



The Case For Feminist Foreign Policy: Why Nations Must Act Now

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Abstract: Feminist Foreign Policy, abbreviated as FFP, signifies a revolutionary stance bringing global governance under the rigorous ethos of gender equality and the dismantling of entrenched power hierarchies in international relations. This article explores the process of domestication of FFP in Sweden and Canada, two groundbreakers in this area of enforcement. It analyses how these countries operationalize FFP together with successes and challenges. At the end of this analysis, it is elucidated that the FFP has the potential to bring about lasting peace empowerment for marginalized sectors and address systemic inequities. Backed by global agendas such as Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the FFP provides pathways to achieving a more just and equitable world. The article ends on a call to extend the adoption of FFP, epitomizing its role in radically transforming global governance and addressing some of the most vexing challenges facing humanity. Through experiences in Sweden and Canada, this article establishes that FFP is necessary and achievable and serves as a model for others to replicate.

By providing guidelines for a more just and equal world along with global agendas such as Sustainable Development Goals, the FFP opens up avenues to achieving further justice in the world. The article ends with the demand to make wider adoption of FFP possible, as it reshapes global governance and deals with some of the most worrying dilemmas facing humankind today. Within the Swedish and Canadian experiences, this article argues that FFP is necessary and achievable, serving as a model for replication by other states.

Index Terms - Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP), Gender equality, Intersectionality, Human security, Global governance, Systemic inequalities, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Peacebuilding, Marginalized groups.

I. INTRODUCTION

Many traditional foreign policies, with their emphasis on military might, economic advantages, and alliances, have routinely pushed human rights, gender equality, and social justice to the back burner. Such policies consolidate systemic inequalities without addressing the underlying causes of many challenges facing the globe today, including conflict, poverty, and climate change. The Feminist Foreign Policy goes against this antiquated paradigm in calling for a transformative framework of inclusion, intersectionality, and sustainable peace. An FFP first introduced by Sweden in 2014 and later adopted by Canada in 2017 describes a radical shift in the field of international relations, reinterpretation to include a gendered perspective. By taking a standpoint that centres on the needs and experiences of women and other marginalized groups, FFP attempts to build a global order free from structural inequalities.

In practice, FFP is a very practical approach to foreign policy. Sweden's FFP applies gender equality throughout all its diplomatic efforts, from development aid to conflict resolution. Similarly, targeting women and girls' empowerment through specific projects in sexual and reproductive health, education, and economic inclusion is at the heart of Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP). These illustrate, as in sowing the seeds towards the successful implementation of FFP, outcomes like increased funding for women in right organizations and inclusion in the peacebuilding processes. Despite its potential to transform the nature of international interactions, the FFP has to battle against stiff criticism, including tokenism, competition with other competing policy priorities, and difficulty measuring the outcomes of its interventions. The big question is then: Why does FFP matter, and what the world gains by adopting it globally? FFP is more of a road map for the global response towards addressing systemic inequalities and sustainable development in consonance with global frameworks like the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). With an emphasis on gender justice and intersectionality, the FFP challenges the conventional notions of power and security and puts greater value on human security than state security. This article investigates the Swedish and Canadian enactments of FFP, with a particular focus on the operationalization of those policies and their effects and lessons for other countries. A comparative analysis is intended to contribute to the academic community in discussions on feminist international relations and the practical realm in discussions about global policy formation, showing the importance of FFP in shaping diplomacy for a more just and equitable world.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Ever so Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP) crosses the radical imaginations on power dynamics in international relations, contesting the patriarchal structures solidly entrenched in global politics. Feminist foreign policy punctuates feminist international relations (IR). Human rights and social justice critiques are traditional approaches to international relations, prioritizing state security and economic interests above anything else. Scholars such as Cynthia Enloe and Ann Tickner discuss how gender shapes global politics, usually to the exclusion of participation from women and marginalized spaces (Enloe, 2014; Tickner, 1992). While FFP seeks to lessen these inequities by lending a gender perspective to foreign policy, from diplomacy to development and aid.

At its core, FFP is based on three foundational principles: gender justice, intersectionality, and transformative impact. Gender justice first deals with the eradication of systemic discrimination and violence against women and marginalized groups. This is clearly articulated by international instruments like UN Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security, which states the importance of women in peacebuilding and conflict resolution processes (UN Security Council, 2000). Thus, in the name of gender justice, FFP seeks to eliminate structural barriers which keep women unequal.

Secondly, intersectionality recognizes that various forms of oppression occur on mutually compounding axes, such as race, class, sexual orientation, and disability. Feminist Foreign Policy adopts an intersectional outlook on policymaking, ensuring that foreign policy meets the needs of all forms of marginalization. This principle presents a critique against the generic approaches that have come to characterize traditional diplomacy and demands recognition of the context-dependent complexity of life experiences (Crenshaw, 1989).

Third, FFP aims for transformative impact, a long-term structural change rather than quick wins. Whereas most traditional policies strengthen patriarchal orders, FFP champions inclusive governance and enduring peace. It embraces a world in which justice sustains peace instead of force, where the human security of individuals takes precedence over state security (True, 2020).

As a result, the principles guide not only the content of foreign policies but also their mechanisms of implementation. With its emphasis on inclusivity, human rights, and systemic change, FFP proves viable in stark contrast to militarized and exclusionary methods of traditional diplomacy. It thus serves to disrupt the status quo and advocate instead for an equitable and just global order.

III. CASE STUDY: SWEDEN'S FFP

In its history, the year 2014 saw Sweden become the first country to adopt an openly feminist foreign policy (FFP). Under foreign minister Margot Wallström, Sweden's FFP was designed to include equality into three focus areas: development cooperation, security policy, and trade. Built on the foundations of rights, representation, and resources, the three areas focus on the elimination of systemic forms of discrimination, incorporating women into decision-making, and resource allocation (Government of Sweden, 2014).

On the other hand, an indication of the new FFP of Sweden includes funding gender-sensitive development aid. About 85% of Sweden's bilateral development assistance goes toward programs that make an effort to provide equality for women, including such that would provide some relief from sexual and gender-based violence in conflict areas like South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo (OECD, 2020). Programs have included psychosocial support and legal aid for survivors of sexual violence from areas experiencing violent conflict, for example (UN Women, 2018). Other initiatives include Sweden's investment in trade policies in which gender equality becomes responsive. An example is Sweden and East African countries that are partnering to incorporate gender provisions into trade agreements, which encourage women's participation in the global economy (Aggestam & Bergman-Rosamond, 2016).

In addition, Sweden has been one of the leading countries in the international arena, promoting women's rights in multilateral forums. Sweden became one of the world's leading proponents of UN Resolution 1325 concerning Women, Peace and Security (UN Security Council, 2000). This emphasizes the need for the inclusion of women in peacebuilding and the resolution of conflicts. Sweden has constantly urged states to include women in any peace negotiations since such women would be part of the society as a whole. Sweden has perhaps demonstrated this by showing support for women's involvement in the Colombian peace process, which culminated with a historic peace agreement in 2016 (Krause et al. 2018).

But while it has these successes, Sweden's FFP is not without several challenges. Critics argue that the implementation of the policy is at best sporadic, with scant funding and loose vertical coordination (Aggestam & Bergman-Rosamond, 2016). For example, while Sweden is a global champion of gender equality, arms exports continue to autocratic regimes and raise questions about the coherence of the FFP. From 2014 to 2020, Sweden exported arms to internationally condemned countries due to poor human rights records, such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, thus undermining its feminist commitments (SIPRI, 2021). Such inconsistency calls for stricter arms sales criteria by policymakers that can align them with the principles of FFP.

Another hurdle entails the lack of a transformational effect at the local level. While Sweden's Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP) has cast global reflections upon gender equality, some detractors have maintained it is incapable of engendering significant changes for women and marginalized communities (True, 2020). For instance, while the country has pointedly advocated gender-responsive aid, a considerable number of women in conflict-affected areas still encounter systemic barriers to education, healthcare, and economic opportunity. Therefore, Sweden should adequately fund grassroots organizations and ensure that the experiences of women from the Global South inform its policies.

In sum, Sweden's FFP is a truly path-breaking initiative in placing gender equality on the foreign policy agenda. By putting rights, representation, and resources at the core, Sweden has shown that foreign policy could serve as a fine instrument for social justice advancement. However, Sweden's case also points to the need for more coherence, accountability, and a transformative impact if meaningful change is to be produced.

IV. CASE STUDY: CANADA'S FIAP

In 2017, Canada redefined its approach to international assistance with the introduction of the FIAP, Feminist International Assistance Policy. Under Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, major areas of focus in Canada's FIAP include gender equality, human dignity, growth that works for all, environment and climate action, inclusive governance, and peace and security. The Canadian government aims to support women and girls through the eradication of the underlying causes of gender inequality and the promotion for sustainable development (Global Affairs Canada, 2017).

A mainstay of Canada's FIAP is its claim that 95% of bilateral aid would be allocated to interventions directly aimed at gender equality. This includes the support of grassroots women's organizations, especially in conflict zones (OECD, 2020). For instance, Canada has supported sexual and reproductive health rights in Sub-Saharan Africa, providing access to essential services for millions of women and girls (Global Affairs Canada, 2019). Canada has also funded local organizations advocating for women's rights and providing vital services, including health care, education, and legal aid, via programs such as the Women's Voice and Leadership Initiative (Global Affairs Canada, 2018).

Canada has also prioritized women's leadership in peacebuilding endeavours in recognition of the indispensable role women play in conflict resolution and resilient community building. For example, Canada has facilitated the inclusion of women in peace negotiations in such countries as South Sudan and Afghanistan (Shepherd, 2017). Canada's FIAP intends to challenge patriarchal norms and further inclusive governance by empowering women to be leaders.

Gender-based analysis has been applied to Canada's trade and investment decisions outside of the field of development. For example, certain provisions of Canada's Progressive Trade Agenda endeavour to foster women's economic empowerment and also combat discriminatory practices in global trade (Global Affairs Canada, 2017). Therefore, by prioritizing gender equality in its trade policies, Canada further shows that economic development and social justice can converge.

Nevertheless, poor implementation and a lack of funding have drawn criticism against FIAP. Although the policy sets a high benchmark for facilitating gender-responsible aid, this has been dampened by a lack of money for implementation and inconsistent application across sectors (Tiessen, 2020). For instance, in light of gender inequalities in various parts of the world, the Canadian extractive industries, especially mining and oil, have drawn some critics' concerns. Critics say that Canada's reliance on resource extraction weakens its feminist commitments, whereby these industries dispossess communities, exploit labour, and destroy the environment (Leach, 2019). For further guidance on strengthening the FIAP, Canada should undertake comprehensive gender-based analyses of all its trade and investment decisions.

A further challenge lies in the juxtaposition between what could be called Canada's feminist policies and its homegrown approaches. For instance, whereas Canada has been actively promoting gender equality internationally, it has suffered quite some indictment for its treatment of Indigenous women and girls at home. The ongoing crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women highlights that Canada still needs to work on gender equality within itself (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019). If Canada were to align its domestic and foreign policies, its credibility concerning being a global leader on gender inequality would be bolstered.

That said, Canada's FIAP is a major advancement for the global gender equality movement. In putting women's rights and empowerment at the forefront, Canada recognizes that foreign assistance can be a powerful instrument for social justice and sustainable development. However, Canada's case also emphasizes

that policy coherence, adequate funding, and transformative impact must also be present to achieve any real change.

V. WHY NATIONS SHOULD ADOPT FFP?

Indeed, Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP) is now imperative not only morally, but also synchronically as a strategy to lend efficacy to countries' interests in the cooperation systems for countering ingrained inequalities and keeping sustainable global development going. Focusing on gender equality and intersectionality in foreign policy, FFP offers a transformative framework that is a boon both for countries adopting the citizenry aspect and the community as such. From strengthening soft power to ensuring alignment with global agendas such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), FFP in itself harbours the pathways to a more just world.

5.1 Enhancing Soft Power and Global Leadership

Adopting feminist foreign policy also improves soft power and global leadership. Progressive values tend to attract respect and influence for countries that have them - in a world that's fast becoming connected this time. A great example is Sweden, which has injected itself at the global level on gender equality and has inspired many other countries to implement the policies. Similarly, Canada has made great strides in establishing the image of being a progressive and inclusive nation through FIAP. Countries aligning their international relations with FFP characteristically show the world that they are committed to the first in the crusade for social justice, thus tightening their diplomatic ties and influence in the multilateral forums.

5.2 Congruency with World Goals

Curtailing Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP) with other international frameworks such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) fits right into Goal 5 when it comes to Gender Equality. Countries could, therefore, initiate their respective FFPs in building up to achieving these global goals so that it would not be a matter of 'leaving no one behind'. For instance, Canada's FIAP has made sexual and reproductive health a priority issue and thus directly addresses SDG targets related to health and well-being (Global Affairs Canada, 2017). In a similar vein, Sweden's FFP stresses the need for gender involvement in peace-building activities as accorded in SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions). Nations that choose to mainstream FFP within their foreign policies demonstrate their commitment to a worldwide vision and sustainable development.

5.3 Addressing Systemic Inequalities

FFP is uniquely positioned to address the causes of systemic inequalities, which remain unheeded by tradition-bound foreign policies. It does so by putting in the forefront the needs and experiences of women and marginalized groups, thereby challenging patriarchal norms and fostering inclusive governance. For example, Sweden's FFP stresses intersectionality to ensure that its policies reflect the various experiences of marginalization (Aggestam & Bergman-Rosamond, 2016). Canada's FIAP is more specific, targeting empowerment efforts for Indigenous women and LGBTQ+ communities as they relate to gender and intersecting forms of discrimination (Global Affairs Canada, 2017). Such efforts indicate that FFP can leverage serious change from an approach that eliminates barriers of structure promoting inequality.

5.4 Addressing Common Objections

Critics of FFP argue that it is too idealistic then it is supposed to be difficult to implement. The situations in Sweden and Canada demonstrate, however, that FFP is realistic and pragmatic. Barriers to effectiveness-such as policy coherence and funding- can be addressed through clear metrics, adequate resources, and political will. For instance, Sweden has been criticized for arms exports to authoritarian regimes. However, arms exports would be more in line with FFP values if the existing criteria for arms sales were made stricter in practising FFP (SIPRI, 2021). Policy coherence questions have been raised due to Canada's investment in extractive industries, but gender-based assessments of trade and investment alternatives could begin to

reconcile these tensions (Leach, 2019). This shows that FFP is not only practically workable but also applicable to various national contexts.

VI. HOW FFP CAN CHANGE THE WORLD?

A Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP) sowed lunar seeds, fertilized with gender inequities that wrestled down patriarchal norms and planted the notion of gender equality at the heart of international relations, standing strong against the traditional norm to transform governance, security, and development at a global stage. It asserts justice for the world, peace for all, and sustainability among the disadvantaged by countering existing inequalities. Its range of influence stretches across the board, from rethinking the intricacies of diplomacy and crude confrontations to gender and sexualized violence to inclusive development.

6.1 Reshape Global Governance

FFP pushes against the patriarchally dominated walls of global governance and calls for the inclusion and equality of decision-making processes. Classical diplomacy, now stuck in the patriarchal mentality...quite often, has not been gender-sensitive and has denied decision-making powers to women and marginalized groups, hence perpetuating inequalities and, in effect, undermining cooperation by multilateral frameworks. FFP seeks to terminate this practice by ensuring women are part of the decision-making processes in multilateral frameworks. Sweden has been a champion of such activities within the FFP, promoting women's participation in peace negotiations for far more durable and inclusive agreements (Krause et al., 2018). Whereas the FFP would work toward new governance.

6.2 Transform Security and Conflict Resolution

It reverses the idea of security from state security to human security. State-centric conflict resolution, emphasizing military solutions, aggravates violence and usually results in the displacement of victims. FFP, however, recognizes the agency of women and other marginalized groups in peacebuilding thereby emphasizing the importance of their perspectives and roles. Studies show that peace agreements are likely to succeed if women are at the negotiation table (Shepherd, 2017). Therefore, by fostering inclusive peace processes, Feminist Foreign Policy has the potential to create conflict resolution paths that enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of such interventions and avert the human cost of war.

6.3 Countering Sexualized Violence

One of the most challenging fronts on which FFP fights resolution in sexualized violence, especially in conflict zones, is that women and girls are usually affected by sexual violence the most. It is not the only case in which women end up victims of sexual violence; this sort of violence is even weaponized in wars. Therefore, FFP gives priority to the prevention of sexualized violence and supporting survivors through targeted initiatives. An example of this initiative is one funded by FIAP of Canada, which sustains psychosocial support and legal aid programs for survivors of sexual violence in Sub-Saharan African countries (Global Affairs Canada, 2017). As FFP tackles this, it can help create a world where women and girls live free from fear and violence.

6.4 Empowerment of Marginalized Groups

FFP potently empower marginalized groups. It tackles gender issues with other discriminations such as race, class, and orientation. Intersectionality through intersectional policies makes FFP cross-boundary policies responsive to the experiences of marginalization. Sweden's FFP has taken this as a principle in terms of importance for ensuring that not only but also FFP programs include LGBTQ+ communities in the development agenda while FIAP is focusing on empowering Indigenous women (Aggestam & Bergman-Rosamond, 2016; Global Affairs Canada, 2017). Empowerment by FFP will be a great opportunity to pursue practical changes and social justice.

6.5 Setting Realization of Sustainable Development Goals

FFP remains narrow in association with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, especially Goal 5, Gender Equality. By encouraging gender equality and empowering women, FFP continues to push forward some of the other SDGs like poverty reduction, quality education, and climate action, so it seems. For example, this represents one of SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) as Sweden's FFP-supported efforts led to the advancement of women in economic terms (Government of Sweden, 2014). Thus, the SDGs continue to take shape with a very sustainable, fairer world as a result.

6.6 Global Call for Action

The impact of FFP is thus unequivocal in terms of transformation; however, such impact would depend upon its large-scale adoptions. Therefore, FFP should be adopted by countries not just for the moral imperative of a country or the strategic necessity of the international political economy, in particular cases of the common world's challenges. Nations should include their treatments in the global movement toward FFP of driving transformational change that includes rather than compels substantive change in which peace, justice, and equality occur.

VII. CONCLUSION

Indeed, Feminist Foreign Policy means a reshaped global governance that speaks daggers to the very heart of traditional power and finally made gender equality into international relations. This article has shown, through the experiences of Sweden and Canada, that FFP is, first of all, a moral one; and, then, in practice, has proved itself as being one of the best frameworks that consider systemic inequality; sustainable peace; and empowerment toward marginalized groups. And since it aligns itself with gender justice, intersectionality, and inclusive governance, FFP becomes by global goals like the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and offers further soft power and global leverage to nations.

Yet, the maximum realization of the FFP potential will only succeed when really wide adoption and constant turning into actual practice are obtained. Nations still need to overcome obstacles like coherence in policy, funding, and accountability to ensure that real change is delivered by FFP. Sweden and Canada's joint studies thus offer rich and useful lessons for other countries such that it is clear that Feminist Foreign Policy can be embraced in several contexts while yielding tangible outcomes.

The challenges are getting thornier as the world heads towards complicated avenues created by phenomena like climate change, inequality, and sprouting victimization and manipulation in various forms across the globe. FFP map out the avenues leading to justice and fairness soon. Countries that adopt and embrace FFP will play their role in building a world where peace, justice, and equality are kept through inclusion and not violence. The time for feminist foreign policy is now.

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