

ZEITENWENDE: TIME FOR A FAIR FOREIGN POLICY

Introduction

Climate change, war in Ukraine, and refugee crises all underscore the need to reevaluate feminist foreign policy (FFP), which was intended to examine gendered problems and responses, and generate solutions by bringing women, their perspectives and preferences into foreign policy decisions.¹ This promising approach could hold answers to current crises but is undermined by four central tensions. In this paper, we analyse weaknesses in feminist foreign policy and advance a new concept of Fair Foreign Policy, FFP 2.0, to embrace original goals of feminist approaches within a more inclusive, equity-centered framework. We suggest ways the German Federal Foreign Office (FFO) and the German federal government can implement FFP2.0.

FFP, a Contested Concept

The meaning of “feminist foreign policy” is uncertain² even though eight countries have adopted it in some form: Sweden (2014), Canada (2017), Luxembourg and France (2019), Mexico (2020), and Spain, Libya and Germany (2021).³ Sweden pioneered this concept and is regarded as an authority but disagreements remain. There have been attempts to define FFP⁴ and a few studies on the efficacy of FFP⁵ but there is no single definition of FFP⁶ and no cross-country comparison of its impact⁷. These uncertainties are problematic. More broadly, differing understandings of FFP have created frictions with civil society organisations.⁸

Ongoing tensions in the articulation and implementation of FFP are significant for Germany. In late 2021, the new government’s coalition agreement embraced FFP to

¹ Schmidt, J. A Green Feminist Foreign Policy for the EU. <https://eu.boell.org/en/2021/09/13/green-feminist-foreign-policy-eu>. Assad, C. and Tausendfreund, R. H. A Feminist Foreign Policy for Germany is Not Enough, March 18, 2022. Accessed June 16, 2022. <https://ip-quarterly.com/en/feminist-foreign-policy-germany-not-enough>.

² Scheyer, Victoria, and Marina Kumskova. Feminist Foreign Policy: A Fine Line between ‘Adding Women’ and Pursuing a Feminist Agenda. *Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 72, no. 2, 2019, pp. 57–76, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26760832>. Accessed 18 Apr. 2022.

³ International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), (2021). Defining Feminist Foreign Policy: A 2021 Update. Accessed May 5, 2022. <https://www.icrw.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Defining-Feminist-Foreign-Policy-2021-Update.pdf>

⁴ *Ibid.* International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), (2019). Defining Feminist Foreign Policy. Accessed April 16, 2022. https://www.icrw.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/ICRW_DefiningFeministForeignPolicy_Brief_Revised_v5_WebReady.pdf.

⁵ Rao, S. and Tiessen, R. (2020). Whose feminism(s)? Overseas partner organizations’ perceptions of Canada’s Feminist International Assistance Policy. *International Journal*, vol. 75(3). IWDA, (2021). Seeds to Roots: Trajectories towards Feminist Foreign Policy. https://iwda.org.au/assets/files/IWDA_FFPTrajectoriesReport_Web.pdf

⁶ Canada’s Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP) was launched without defining feminism or clarifying how the new policy differed from previous approaches (Rao and Thiessen, 2020).

⁷ *Op. cit.* IWDA, (2021).

⁸ Gammage, S. et al. Feminist Foreign Policy Key Principles & Accountability Mechanisms, May 2019. Accessed June 16, 2022. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333566695_Feminist_Foreign_Policy_Key_Principles_Accountability_Mechanisms

strengthen the *Rechte, Ressourcen* and *Repräsentation* of women and girls and promote *Diversität*.⁹ The diversity commitment extends the 3Rs as articulated by Sweden.¹⁰ More recently, State Minister Lindner characterised the policy as “3Rs and 1 D”.¹¹ Germany’s “D”, while unspecified, may acknowledge gender diversity since the coalition agreement mentions “an integrated and inclusive approach” (*ein vernetzen und inklusiven Ansatz*).¹² Alone, this is inadequate, as we examine.

FFP, a Flawed Concept

Beyond conceptual uncertainty, FFP has four deep flaws that limit the realisation of its potential. First, the term “feminism” is sometimes polarizing and can detract from the objective of advancing more equitable outcomes.¹³ A 2020 recipient survey about Canada’s FIAP found that greater than 50 percent of respondents believed feminist development, gender equality and/or women’s empowerment programming did not benefit women but rather undermined men and boys.¹⁴ This perception runs counter to feminism’s goals, and is a serious obstacle for effective foreign policy.

Second, FFP does not explicitly account for intersectionality, making it ineffective for issues with multiple dimensions or power differentials. If FFP overtly focuses on women and girls, as in Sweden, it may fail to capture complexities of race, ethnicity, religion, or age, and does not account for other vulnerable or marginalised groups. In Sweden’s model, it is unclear whether intersectionality is actually implemented.¹⁵ For instance, it is insufficient in Europe to focus on women and girls without examining how Roma people may be excluded.¹⁶ Thus far, only Mexico and Spain have explicitly focused on intersectionality.¹⁷

Third, FFP is specifically concerned with an outward-looking mandate and does not address domestic policies, leaving implementing governments open to accusations of

⁹ Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands [Social Democratic Party] (SPD), *Bündnis 90/ Die Grünen* [Alliance 90/ The Greens] and *Die Freie Demokraten* [Free Democratic Party] (FDP). *Mehr Fortschritt Wagen: Bündniss für Freiheit, Gerechtigkeit und Nachhaltigkeit. Koalitionsvertrag 2021-2025* [Dare for More Progress: An Alliance for Freedom, Justice and Sustainability. A Coalition Agreement, 2021-2025]. Accessed May 3, 2022. https://www.spd.de/fileadmin/Dokumente/Koalitionsvertrag/Koalitionsvertrag_2021-2025.pdf.

¹⁰ Vogelstein, R. and Bro, A., Sweden’s Feminist Foreign Policy, Long May It Reign, *Foreign Policy*. January 30, 2019. Accessed March 8, 2022. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/01/30/sweden-feminist-foreignpolicy/>.

¹¹ *Keynote von Staatsminister Tobias Lindner zur feministischen Außenpolitik* [Keynote from State Minister Tobias Lindner on Feminist Foreign Policy], German Federal Foreign Office, April 12, 2022. Accessed April 17, 2022. <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/newsroom/lindner-ffp/2522998>.

¹² *Op. cit.* Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands.

¹³ *Op. cit.* IWDA (2021).

¹⁴ *Op. cit.* Rao and Thiessen (2020).

¹⁵ International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) and WeDo, (2019). *Feminist Foreign Policy Discussion Series: Furthering Accountability and Centering Climate Change*. September 2019. Accessed June 16, 2022. <https://www.icrw.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Feminist-Foreign-Policy-%E2%80%93-Furthering-Accountability-and-Centering-Climate-Change-FINAL-3.pdf>.

¹⁶ *Op. cit.* ICRW (2019).

¹⁷ Thompson, L., Ahmed, S. and Khokhar, T. *Defining Feminist Foreign Policy: A 2021 Update*. ICRW. Accessed April 4, 2022. <https://www.icrw.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Defining-Feminist-Foreign-Policy-2021-Update.pdf>.

hypocrisy and policy incoherence.¹⁸ One of only two southern adopters of FFP, Mexico, has been criticised by activists for failing to apply feminist principles to domestic issues, including femicide.¹⁹ If a feminist approach centers the needs of women and girls (and the marginalised in some interpretations), policy coherence would imply the need to align domestic policies in the same way, but this is not part of FFP.

Fourth, FFP debates sometimes oversimplify militaristic versus feminist, or weapons versus peace into false binaries.²⁰ Military capacity building and weapons stockpiling or even self-defence in the face of attack have been conflated with aggressive dominance. In Germany, feminist Alice Schwarzer's open letter to Chancellor Olaf Scholz warned that responsibility for nuclear conflict lay not only with the aggressor but also with those who resisted the aggressor's demands.²¹ Thus, some advocates for FFP would not allow a country to respond militarily, even if attacked. The confusion about military power under FFP has been further compounded by the West's tendency to link the use of armed forces with the promotion of white feminism. Women became a pretext for foreign policy when political exigencies arose, as when then First Lady of the United States Laura Bush's declared that invading Afghanistan would liberate its women or when the Trump administration cited women's rights to justify pulling out of a nuclear agreement with Iran. These unfortunate connotations have allowed insurgent groups from ISIS to the Taliban to mount a defence in reverse, rallying against "anti-imperialism" with cries against feminism.²²

Fair Foreign Policy

Although equity is central to feminism, we advance "Fair Foreign Policy" or FFP 2.0 as a broader and more inclusive concept that has many advantages beyond a Feminist Foreign Policy and can resolve the four weaknesses we identify above. Where Feminist Foreign Policy is centered on gendered problems, fairness is inclusive of all groups and does not carry the implication of favor or disfavor to any. There is also considerable scope to shape this concept. A recent search for the term "fair foreign policy" on Google Scholar returned only 44 publications in the last 30 years²³, demonstrating that fairness has been used very rarely vis-à-vis foreign policies.

¹⁸ Zilla, C., Feminist Foreign Policy: Concepts, Core Components and Controversies, SWP Comment. August 18, 2022. Accessed August 20, 2022. <https://www.swp-berlin.org/publikation/feministische-aussenpolitik>.

¹⁹ Gupta, A. H., What Do Sweden and Mexico have in Common? A Feminist Foreign Policy. July 21, 2022. Accessed July 21, 2022. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/21/us/sweden-feminist-foreign-policy.html>.

²⁰ Tausendfreund, R. (2021). What kind of Feminist Policy can we Expect from Germany's Government? The German Marshall Fund of the United States, November 30, 2021. Accessed April 17, 2022. <https://www.gmfus.org/news/what-kind-feminist-foreign-policy-should-we-expect-germanys-new-government>.

²¹ Emma [feminist magazine based in Germany]. *Offener Brief an Kanzler Olaf Scholz* [An Open Letter to Chancellor Olaf Scholz], April 29, 2022. Accessed May 2, 2022. <https://www.emma.de/artikel/offener-brief-bundeskanzler-scholz-339463>.

²² Moaveni, A., The Big Idea: Can Foreign Policy be Feminist? Feb 7, 2022. Accessed June 16, 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2022/feb/07/the-big-idea-can-foreign-policy-be-feminist>.

²³ Plus another entry from 1965.

We use “fair” broadly: “treating an individual or a group of people in a right or reasonable manner, equally, not colored by personal opinions or judgement”.²⁴ Fairness could inform foreign policy to challenge the gendered binaries inherent in post-Westphalian diplomacy—the masculine state as the benchmark—and the patriarchal association of masculinity with universality and objectivity, while alternatives are silenced or dismissed.²⁵ Applying a political economy lens, fairness may be analysed in terms of rights, entitlements, and responsibilities.

Second, FFP 2.0, explicitly extends narrow, non-intersectional versions of feminism. “Fair” makes space for gender diversity. Using Crenshaw’s (1989) definition of intersectionality, FFP2.0 permits the disruption of harmful historic norms such as relate to colonialism, racism, patriarchy, ableism, and sexism, and recognises the rights of LGBTQI+, rural, and indigenous people.²⁶ FFP2.0 advances accountability and centers inclusiveness and equity within foreign policy.

Third, “fair foreign policy” is untainted by the colonial and imperial links to the term “feminist” and is therefore more appropriate globally. An FFP2.0 would stand for policy coherence between foreign and domestic policies. It would improve transparency within nation states as it would be more straightforward to monitor the implementation of domestic policies, compared to foreign policy, while improving accountability of the government to its citizens in both spheres.

Fourth, a Fair Foreign Policy permits self-defense, acknowledging hard power without compromising the principle of “fairness”. This supports recent decisions by Finland and Sweden to join NATO, for instance. The concept of fairness and the right to self-defence extends to sexual violence, as exemplified by the Êzîdxan Women’s Units in Iraq, an all-women militia formed to protect Yazidi women and girls from ISIS. Gender-based violence during war is often ignored within foreign policy.²⁷ Fair foreign policy addresses this directly. We detail the principles of Fair Foreign Policy in Annex A.

Germany: A *Zeitenwende*

The invasion of Ukraine has injected clarity and urgency into German foreign policy debates. This is a *Zeitenwende* with Germany jettisoning its long-held foreign policy norms of *Wandel durch Handel* viz. the supremacy of commercial gains over security, and the reluctance to invest in the military for either self-defense or supporting NATO. The coalition government has refocused on trans-Atlantic relations as a pillar of German foreign policy. It is also positioning Berlin as a stronger leader in the Europe Union.

Germany’s foreign policy approach would be further enhanced by a deeper understanding of whether and how feminist foreign policy is working. As we argue, Fair Foreign Policy

²⁴ Cambridge Dictionary. Accessed April 29, 2022. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/fair>

²⁵ Robinson, F. (2021). Feminist Foreign Policy as Ethical Foreign Policy? A Care Ethics Perspective, *Journal of International Political Theory*, vol. 17(1) 20-37.

²⁶ *Op. cit.* International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) and WeDo, (2019).

²⁷ *Op. cit.* Assad and Tausendfreund (2022).

addresses the limitations of feminist foreign policy, and supports Germany's non-binary approach towards gender. Articulating a definition of FFP2.0 would guide implementation, including creating room for the FFO to maneuver where needed most, such as with war in Ukraine.

An articulation of FFP2.0 will clarify the core principles of this new foreign policy approach. These principles will guide bilateral relations, based on careful evaluation of context and needs. FFP2.0 thus should include broad consultations with German citizens, beneficiaries of the German government's programmes, and partner organisations abroad.²⁸ It should be applied across all elements of foreign policy such as development aid, technical assistance, trade, defense, culture as well as diplomacy itself.²⁹ The FFO should examine perceptions towards FFP2.0 to anticipate and mitigate against actors who may try to hinder this process, and to ultimately develop the right sequencing strategy.

Recommendations

1. **Use political economy analysis (PEA) to shape the German government's definition of FFP2.0.**³⁰ PEA can illuminate ways to manage difficult challenges, such as the distribution of power and wealth, and helps to reveal power structures as embedded in governance, accountability and participation.³¹ The goals are twofold: first, to identify opportunities and broaden the scope for dialogue between key stakeholders including partner countries. Second, to inform better policy and programming. PEA will contribute to a shared understanding of FFP2.0 within the German government.
2. **Promote implementation coherence across the German government.** Under the auspices of the FFO, the Chancellery should call for the involvement of all stakeholders including the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the German development agency GIZ, Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (BMWK), the Federal Ministry of Defence (BMVg), the Federal Ministry of the Interior (BMI), and the state-owned investment and development bank KfW.
3. **Formulate accountability mechanisms.** To strengthen accountability and policy coherence, four mechanisms are needed: 1) transparent resourcing and budgetary

²⁸ It is vital to examine all forms of collaboration, whether North-North, South-South, North-South, or South-North.

²⁹ Thompson, L. and Clement, R (2019). Defining Feminist Foreign Policy, ICRW. Accessed April 2, 2022. https://www.icrw.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/ICRW_DefiningFeministForeignPolicy_Brief_Revised_v5_WebReady.pdf.

³⁰ PEA has been employed by inter alia, the Australian Agency for International Development, the European Commission, the Netherlands' Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), and the World Bank Source: Bump, J.B., and M.R. Reich. (2013). "[Political Economy Analysis for Tobacco Control in Low- and Middle-Income Countries.](#)" Health Policy and Planning 28(2): 123-133.

³¹ Ottersen, O.P. et al. (2014). [The Political Origins of Health Inequity: Prospects for Change](#), *Lancet* 383: 630-67.

processes as part of priority setting such as employing the OECD’s “gender marker” to track spending on gender equality.³² 2) accountability audits in the form of consultative processes with stakeholders domestically and abroad.³³ The reports should be made public. 3) key indicators for the human resources departments in implementing ministries. Job descriptions should include performance-based assessments vis-à-vis FFP 2.0. 4) establish an ombudsperson for citizen and stakeholder recourse.

4. **Build a communications strategy to inform perceptions** of German citizens and recipients and organisations in partner countries. This aligns with the coalition commitment to engage citizens (“*Wir suchen aktiv den Dialog mit den Bürgerinnen und Bürgern über die Herausforderungen der internationalen Politik*”).³⁴ The German government could emphasise that FFP2.0 continues its human rights-centered approach vis-à-vis foreign policy with greater inclusivity.

Next Steps

EAR is founding member, Global Diplomacy Lab (GDL). Minister Annalena Baerbock is patron and the GDL’s secretariat is within the FFO. The FFO could commission the GDL to conduct Labs or workshops to assist with FFP2.0 implementation. GDL details are included as Annex B.

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³² *Op. cit.* ICRW (2021).

³³ France and Canada had conducted consultative processes for their respective FFP before announcing them. Source: *op. cit.* Rao and Thiessen (2020).

³⁴ *Op. cit.* Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands.

Principles of FFP 2.0

The five principles of FFP 2.0 are informed by feminist values and rooted in human rights.³⁵ First, FFP 2.0 should be posited within a human rights framework, based on existing UN instruments such as UN Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, and Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Second, it should be intersectional as defined by Crenshaw (1989) and inclusive. Third, it should be transformative, meaning it should disrupt power inequities and redress historical injustice, and shift power relations and social norms within and between countries. Fourth, all stakeholders must have agency and not be viewed as victims and/or bystanders. They should be meaningfully engaged with substantive representation. Fifth, there is not universalization; context is important. Fairness requires attention to inequities of history, structure, society, and power. FFP 2.0 must be informed by ongoing learning and full accountability. Taken together, these principles help to define an FFP 2.0 that is not rigid but rather contextual and adaptive.

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³⁵ <https://www.icrw.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Feminist-Foreign-Policy-%E2%80%93-Furthering-Accountability-and-Centering-Climate-Change-FINAL-3.pdf>

The Global Diplomacy Lab

The Global Diplomacy Lab (GDL) was founded by the FFO in 2014 and its secretariat is housed within the FFO. The GDL is a public private partnership between the FFO, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Slovenia, the German-American Fulbright Commission, the BMW Foundation Herbert Quandt and the Robert Bosch Foundation.

The GDL would be able to help define FFP 2.0, carry out political economy analysis, and help implement the proposed recommendations. We are unique in that our 300 members from approximately 90 countries have deep experience with foreign policy. As an organisation, we have been working in various countries and cities to develop new solutions toward real world challenges. We have thus far hosted 11 Labs on four continents.

First, our approach is to include all actors, including those traditionally excluded, in the complex process of restoring and building peace, an approach that is innovative as it is warranted.³⁶ Second, contrary to traditional foreign policy, the GDL's priority is not the "what" but the "how": the GDL format allows for the safe experimentation and testing of ideas and concepts, as well as for building trust among different peoples.³⁷ Third, unlike traditional foreign policy, which may be limited to the national level, we have worked with various actors at the country and city level across continents.³⁸

Our members have comprehensive and rich experiences dealing with gender equality and feminist issues. The GDL is a founding member of the Gender Alliance, established in 2019, that is also supported by the BMW Foundation Herbert Quandt and the Bosch Alumni Network. The Gender Alliance has worked with organisations like BMW Poland to find solutions to gender equality issues among its workforce and shared its feminist manifesto with several organisations including with Ambassador Bonnie Jenkins from Women of Color Advancing Peace, Security and Conflict Prevention (WCAPS).

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³⁶ Schaefer, M. Foreword in Abdul Rahman, E., D'Silva, E. and Peteranderl, S. (ed.), 2021. *The Demographic Dividend and the Power of Youth: Voices from the Global Diplomacy Lab*, London: Anthem Press.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ In 2016, the GDL worked on citizen diplomacy with Global Affairs Canada as the Canadian government sought to engage its citizenry abroad. In 2017, we guided the ESMA Memory Site Museum in Buenos Aires on its truth and reconciliation work due to the military junta (1976 to 1983). In 2018, we collaborated with the Mayor of Chicago and the Obama Foundation to tackle youth violence in Chicago. In 2019, we worked with the FFO in Accra on the issue of the demographic dividend to incorporate the views of the youth in Africa. Source: *op. cit.* Abdul Rahman et al. (2021).

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