *Transformative*: social change, power relationships addressed through gender mainstreaming, addressing all discrimination and inequality
- *Representation and strategic advantages*: women as agents of change (economy, for themselves), participation in development (economic, political, social), participatory process of drafting of policies,
- *Institutionalization*: equality within Foreign Ministry (representation, prevention of harassment and violence, improvement of work-life balance, language and communication), systematic inclusion of gender strategy in all MFA agencies and institutions, institutional culture of gender equality (high-level oversight, setting an example through internal practices, ambassador for equality and ambassador for LGBT+ rights)

### **Actions planned on the following topics:**

- *Improvement of*: sustainable development, violence against women (domestic, conflict), promotion of fundamental rights, economic issues, participation/representation (economic, political, social development, peace and security processes, decision-making, leadership), support for feminist organizations, workforce (equality and economic empowerment), resources (healthcare, education, economic, decent work, rights, and justice), sexual and reproductive rights, gender budgeting
- *Gendered lens on*: environment and climate mitigation, economic issues, peace and security issues, official development aid,
- *Fight against*: violence against women (private, public, conflict situations), backsliding
- *How*: bilaterally, (diplomacy) multilaterally (advocacy), development policy (actors of change, sustainable development and functioning of society, crisis, and reconstruction), collaboration with civil society, private sector, and research stakeholders,

- *Other*: resource and budgeting, monitoring mechanism, accountability framework

**The discourse does not address:**

- Lack of consideration of colonial/imperial legacies
- Lack of consideration of capitalism
- Nothing about us without us' is not applied.
- A limited incorporation of an intersectional approach
  - o Strong focus on 'women and girls'
  - o Alluded to, but not explicitly mentioned and little elaboration.
- Specific topics: immigration, peace and security (conflict situations, militarization, weaponization, military spending), carbon emissions
- Not cross-cutting / gender mainstreaming
  - o Only within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
  - o Limited to development aid and diplomacy (advocacy)
  - o Limited to 'women over there'
- Definitions

**The emphases in France's discourse indicate a FFP shaped by the following aspects:**

- A Focus on women's empowerment
- Women as agents of change
- A focus on participation/representation of women
- Gender equality as a means for something, not as a goal in itself
  - o To achieve development goals (i.e., sustainable development, reducing poverty)
  - o More economic power for women
- A signal of the adherence to the international liberal order
- Limited transformative aspects:
  - o Through incorporation of role of men and boys
  - o 'Three levels of change: individual, socioeconomic, community
  - o Power relations addressed.
- A limited intersectional lens:
  - o Alluded to, but not elaborated.
  - o Strong focus on 'women and girls'



## 1.5 Germany

### **The general discourse emphasizes the following aspects:**

- *Values*: equality of men and women and other marginalized groups worldwide, diversity, justice, arms control and disarmament, non-white, non-eurocentric, non-Western feminism, human rights,  
→ many feminisms (diverse and dynamic, various approaches)
- *Cross-cutting*: gender mainstreaming is central, all of the foreign office's fields and within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
- *Intersectional*: FFP is inclusive (gender, origin, religion, age, disability, sexual orientation, other reasons in multiple ways), women and marginalized groups, women in all their diversity, consider intersections between diverse forms of discrimination, post-colonial and anti-racist development policy with a gender-transformative approach
- *Transformative*: break up power structures, colonial past, patriarchal power structures, male domination within society, elimination of those discriminatory structures, gender-transformative, eliminate structural and systemic causes of inequality
- *Institutionalization*: Ambassador for FFP, development of a 'feminist reflex' within Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in Foreign Service (representation, support of individual life situations, non-discrimination, equality of opportunity, diversity (retaining))
- *Other*: FFP policy paper as a living document, pragmatism (FFP does not mean pacifism, gender equality and human security at the centre but human lives must also be protected by military means), women as agents of change

### **Actions planned on the following topics:**

- *Areas of Activity*: peace and security policy (WPS Agenda, participation, combatting sexual and gender-based violence (→ combatting impunity), humanitarian arms control, no nuclear weapons and gender-sensitive approaches in arms (export) control); humanitarian assistance and crisis management (all budget gender-sensitive or gender-targeted, participation/inclusion, gendered and intersectional lens/strategy (menstrual hygiene)); legislation and rights/human rights policy (advocacy, confront pushbacks, address gaps regarding sexual and reproductive rights, self-determination, FGM, LGBTQIA+ mainstreaming, strong cooperation with Global South); climate diplomacy and energy policy (gendered lens, SDGs, COP, Climate for Peace initiative, ...); Foreign trade and investment policy (participation, parity, standards, gendered lens, economic

empowerment; business and human rights); cultural and societal diplomacy (women and marginalized groups in society, arts, culture, research, science, education, media / protection to vulnerable groups)

- dialogue and network building (civil society, citizens, international partners)
- *Instruments*: gender mainstreaming, multipliers (networks, activists, civil society dialogue etc.), gender budgeting, monitoring
- *Other*: gender budget (concrete plans), civil society collaboration and input,

**The discourse does not address:**

- Lack of consideration of capitalism
- Specific topics: immigration, weaponization is mentioned, but with a ‘pragmatic’ approach.
- Not antimilitaristic:
  - o Continuation of weapons exports
  - o ‘pragmatic’ approach

**The emphases in Germany’s discourse indicate a FFP shaped by the following aspects:**

- A non-white, non-Western feminism explicitly mentioned.
- A focus on equal rights and representation of women
- Gender equality as a goal, but also as a means for more stable and peaceful societies
- A strong focus on development aid
- A transformative approach:
  - o Overcoming power structures
  - o Colonial past
  - o Attentive to power relations
  - o Addressing root causes (i.e., oppression of marginalized groups)
  - o FFP as a cultural shift (feminist reflex)
- A very intersectional lens:
  - o Post-colonial / Anti-racist
- ‘Nothing about us without us’ is applied.
- A cross-cutting (gender mainstreaming) implementation of FFP
  - o Gender mainstreaming on all levels
  - o Gender at the foundational stage of any policy
- FFP policy as a living document

## 1.6 Luxembourg

### **The general discourse emphasizes the following aspects:**

- *Values*: human rights, human dignity, women's rights (sexual and reproductive rights), environmental sustainability, gender equality
- *Built on*: international engagements (WPS, SDFs, CEDAW, ...)
- *Cross-cutting*: mainstream throughout all activities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
- *Intersectional*: rights of women and LGBTI people, intersectional lens explicitly mentioned in humanitarian action strategy
- *Institutionalization*: gender equality within MFA (recruitment, work-life balance, language, legal framework)

### **Actions planned on the following topics:**

- *Improvement of*: social and political representation of women, equal opportunities for women (education, employment, social services, health, land and property rights), sexual and reproductive health of women, rights of LGBTQI people, protection and promotion of human rights of women and girls (dignity, security, integrity, education, socio-economic integration, representation/participation (multilateral, education, missions abroad,...), link between gender, environment and development, resources for international initiatives (i.e. donations to UN women) → gendered strategies in all areas
- *Gendered lens on*: defence, diplomacy, gender equality within migration, development aid strategy (goals: eradicate poverty and promote economic, social and environmental sustainability by improving access to resources, socio-economic integration of women, promoting sustainable and inclusive growth and inclusive governance), humanitarian action strategy (need for intersectional lens on conflict (girls, women, people with a disability, other vulnerable groups) and gender-transformative change)
- *Fight against*: gendered violence (conflict and other), sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment

### **The discourse does not address:**

- Transformative change: systemic and structural change, root causes of gender inequality, violence against women etc.
- Lack of consideration of colonial/imperial legacies
- Lack of consideration of capitalism
- 'Nothing about us without us' is not applied.

- Specific topics: democratic backsliding, peace and security (conflict situations, militarization, weaponization), care work,
- Not cross-cutting/Gender mainstreaming:
  - only within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
  - focused on ‘over there’.
- Accountability framework
- Budgets & gender budgeting
- Definitions

**The emphases in Luxembourg’s discourse indicate a FFP shaped by the following aspects:**

- A focus on women’s empowerment
- A focus on participation/representation of women
- Gender equality as a means for something, not as a goal in itself
  - To eradicate global poverty
  - For economic, social, and environmental sustainability
- A limited incorporation of an intersectional approach
  - Only mentioned for humanitarian strategy
  - Not very elaborate
  - Applied ‘over there’.
- A limited incorporation of a transformative approach
  - Only mentioned for humanitarian strategy
  - Not very elaborate
  - Applied ‘over there’

## 1.7 Mexico

### **The general discourse emphasizes the following aspects:**

- *Values:* human rights, gender equality, non-discrimination, feminism (substantive equality, personal autonomy in decision-making, eradication of structural inequalities, elimination of discrimination), SDGs,
- *Cross-cutting:* gender perspective across all sectors and areas of Mexico's foreign policy, within and outside of FM, a feminist agenda abroad.
- *Intersectional:* An intersectional feminist approach in all foreign policy actions, women and girls, indigenous, afro-descendant, and other historically excluded groups
- *Strategic advantages:* Mexico as the first country of the global south and of Latin America, FFP as the next step in Mexico's international leadership on gender equality
- *Transformative:* make structural and historical inequalities visible and combat them, structural inequality requires radical solutions
- *Other:* Mexico perceives it the state's responsibility to provide necessary legal, institutional, financial, and human resources to strengthen human rights and freedoms  
→ feminism spearheaded by the state

### **Actions planned on the following topics:**

- *Improvement of:* reduction and elimination of structural differences, gender gaps and inequalities, parity within the foreign ministry and foreign service, eradicating all forms of gender-based violence within the FM (language, restricted employment opportunities, professional discrimination, sexual harassment, domestic violence), representation/visibility (foreign policy making, economic and political leadership), equality at the workplace (within Foreign ministry and other), make feminist leadership visible, raising awareness of women's contributions to foreign policy,
- *Gendered perspective on:* foreign policy
- *How:* support for international initiatives (e.g., HeforShe, Generation Equality Forum), workshops, education, parity certifications, improvement of public space's (e.g., cities = less femicides), international agreements on anti-discrimination, including gender equality policies in COP and UNFCCC (→ Mexico one of the leaders), working towards social and individual rights plus multilateralism and cooperation, meetings with civil society to come up with effective policies
- *Additional:* willingness to learn from other countries with more experience and share benefits

**The discourse does not address:**

- Lack of consideration of colonial/imperial legacies
- Lack of consideration of capitalism
- Specific topics: health & sexual and reproductive health, immigration, democratic backsliding, peace and security (conflict situations, militarization, weaponization), trade and economic issues, care work
- Not cross-cutting/gender mainstreaming
  - o only limited to Foreign Affairs (Feminist agenda abroad)
  - o Disconnect between international level and domestic situation (i.e., femicides, domestic sexual and gender-based violence)
- ‘Nothing about us without us’ is not applied.
- Accountability framework
- Budgets & gender budgeting
- Definitions

**The emphases in Mexico’s discourse indicate a FFP shaped by the following aspects:**

- Feminism explicitly mentioned as core value for the state.
- A focus on participation/representation of women
  - o Especially within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- A focus on reduction of structural differences, gender gaps and inequalities
- FFP as a tool for positioning on the international/regional stage
  - o ‘First country of the global South’
  - o Mexico as an international leader for gender equality
- A transformative approach to some extent
  - o Radical solutions for structural and historical inequalities
  - o Only through government reforms
- An intersectional lens
  - o A voice to the people of the Global South
- Other: willingness to learn from and share with other countries

## 1.8 Scotland

### **The general discourse emphasizes the following aspects:**

- *Values*: feminism, fairness, equality, inclusion, human rights, net zero and climate resilience, cooperation, rule of law, peace, anti-racist, equity
- *Transformative*: addressing root causes of inequality, for those most affected by global challenges, led by priorities from the global south, systemic change, questioning and challenging existing power structures, consultative, collaborative, participatory
- *Cross-cutting*: cross-government approach, feminist principles in all international policy, overseas and domestically, FAIR complements domestic objective to address inequality. → policy coherence, mainstreamed across the Scottish government.
- *Intersectional*: women, girls and other marginalized groups, a post-colonial and anti-racist vision of policymaking, recognition of distinct disadvantage, harm, and injustice when multiple categories of identity overlap
- *Strategic advantage*: Scotland as a strong, respected voice in the world, good global citizen, supporter of multilateralism and rules-based international system
- *Other*: accountability, transparency, collaboration, FFP as an ongoing process
- *However*: Scotland does not have full power over foreign policy (United Kingdom)

### **Actions planned on the following topics:**

- *Areas of focus (gendered lens on)*: international development and humanitarian aid, climate justice, trade, peace and security (democracy, rule of law, fundamental human rights)
- *How*: led from the Global South (governments and civil society), encouraging south-south collaboration, knowledge exchange and leadership, participatory methodology, providing resources (budget, funds for climate justice, gender equality etc.), partnership programs to facilitate education and learning (e.g. of police), encouraging gender mainstreaming in policies, participation in international initiatives, many new domestic policies in the works on all area topics, representation not just of women but also women activists, support and protect activists, trying to influence UK Government, work with local organizations
- *What*: policy coherence, support women's organizations, networks and grassroots movements incl. platforms to learn and speak up, funding in line w. feminist principles, engage in international knowledge exchange (listening, learning, sharing, reflecting), advocate for structural change, supporting research, funding in a minimally

administrative and participatory approach, capacity sharing, representation/participation (policy and decision-making, ), support (indigenous) women leaders, advocating, gendered policies or gender chapters in policies, gender-specific impact analyses,

**The discourse does not address:**

- Lack of consideration of capitalism
- Specific topics: sexual and gender-based violence, health & sexual and reproductive health, immigration, democratic backsliding, peace and security (conflict situations, militarization, weaponization), care work
- Budgets & gender budgeting
- Definitions

**The emphases in Scotland's discourse indicate a FFP shaped by the following aspects:**

- Feminism explicitly mentioned.
- Anti-racism explicitly mentioned.
- A focus on international development and humanitarian aid
- A transformative approach:
  - o Addressing root causes
  - o Those most affected
  - o Priorities from the global south
  - o Systemic change
  - o Challenging power structures
- A very intersectional lens:
  - o Post-colonial / Anti-racist
- 'Nothing about us without us' is applied.
- A cross-cutting (gender mainstreaming) implementation of FFP
  - o Cross-government
  - o Domestic & overseas
- FFP as a tool for positioning on the international/regional stage
  - o Scotland as a strong & respected voice in the world
  - o Good global citizen
  - o Distinction from Great Britain
- FFP as an ongoing process



## 1.9 Spain

### **The general discourse emphasizes the following aspects:**

- *Values*: gender equality, empowerment of women and girls, gender parity
- *Approach*: rights and justice but also benefits to the society as a whole (i.e. economy, conflict resolution), gender equality as a goal and as a prerequisite for sustainable peace and prosperity, transformative (within the foreign service, all areas of external action and structural change in working methods and institutional culture), committed leadership, ownership of FFP by different stakeholders through coordination mechanisms, inclusive participation and fostering alliances (collaboration with other ministries, stakeholders such as civil society organizations, parliament, international level), intersectionality and diversity
- *Cross-cutting*: national policy and external action, same level of commitment in all public policies, importance of domestic-foreign policy congruence.
- *Intersectional*: improving situation of women and girls by recognizing existence of intersectional and multiple forms of discrimination (ethnic, racial, sexual orientation, gender identity, economic status, religious beliefs, disability, or place of origin). Intersection and diversity focus, encompassing gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, economic status, religious belief, disability, place of origin).
- *International stage*: multilateral, bilateral, within the EU and in development cooperation / achieving SDGs / Spain as an international reference / reference to all international commitments (CEDAW, Beijing etc.), and EU commitments (Istanbul convention),
- *Other*: Spain as a leader in implementation of equality policies

### **Actions planned on the following topics:**

- *Areas of focus*: WPS (advocating for, financially and otherwise support implementation on all action levels), violence against women and girls (fight against impunity for crimes, promote intervention in international courts, adoption of sanctions etc.), Human rights of women and girls (attention on trafficking, sexual and reproductive rights (also for LGBTQIA+), supporting human rights defenders), participation/representation of women in decision-making (political, multilateral bodies, peace and mediation processes, climate action), economic justice and the empowerment of women (women's economic rights, agents of wealth creation, inclusive trade policy (access to resources, training, education), gender parity as a key goal

- *How (action levels)*: mainstreaming gender approach in FP on all topics (e.g., climate, trade, human trafficking, ...) and all phases (from drafting to follow-up), capacity-building, awareness-raising, training, bilateral and regional diplomacy (systematically in all interactions), voice to women and women's organizations, regional organizations as priority stakeholders (African Union, OAS, SICA, Ibero-American relations, etc.), within the EU (advocacy, policy development, promotion of measures (pay transparency etc.), good practices, advocacy for joining initiatives (Istanbul convention)), multilateral diplomacy (gender issues on the agenda, support of candidates, gender lens on funding, ), increase of participation/representation, in international cooperation for sustainable development (85% with gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment as objective, gender strategy, mainstreaming of gender approach), humanitarian affairs (mainstreaming gender equality in all interventions, sexual and gender-based violence, WPS Agenda (women as peacebuilders), in consular protection and assistance (assistance to Spanish women), in public diplomacy (campaigns, events, conferences, publications), in foreign service (equality policies, representation, family support, training, )),
- *Who*: Ministry of Foreign Affairs in cooperation with other actors involved in Spain's external action, with other ministries and public administrations, with NGOs, the private sector, universities and research centres, multilateral organizations,
- *Monitoring & resources*: gender perspective on budget preparation, under supervision of ambassador at large for equality in FP, monitoring through annual reports given to parliament and discussed with civil society and other stakeholders + creation of high-level Advisory group to further shape FFP,
- *Additional*: many concrete actions outlined and further planned, more actions than values outlined.

**The discourse does not address:**

- Transformative change: systemic and structural change, root causes of gender inequality, violence against women etc. only limited.
- Lack of consideration of colonial/imperial legacies
- Lack of consideration of capitalism
- Specific topics: health & sexual and reproductive health, democratic backsliding, peace and security (conflict situations, militarization, weaponization), climate change & sustainable development, care work, education

- Immigration: protection of human rights of migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers within the EU  
→ at the same time outsourcing migration control to partner countries like Morocco
- Definitions

**The emphases in Spain's discourse indicate a FFP shaped by the following aspects:**

- A focus on the international conflict between rising political right and diminishing political left.
- A focus on women's rights and closing the gaps.
- A focus on women's empowerment
- A focus on participation/representation of women
- Gender equality both as a means and as a goal
  - Means for a better society as a whole (economy, conflict resolution, sustainable peace)
- A limited transformative approach
  - Structural change is mentioned.
- A limited intersectional lens
  - Focus on 'women and girls' but with consideration of multiple forms of discrimination.
- 'Nothing about us without us' is applied.
- A cross-cutting (gender mainstreaming) implementation of FFP
- FFP as a tool for positioning on the international/regional stage
  - Spain as a leader of equality policies

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