

FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY AND NUCLEAR WEAPONS: CONTRIBUTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

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I. INTRODUCTION

Since 2014, 12 states have committed themselves to a Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP). While each of these states is a party to the 1968 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (Non-Proliferation Treaty, NPT), how these states deliver on their commitments to non-proliferation and disarmament varies significantly. Four have signed and ratified the 2017 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) while others rely on the extended deterrence of the United States as part of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) nuclear alliance.

This paper seeks to understand how these states reconcile an FFP with their non-proliferation and disarmament goals. It argues that the potential for an FFP to be transformative for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament is dependent on the specific vision of feminism adopted by the state. It therefore calls for caution when building expectations around FFPs, particularly in their treatment of nuclear weapons. The paper outlines the parameters for understanding nuclear weapons as a feminist issue and discusses contemporary approaches to FFPs in terms of what states prioritize and how the literature responds. This deconstruction of FFP discourses highlights the multiple reasons for states' decisions to adopt an FFP.

When it comes to nuclear weapons, the implications of an FFP approach are largely inconsistent and equivocal. In the context of the NPT, an ambiguous FFP is a useful tool for avoiding the tensions between pursuing a feminist agenda through the state and relying on nuclear weapons for state security. However, an FFP also represents a discursive opportunity for proponents of nuclear disarmament, specifically in the case of TPNW signatory states. An FFP is another venue through which proponents of the TPNW can

SUMMARY

This paper asks how Feminist Foreign Policies (FFP) fit with non-proliferation and disarmament goals. In particular, it highlights the multifarious and overlapping approaches to FFP and locates nuclear weapons as a feminist issue that requires a feminist response. How transformative the adoption of an FFP might be for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament is dependent on the specific vision of feminism adopted by a state. The paper uses the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons as case studies to demonstrate that the way contemporary FFPs treat nuclear weapons is both inconsistent and equivocal. States use FFPs to navigate the tensions at the heart of relying on nuclear weapons for state security while pursuing a feminist agenda. Nonetheless, FFPs provide a discursive opportunity by providing an additional platform for states and advocates to stake their claim for nuclear disarmament. This discursive opportunity gives policymakers opportunities to broaden the framing of nuclear weapons policy and to reassess the implications of existing discourses and alternative visions of a feminist future.

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instigate a ‘discursive shift’ towards stigmatizing the possession of nuclear weapons.

The paper identifies the opportunities that an FFP presents for states to advance their non-proliferation and disarmament commitments and provides European policymakers with ideas about how to conceive of alternative, feminist futures. Policymakers should use FFPs to broaden the frame in which they consider nuclear weapons, taking a human security approach to consider the intersecting security threats that go beyond military threats. This would involve establishing clearly articulated FFPs with guiding principles on which policymakers across security and defence policy can meaningfully draw, as well as extending existing FFPs to engage systematically with the nuclear arena.

It recommends the instigation of a formal consultation process with civil society experts on FFP and encourages European Union (EU) policymakers to leverage and build on the promising language in the 2019 EU Action Plan and Strategic Approach on Women, Peace and Security and the 2022 European Parliament Resolution on the EU Gender Action Plan.

II. NUCLEAR WEAPONS AS A FEMINIST ISSUE

Both FFP and nuclear weapon politics contribute to ideas about a state’s interests and its positioning in the international order. They are both feminist issues. Scholarship has explored the relationship between nuclear weapons and power, and the related masculinized symbolic systems that construct ideas about nuclear weapons. Exploring the power invested in nuclear weapons, Harrington de Santana notes that ‘the power of nuclear weapons is not reducible to their explosive capability. Nuclear weapons are powerful because we treat them as powerful’.¹ This treatment of nuclear weapons translates rapidly into ideas about the possessors of nuclear weapons and their status in the global nuclear order.² Nuclear weapons understood as ‘the embodiment of power’ are thus depicted as a currency of power.³ This is important to keep in mind when considering how self-designated feminist states might seek to project themselves in the liberal global order.

¹ Harrington de Santana, A., ‘Nuclear weapons as a currency of power’, *Nonproliferation Review*, vol. 16, no. 3 (2009), p. 327.

² Ritchie, N., ‘A hegemonic nuclear order: Understanding the Ban Treaty and the power politics of nuclear weapons’, *Contemporary Security Policy*, vol. 40, no. 4 (2019).

³ Harrington de Santana (note 1), p. 327.

Nuclear weapons are a site of feminist contestation and political struggle. They constitute a feminist issue, given their construction within gendered discourses, their role in perpetuating the side-lining of marginalized groups, the disproportionately harmful impact of ionising radiation that comes from nuclear devices on women and children, and the history of feminist anti-nuclear activism that has sought a world free from nuclear weapons.⁴ Thus, nuclear weapons can be understood as symbols of power, hierarchy and inequality.⁵ This section provides an overview of the relationship between these dynamics and nuclear weapons to contextualize why nuclear weapons should be interrogated in feminist terms and what this means for an FFP. Importantly, the concept of feminism is multifarious. There are multiple overlapping and conflicting feminisms, which explains the varied approaches explored below to applying feminist approaches in a state context. This political complexity across a spectrum of different feminisms is demonstrated through the different sites of feminist analysis and the questioning of nuclear weapons.

Nuclear weapons are a feminist issue because reliance on them has perpetuated the side-lining of marginalized groups in gendered terms. In the nuclear policymaking sphere, this has led to the creation of a policymaking community dominated by men and masculine modes, particularly in decision-making forums.⁶ The liberal feminist response to this structural inequality is to focus on adding women to these spaces by various means, including an emphasis on gender quotas and the introduction of reporting on gender balance. This version of feminism is closely aligned with corporate goals rooted in neoliberal contexts.⁷ For this reason, liberal feminist interrogations of nuclear weapon policies are often characterized as less radical and working within the confines of the status quo of the nuclear weapons enterprise. According to this approach, the feminist challenge is that of the

⁴ Olson, M., ‘Disproportionate impact of radiation and radiation regulation’, *Interdisciplinary Sciences Reviews*, vol. 44, no. 2 (2019); and Eschle, C., ‘Gender and the subject of (anti)nuclear politics: Revisiting women’s campaigning against the bomb’, *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 57, no. 4 (2013).

⁵ Acheson, R., *Banning the Bomb, Smashing the Patriarchy* (Rowman and Littlefield: London, 2021).

⁶ Hessmann Dalaqua, R., Egeland, K. and Graff Hugo, T., *Still Behind the Curve: Gender Balance in Arms Control, Non-proliferation and Disarmament Diplomacy* (UNIDIR: Geneva, 2019).

⁷ Egeland, K. and Taha, H., ‘Experts, activists, and girl bosses of the nuclear apocalypse: Feminisms in security discourse’, *Zeitschrift für Friedens- und Konfliktforschung*, 12 May 2023.

absence of women, and the resolution to this problem resides in adding women to the field.⁸ While important, this does little to resolve the gendered dynamics at work that have contributed to the ongoing side-lining of women and other marginalized groups.⁹

Liberal feminist responses to nuclear weapons have been critiqued by other feminisms, such as anti-war and anti-militarism feminist branches, which denounce the impact of war and its technologies on women and other marginalized groups.¹⁰ From the anti-militarist feminist perspective, nuclear weapons are a site of feminist struggle because of their violent role in the practice of war-making. Anti-militarist feminism also challenges the significant state expenditure on nuclear weapons, which is privileged over social spending.¹¹ Proponents ask why so much is invested in weapons that are designed never to be used and challenge the strategy of deterrence. Deterrence is also a site of feminist query, not least because the academic disciplinary home of nuclear deterrence theory is the masculinized realm of Realist International Relations. This realm centres the state as the referent object, individuals as rational actors and perpetual anarchy between states as inevitable. Feminists challenge these departure points of Realist IR theory and highlight their gendered underpinning; most notably, that rationality is construed as a masculine trait associated with strength while emotion takes on the trope of feminine weakness.¹²

The gendered departure points of nuclear weapons politics have implications for how nuclear weapons policy has been developed and is spoken about. This has been demonstrated in research on gendered constructions of the nuclear bomb from Cohn's exploration of how phallic imagery contributes to an abstractive 'techno-strategic' language about nuclear

weapons,¹³ to more recent feminist scholarship on the use of the egg as a feminine symbol in 1950s Egypt.¹⁴ State discourses on nuclear weapons have also been investigated in terms of how they perpetuate gendered dynamics of 'responsible stewardship' and protection that rely on gendered axioms and reinforce hierarchy.¹⁵ From these perspectives, nuclear weapons and their governance are a site of power through which gendered hierarchies are consistently renegotiated.

Feminist challenges require feminist responses and the TPNW can be understood in this context. It emanated from a transnational feminist activist network that collaborated to codify the prohibition of nuclear weapons in international law. The TPNW, which entered into force in 2021, comprehensively prohibits its states parties from participating in any nuclear weapon-related activity. It is the first legally binding treaty to acknowledge the disproportionately harmful impact of nuclear weapons on women and girls. It can therefore be seen as an anti-militarist feminist instrument. Contrastingly, the NPT represents a more complex forum for the implementation of anti-militarist feminism. From a postcolonial feminist perspective, the NPT and the non-proliferation regime it governs have been described as sustaining 'a global nuclear order that generates the desire for nuclear weapons'.¹⁶ It designates 'nuclear haves' and 'nuclear have nots', and thus could be seen as perpetuating entrenched and historical global hierarchies in novel forms of nuclear colonialism. Each of these aspects helps to explain how nuclear weapons are construed as tools of power that are challenged by feminist scholars and advocates.

The broad gendered implications that arise from the existence of and reliance on nuclear weapons emphasize the need to engage critically when a state adopts an FFP. Adopting an FFP is inherently political as it implies the adoption of specific visions of feminism that have implications for subsequent policy options and priorities.

⁸ Brown, L. R. and Considine, L., 'Examining gender-sensitive approaches to nuclear weapons policy: A study of the Non-Proliferation Treaty', *International Affairs*, vol. 98, no. 4 (2022).

⁹ Olson, M., 'Disproportionate impact of radiation and radiation regulation', vol. 44, no. 2 (2019).

¹⁰ Cohn, C. and Ruddick, S., 'A feminist ethical perspective on weapons of mass destruction', eds S. H. Hashmi and S. P. Lee, *Ethics and Weapons of Mass Destruction: Religious and Secular Perspectives* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2004).

¹¹ Duncanson, C. and Eschle, C., 'Gender and the nuclear weapons state: A feminist critique of the UK government's White Paper on Trident', *New Political Science*, vol. 30, no. 4 (2008).

¹² Tickner, J. A., *Gender in International Relations: Feminist Perspectives on Achieving Global Security* (Columbia University Press: New York, 1992).

¹³ Cohn, C., 'Sex and death in the rational world of defense intellectuals', vol. 12, no. 4 (1987).

¹⁴ Taha, H., 'Atomic aesthetics: Gender, visualization and popular culture in Egypt' *International Affairs*, vol. 98, no. 4 (2022).

¹⁵ Duncanson and Eschle (note 11).

¹⁶ Biswas, S., *Nuclear Desire: Power and the Postcolonial Nuclear Order* (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 2014).

Feminist interventions on FFP

Explanations in feminist scholarship for the emergence of FFPs reflect the hierarchical power dynamics that also underpin the power politics of nuclear weapons. These include the role of powerful individuals in promoting an FFP agenda. For instance, the name, gender and feminist persuasion of Sweden's former minister for foreign affairs, Margot Wallstrom, are often evoked as the starting point or origin story for Feminist Foreign Policy in Sweden. Similar status is awarded to Prime Minister of Canada Justin Trudeau's feminist self-identification. The decision of President of Liberia George Weah in 2018 to confer on himself the title of Liberia's Feminist-in-Chief also follows this trend. This has been explored by some as a form of norm entrepreneurship.¹⁷

A separate account in the feminist literature considers how FFP relates to how states seek to position themselves within the liberal world order.¹⁸ For Thomson, 'feminist foreign policy is as much about states' positions on the world stage as it is about policy content' because of how FFP works to 'signify these states' adherence to the liberal world order and institutions, and their role as "good" international actors'.¹⁹ In other words, states might adopt an FFP for the perceived benefits it will have for its international standing, rather than out of concern for gender inequality. This is closely related to motives for participation in the global nuclear order, and the conferral of prestige on states in possession of nuclear weapons or their security assurances.

This paper encourages those who engage with FFP to assess which visions of feminism their FFP and nuclear policy privileges, and to ask what these visions mean for non-proliferation and disarmament. Answering these questions should provide policymakers with a more concrete understanding of how FFP relates to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, before prompting an exploration of how current approaches to FFP might be transformed to better align them with the broader feminist endeavour of questioning the assumptions that underpin contemporary nuclear issues.

¹⁷ Aggestam, K. and True, J., 'Gendering foreign policy: A comparative framework for analysis', *Foreign Policy Analysis*, vol. 16, no. 2 (2020), pp. 142–162.

¹⁸ Thomson, J., 'Gender norms, global hierarchies and the evolution of feminist foreign policy', *European Journal of Politics and Gender*, vol. 5, no. 2 (2022), pp. 173–90.

¹⁹ Thomson (note 18), p. 173.

What is a Feminist Foreign Policy?

The emergence of FFP as both a growing trend and a specific policy option has been the subject of much scholarly and policy debate in the past decade. Sweden adopted an FFP in 2014, articulating this step as a 'precondition for achieving' Sweden's security- and development-related foreign policy objectives.²⁰ Canada has been pursuing a feminist foreign policy agenda since 2015.²¹ In addition, Luxembourg (2018), France (2019), Mexico (2019), Spain (2021), Libya (2021), Germany (2021), Chile (2022), the Netherlands (2022), Colombia (2022) and Liberia (2022) have all announced their adoption of an FFP. Various themes have emerged from states' FFPs and this section provides an overview of their key features. Sweden's recent renunciation of its FFP also marks a new development in the debate.²²

First, most states portray FFP as rooted in the protection of rights. FFP is a self-proclaimed rights-based approach to achieving gender equality. It is portrayed as necessary because of people's lack of rights but also understood as a means of achieving those rights. For the most part, it is women's rights more specifically that require protection and attention. For instance, Luxembourg's FFP is about acknowledging 'women's rights as human rights', while for France FFP is concerned at least in part with 'advocating for women's rights in multilateral bodies'.²³ Germany's FFP seeks to 'actively address areas where we see that the rights of women and marginalized people are not consistently implemented', which again suggests that FFP is a recovery mission for rights that are not respected.²⁴ Germany's and the Netherlands' FFPs define—and Sweden's FFP defined—rights in their core principles. In addition, the protection of sexual and reproductive health rights is prominent among FFP adopting states. It is notable that the FFPs of the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Germany also emphasize the rights of LGBTQ+ people, which is significant in highlighting the rights

²⁰ Rupert, J., *Sweden's Foreign Minister Explains Feminist Foreign Policy* (United States Institute for Peace: Washington, DC, 2015).

²¹ Pallapothu, V., 'Policy analysis: Canada's feminist foreign policy, Part one', Gender Security Project, 29 Aug. 2022.

²² Achilleos-Sarl, C. et al., 'The past, present, and future(s) of feminist foreign policy', *International Studies Review*, vol. 25, no. 1 (2023).

²³ Government of Luxembourg, 'Foreign policy address presented by Mr Jean Asselborn, Minister of Foreign and European Affairs, to the Luxembourg Parliament on 13 March 2019', p. 40; and France Diplomacy, 'What is feminist foreign policy?', 8 Mar. 2022, p. 5.

²⁴ German Federal Foreign Office, *Shaping Feminist Foreign Policy*, Berlin, Feb. 2023, p. 38.

of marginalized and vulnerable people beyond heterosexuality and the gender binary of men and women.

Second, all the FFPs emphasize representation in some way and the participation of women and marginalized people, although the degree to which this is constitutive of FFPs varies. For instance, representation is one of the core tenets of Sweden's former and the Netherlands' current FFPs. For Luxembourg, the inclusion of women is presented as pivotal as 'the strengthening and empowerment of women plays a central role' in its bilateral and multilateral interventions.²⁵ A former minister of foreign affairs in Libya has highlighted the addition of marginalized perspectives to foreign policy design as a key aspect of Libya's FFP vision.²⁶ Colombia is seeking a participatory FFP, emphasizing that women should be included in decision making in both public and private spaces.²⁷ Germany's FFP, which is articulated through ten guidelines, specifically calls for inclusion of the perspectives of women and marginalized groups on peace and security. The German guidelines also call for better representation and participation of women and marginalized people in the German foreign ministry. The separation between women in policymaking, and women writ large speaks to a broader distinction, evident across various FFPs, between representation of the perspectives of women and marginalized groups in foreign policy, on the one hand, and better representation of women in the institutions of foreign policy, most notably the foreign affairs ministry, on the other. The latter is a particularly clear aspect of states' FFPs.

A further consideration is the level of change implied by an FFP. For some states, such as Germany, Mexico, the Netherlands and Spain, FFP means addressing structural change. Spain's self-defined 'transformative' approach involves a commitment to structural change to 'working methods and institutional culture'.²⁸ Mexico also emphasizes structural change but in terms of the need to eradicate structural and gendered inequalities: 'structural gender inequality requires a

radical solution'.²⁹ The Netherlands evokes the 'root causes of existing power structures and inequality'.³⁰ From the limited information currently available on Colombia's FFP, the pursuit of pacificism stands out, particularly as it is linked to the success of the country's peace agreement. Pacificism is also discussed in the German guide to FFP, but in this case the message is quite different: 'FFP is not synonymous with pacifism'. This wording is important and is careful to ensure coherence with wider German policy. The importance of coherence across all policy areas is also stressed in the Spanish FFP, which seeks to eliminate silos and ensure 'coherence across all areas of external action'.³¹ Taken together, these ideas raise the notion that FFPs are adopted in the context of existing norms and structures, which set the limits of and parameters for what an FFP can and cannot be in different states.

The related question of how FFP relates to domestic politics is also important. For Haastrup, in the South African case, the domestic context shapes the nature of any FFP that could possibly be pursued.³² The relationship between domestic context and a formalized FFP is also highlighted in the case of Mexico, where the strong normative commitment to nuclear disarmament and a formally articulated FFP is juxtaposed with its high rates of femicide and 'militarized response to insecurity'.³³ These tensions are important for nuclear weapon politics, given the complex arrangement of institutional commitments, norms and beliefs that govern the non-proliferation and disarmament regimes.

Similarly, states understand their FFPs in the light of their pre-existing international commitments. FFP is articulated as a means of implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and delivering on the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), but also the UN Sustainable

²⁵ Government of Luxembourg (note 23), p. 41.

²⁶ Thompson, L., Ahmed, S. and Khokar, T., *Defining Feminist Foreign Policy: A 2021 Update* (International Centre for Research on Women: Washington, DC, 2021), p. 21.

²⁷ Colombia Ministry of External Relations, 'Colombian Feminist Foreign Policy: Pacifist, participatory and intersectional', Side event in the margins of the 67th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, 7 Mar. 2023.

²⁸ Government of Spain, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation, *Spain's Feminist Foreign Policy: Promoting Gender Equality in Spain's External Action*, [n.d.], p. 7.

²⁹ Delgado, M., 'Mexico's feminist foreign policy', *Transatlantic Policy Quarterly*, vol. 19, no. 1 (Spring 2020), p. 38.

³⁰ Government of the Netherlands, 'Letter of 8 November 2022 on feminist foreign policy from the Minister of Foreign Affairs Wopke Hoekstra and the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation Liesje Schreinemacher to the House of Representatives', 7 Dec. 2022, p. 2.

³¹ German Federal Foreign Office (note 24), p. 13; and Government of Spain (note 28), p. 7.

³² Haastrup, T., 'Gendering South Africa's foreign policy: Toward a feminist approach?', *Foreign Policy Analysis*, vol. 16, no. 2 (2020), pp. 199–216.

³³ Philipson Garcia, D., 'Mexico aims to lead the way', *The World Today*, Chatham House, 4 Feb. 2022.

Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda. For Chile, Foreign Minister Antonia Urrejola notes that its FFP work in the multilateral arena includes a continuation of WPS Agenda implementation and working within the CEDAW framework.³⁴ This is also the case in Germany, which notes that ‘Implementing and strengthening the WPS agenda is a priority of our multilateral engagement’.³⁵ Germany also lauds its work on enshrining the WPS agenda in the 2022 NATO strategic concept while the Netherlands couches its FFP in its commitment to achieving SDG 5 on Gender Equality.³⁶

At the same time, however, these institutions and conventions are lauded as evidence and examples of states’ FFP. In other words, adherence to these agendas, which pre-date FFPs, provides a platform for states to demonstrate that they ‘were doing’ FFP even before they articulated it. For instance, France claims in its strategy for gender equality that ‘gender equality has now been mainstreamed in France’s external action’ as a means of achieving this global agenda.³⁷ Again, there is an important distinction to consider in the light of what this means for the level of ambition and the aspirational agenda of FFP. If states are already acting in feminist terms, how much further do they need to go? Furthermore, the French explainer stands out because the focus is almost exclusively on the things France has already done to earn its feminist credentials. France’s efforts include the launch of the Simone Veil Prize and organization of the Generation Equality Forum, as well as its contributions to the Global Survivors Fund in 2020–2022 and a snapshot of gender balance efforts by the French foreign ministry. The document does not articulate any future goals for its FFP. This shows how existing ways of working can be brought within the remit of FFP, but it also shows how an FFP might be adopted to pay lip-service to making progress on gender equality after the fact rather than to drive the agenda. This has implications for how feminism might be viewed as an add-on to foreign policy as opposed to a paradigm *constitutive of* foreign policies.

³⁴ Urrejola, A., ‘The development of a feminist foreign policy will be a distinguished hallmark and vanguard element for our diplomacy’, Chilean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 22 Mar. 2022.

³⁵ German Federal Foreign Office (note 24), p. 20.

³⁶ Government of the Netherlands (note 30), p. 3.

³⁷ Government of France, French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, ‘France’s International Strategy on Gender Equality (2018–22)’, p.10.

III. CLAIMS FOR A FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY

The rationale provided for adopting an FFP varies among states. Similarly, states have communicated their FFPs in different degrees of detail and by various means. Use of a handbook or guide as a model of communication on FFP is notable as a method for states to demonstrate the meaning and purpose of their FFP on their own terms. France, Germany, Spain, Canada and Sweden have each developed stylized explainer documents to set out their visions on FFP, while those earlier in their FFP journey, such as Colombia, Mexico and the Netherlands, have signalled the ongoing development of guides to explain, or in the Netherlands’ terms ‘flesh out’, the policy.³⁸ For those states still in the early stages of their FFP development, it is possible to gain insights into their understanding of FFP from parliamentary speeches, in the case of Luxembourg and the Netherlands, and from foreign ministry websites and press releases, in the case of Chile, Liberia and Libya.

Why do states adopt a Feminist Foreign Policy?

Five themes emerge when considering why states adopt an FFP. First, states explain their adoption of an FFP as a response to the vulnerability of women and girls globally. This is the rationale for a majority of the FFP states. France, for instance, describes women and girls as ‘the biggest victims of realities in the world like humanitarian crises, violence against civilians in armed conflicts, access denied to rights, climate change, poverty, violence and discrimination’.³⁹ Sweden stated in 2018 that: ‘Throughout the world, women are neglected in terms of resources, representation, and rights. This is the simple reason why we are pursuing a feminist foreign policy’.⁴⁰ Germany announced that its FFP was ‘desperately necessary’, adding that an FFP has been adopted ‘for the sake’ of women.⁴¹ In the Netherlands, the letter to parliament on the 2021 coalition agreement expands on women’s vulnerability and inequality, and references the various forms of violence women face, as well as labour market inequalities and the impact of Covid-19 on increasing inequalities. These examples highlight

³⁸ Government of the Netherlands (note 30).

³⁹ France Diplomacy (note 23), p. 4.

⁴⁰ Government Offices of Sweden, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, ‘The Government’s Statement of Foreign Policy 2018’, 14 Feb. 2018.

⁴¹ German Federal Foreign Office (note 24), p. 5.

the idea that FFP is understood by states as *about* women and girls, and to a certain extent *for* them.

This relates to the second theme that emerges from states' stated reasoning for the adoption of an FFP. In some cases, states claim to have adopted an FFP to advance women's agency in the international sphere. France describes women and girls as 'undeniable drivers of change'.⁴² Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP) notes that: 'Canada has adopted a feminist approach because we firmly believe that women and girls have the ability to achieve real change in terms of sustainable development and peace, even though they are often the most vulnerable to poverty, violence and climate change'.⁴³ It is significant that the vulnerability of women and girls is the rationale for adopting an FFP. In this quote and states' discourses more broadly, women and girls are presented as both vulnerable and in need of help, and the driving force of change in relation to these same inequalities.

Third, states present their adoption of FFPs as compatible with their other stated goals, in terms of economics and productivity. The Netherlands evokes the importance of women in terms of the benefits they bring to global output, while also noting the effectiveness of women in conflict resolution. Spain frames the rationale for FFP in terms of how equality and diversity relate to wealth: 'Equality is a synonym of diversity and thus also a synonym of wealth. Wealth in the exercise of rights by all citizens, but also economic wealth, prosperity and justice'.⁴⁴ Sweden's then foreign minister, Ann Linde, described FFP as 'sound economic policy' while France presents its FFP as a way to deliver on French priorities.⁴⁵ Germany similarly evokes the importance of gender equality for prosperity.

Fourth, states adopt FFPs with an apparent intention to project ideas about themselves as states in the international community, particularly when it comes to projecting an image of leadership. The case of Mexico is notable, where FFP is presented in terms of the leadership potential it gives the Mexican state both regionally and internationally. Minister of Foreign Affairs Maria Delgado expressed that Mexico

is 'willing to . . . lead the nations of our region to adopt this foreign policy' and claimed that 'Mexico's FFP gives us a leading role in the international arena'.⁴⁶ The Netherlands echoes this rationale, rooting its FFP in an intention to join 'pioneering countries' in 'using [its] international influence'.⁴⁷ Canada asserts its desire to have a 'leading international role' and Sweden had noted its position as a role model both domestically and internationally.⁴⁸ Leadership aspirations also appear to play an important role in how Spain wants to be perceived. FFP is presented as a means for making policies consistent, but also as a metric for validity: FFP is a 'matter of coherence . . . [and] a matter of . . . credibility'.⁴⁹ This suggests that Spain perceives its FFP as a metric that others might use to judge behaviour. In a similar vein, Mexico shows how launching an FFP could be a way to signal to other states, through its claim that its FFP 'sends a message about how Mexico wants to address humanity's greatest challenges'.⁵⁰ Similarly, Chile announced its FFP as 'a strategy of international insertion in accordance with the challenges posed by the global agenda'.⁵¹

Fifth, some states adopt an FFP with an expressed intention to engage in national introspection and highlight ongoing barriers to equality. Luxembourg's aim in adopting an FFP stands out here: 'We want to look at where we stand rather than give lessons to others'.⁵² This is also anticipated in a Mexican policy document, where it is claimed that: 'A key reason for adopting a feminist perspective is to make social phenomena, such as structural inequalities, that would otherwise remain unseen, visible'.⁵³ The Netherlands also evokes this intention when it claims to have 'opted for a policy of highlighting and addressing systemic inequality'.⁵⁴ Thus, an intention to adopt an FFP can be understood as shining a light on existing issues, presenting an FFP as an introspective learning process. This aligns FFP with feminist methodologies that seek

⁴² France Diplomacy (note 23), p. 4.

⁴³ Government of Canada, *Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy* (Global Affairs Canada: Ottawa, 2017), p. iii.

⁴⁴ Government of Spain (note 28), p. 4.

⁴⁵ Sweden Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 'Handbook: Sweden's feminist foreign policy', Stockholm, 2018, p. 11; and France Diplomacy (note 23), p. 4.

⁴⁶ Delgado (note 29), p. 39.

⁴⁷ Government of the Netherlands (note 30), p. 1.

⁴⁸ Government of Canada (note 43), p. iii; and Sweden Ministry for Foreign Affairs (note 45), p. 18.

⁴⁹ Government of Spain (note 28), p. 5.

⁵⁰ Delgado (note 29), p. 39.

⁵¹ Chilean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Ministry of Foreign Affairs presents Chile's feminist foreign policy and reinforces its international commitment to human rights', 12 June 2023.

⁵² Government of Luxembourg (note 23), p. 42.

⁵³ Delgado (note 29), p. 38.

⁵⁴ Government of the Netherlands (note 30), p. 1.

to reveal silences and problematize what is described as the natural constellation of international politics.⁵⁵

This prompts questioning of what precisely an explicit FFP means for progress on breaking down barriers to equality. The extent to which an explicit FFP is beneficial for the broader goal of gender equality is contested in the feminist literature. For instance, in seeking an ‘ethical foreign policy’ and adherence to ‘pro-gender justice norms’, South Africa has aligned itself with the FFP apparatus of Global North actors but not formally articulated an FFP.⁵⁶ This raises questions regarding what if anything distinguishes an explicit FFP from other work to achieve gender equality and what having an explicit FFP means for states in the first place.

The above varied justifications for adopting an FFP demonstrate the location of overlapping ideas at work under the guise of feminism. The protection of rights and representation are more aligned with a liberal feminist view of the world, projected on to the international arena through a focus on leadership and good standing. The framing of women’s agency as delivering on economic value added suggests a neoliberal version of feminism focused on women’s inclusion as a calculable metric of increased productivity. Meanwhile, the claim to have adopted an FFP in order to instigate national introspection or even system change aligns more clearly with more radical political visions that seek to disrupt and challenge the core assumptions upholding the status quo.

Mapping the multiple reasons for adopting an FFP also highlights the location of goals that go beyond the spectrum of feminist transformation. This paper does not seek to determine the intentions behind states’ decisions to adopt an FFP, but to draw attention to the potential for co-optation of feminist ideologies in the service of state goals. The paper encourages policymakers and researchers to question the role state feminism plays in upholding other sites of power, as is explored below in the case of the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime.

What does FFP mean for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament?

Nascent engagement with the interaction between FFP and nuclear weapons emanates primarily from civil society. Renata Hessmann Dalaqua explores the progress made to date and the opportunities arising from this work, such as the increase in gender responsive treaty obligations and increasingly diverse representation in treaty negotiations.⁵⁷ The recently published Feminist Foreign Policy Index developed by the International Centre for Women’s Research, which seeks to quantify the level of feminism embodied in the policies of Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development states, includes stances on nuclear weapons as a metric.⁵⁸ Meanwhile, advocacy organizations such as the Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy have made country-specific policy recommendations on FFP. These contributions are significant in setting a high level of ambition for FFP and advocating for significant change while providing an information point for tracking progress.

This section advances two arguments about the relationship between FFP and nuclear weapon non-proliferation and disarmament. First, it demonstrates that existing FFPs are imprecise and inconsistent when it comes to dealing with nuclear weapons. This must be understood in the context of the broader dynamics of state identity and alliance politics, and the case of the NPT is illuminating here. Second, the ambiguous handling of nuclear weapons in current FFPs provides a discursive space that could be leveraged to advance disarmament goals. Again, the NPT and TPNW are useful case studies for considering lessons learned from previous discursive frames and potential platforms for broadening the future discourse.

States emphasize the participation of women when tying their FFP to security and defence but seldom elaborate on what this means for nuclear weapons. For instance, Canada’s FIAP action area on peace and security emphasizes the role of women in peace processes and conflict prevention. Its focus is on women’s rights in post-conflict scenarios, as well as the

⁵⁷ Hessmann Dalaqua, R., ‘Lifting each other up: Feminist foreign policies and gendered approaches to arms control’, European Leadership Network, 13 Oct. 2022.

⁵⁸ See Papagiotti, F., *Feminist Foreign Policy Index: A Qualitative Evaluation of Feminist Commitments* (International Centre for Research on Women: Washington, DC, 2023). The metric of TPNW membership requires scrutiny but it is encouraging to see attempts to investigate FFP in relation to nuclear weapons.

⁵⁵ Kronsell, A., ‘Methods for studying silence’, eds B. Ackerly, M. Stern and J. True, *Feminist Methodologies for International Relations* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2006), p. 110.

⁵⁶ Haastrup (note 32), p. 199.

prevention of and responses to abuse by peacekeepers and sexual violence more broadly in conflict zones. Action on peace and security is workforce-focused to the extent that women are primarily presented as ‘agents of peace’ from the clearing of landmines to their participation in peace negotiations.⁵⁹ In addition, the FIAP focuses on training military personnel ‘to raise awareness of the differential impact of conflict, natural disasters and humanitarian emergencies on women, men, girls and boys’.⁶⁰ This highlights a tension concerning women’s agency in Canada’s approach, which highlights women’s vulnerability in the face of conflict in parallel with their pivotal role in advancing peace.

France does not explicitly bring nuclear weapons into its FFP discourse. The disproportionately harmful impacts of conflict, poverty and climate change are acknowledged in broad terms. In 2017, Minister of Foreign Affairs Jean Yves Le Drian noted that: ‘France is working relentlessly to ensure the situation of women is better taken into account in conflicts: to respond to the specific threats they face, but also to protect and ensure their participation in consolidating peace’.⁶¹ The nature of these specific threats remains unspoken, however, reinforcing a discourse that places women’s work at the service of peace.

In a speech on foreign policy in 2017, Luxembourg’s minister of foreign affairs failed to mention nuclear weapons, non-proliferation or disarmament in the context of its FFP. The key role of NATO and Luxembourg’s contribution to collective defence were discussed, however, as well as ‘the general crisis of the global system of disarmament and arms control’.⁶² It is also noteworthy that the FFP was the last item in the address, giving at least the appearance of an add-on as opposed to an approach that underpins all action.

This silence on the specific implications of FFP for nuclear weapons policy was reflected in the official discourse of the most recent NPT Review Conference (RevCon). With the exception of Sweden, states did not articulate their statements and commitments at the 10th Review Conference in relation to their FFPs. In the Swedish statement, Ann Linde claimed that: ‘As a Government with a Feminist Foreign Policy, Sweden believes that full and effective participation of women and a further integration of gender perspectives in all

aspects of disarmament and non-proliferation decision-making processes is key’.⁶³ This depicts women’s inclusion and gender perspectives on non-proliferation and disarmament as rooted in and emanating from the Swedish government’s self-proclaimed feminism, although this should be understood in the context of Sweden’s subsequent renunciation of its FFP in late 2022 following a change of government. The absence of explicit references to feminism and FFP at the NPT RevCon, the ‘cornerstone’ of nuclear governance, is mirrored by the equivocal handling of nuclear weapon issues in states’ FFPs.⁶⁴

A more explicit discussion of FFP took place at the NPT Preparatory Committee in August 2023. At a side-event hosted by the Vienna Center for Disarmament and Non-proliferation, Chile highlighted the importance of women’s participation and inclusion for its FFP, but also the need to challenge ‘traditional narratives around nuclear weapons and remediating their victims’.⁶⁵ Meanwhile, Germany emphasized the specific role of women’s agency within its FFP, underlining the need to understand women not only as victims, but also as drivers of change.⁶⁶ While these interventions suggest an opening up of a conversation about FFP in the NPT context, they also remain siloed in side-events that have not thus far had their content translated into official state discourses on the NPT.

The relative silence on nuclear weapons in FFPs and the silence on FFP in the NPT discourse work to keep nuclear weapons and FFP out of view and beyond scrutiny. Within the NPT, and more specifically for NPT states parties that rely on the extended deterrence of nuclear weapon states through the NATO nuclear alliance, this silence is useful in allowing for the discursive reconciliation of an FFP that proclaims the relative vulnerability of women while relying on weapons that have a disproportionately harmful impact on women and children. In other words, silence on nuclear weapons within FFPs can be understood as a political necessity born out of the tension between

⁵⁹ Government of Canada (note 43), p. 62.

⁶⁰ Government of Canada (note 43), p. 60.

⁶¹ France Diplomacy, ‘Feminist diplomacy’, Feb. 2022.

⁶² Government of Luxembourg (note 23), p. 35.

⁶³ Government Offices of Sweden, Statement delivered by Ann Linde, Minister for Foreign Affairs, at the 10th NPT Review Conference General Debate, New York, 1 Aug. 2022.

⁶⁴ Considine, L., ‘The importance of narrative in nuclear policy-making: A study of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty’, EU Non-proliferation and Disarmament Consortium, *Non-proliferation and Disarmament Paper* no. 76 (Jan. 2021).

⁶⁵ Vienna Center for Disarmament and Non-proliferation, ‘Feminist foreign policy and nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament’, 9 Aug. 2023.

⁶⁶ Vienna Center for Disarmament and Non-proliferation (note 65).

vulnerabilities to nuclear weapons projected on to women and children and reliance on nuclear weapons for the security of the state.

Germany's and Sweden's inclusion of language on nuclear weapons but silence on specific policy requirements are examples of the ambiguous handling of nuclear weapons. In the Swedish case, the FFP handbook highlights the under-representation of women in both technical and diplomatic aspects of non-proliferation and disarmament. It also highlights the impacts of nuclear testing and its participation in the NPT as part of its move to push a 'gender equality perspective'.⁶⁷ The language used by Sweden on FFP and non-proliferation spoke to feminist themes of collaboration and dialogue. However, Sweden's renunciation of its FFP calls into question the longevity of these commitments and prompts caution when thinking about how FFP is adapted to reflect and respond to domestic political contexts.

The German vision of an FFP calls for a strengthening of gender-sensitive approaches to arms control and arms export control, as well as the greater participation of women in these areas. It also acknowledges—and promotes further research into—the gendered impacts of nuclear weapons while calling for recognition of and compensation for the effects of historical nuclear tests. The guidelines highlight approaches and projects to be pursued in fulfilling Germany's FFP-related peace and security goals, but there is silence on what this entails specifically for the nuclear realm beyond a broad call for research into impacts and reparations.

Nuclear weapons are mentioned explicitly in the 'approaches and selected projects' only in terms of recognizing and compensating for their impact, but not in relation to gender-sensitive project work or gender-based analysis, as is the case for small arms control. The omission of specific approaches to addressing the nuclear issue in FFP terms is notable given Germany's leadership role in working towards nuclear disarmament, for instance, by fostering knowledge sharing and partnerships between nuclear weapon states and non-nuclear weapon states to develop methods, approaches and measures on advancing disarmament, for example, through the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification. This silence on the specific implications of FFP for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament is conspicuous given that Germany has a portfolio

of work it could draw on to link FFP to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament approaches. The decision on whether to include nuclear weapons in these documents, and where to include nuclear weapons, should be understood as political and raises important questions about how to reconcile the gendered impacts of nuclear weapons with a feminist approach.

The official German discourse on FFP states that FFP does not mean pacifism, but the documents are silent on what exactly is understood by that term, or why pacifism requires a specific mention.⁶⁸ That Germany's FFP does not equate to pacifism is obvious when contextualized by the broader security architecture on which Germany relies, most significantly the extended deterrence of the USA and NATO. It is a significant statement as it goes to the heart of the structures of NATO politics that underpin nuclear issues. Germany's FFP necessarily refutes pacifism to ensure coherence with its security architecture in the international arena. It is useful to relate this back to the spectrum of feminisms. Germany's explicitly non-pacifist FFP places it at odds with anti-militarist feminism. Ideologically, this also allows for a discursive reconciliation of nuclear weapons with feminism by relying on a version of feminism that accepts war as a given, thereby sidelining the need to denounce nuclear weapons. Thus, the feminist label can be operationalized to describe and project multiple and conflicting ideas about a state's actions and intentions. FFPs show how both war and peace can be justified interchangeably under the label of feminism. It is therefore crucial to locate ideologically opposed feminisms in their contexts and to interrogate which feminist visions states are seeking to adopt.

The mix of feminist visions at work in FFPs also explains how states can claim to adopt an FFP for reasons that often conflict with one another (see above). This analysis has identified various tensions. Women are acknowledged as vulnerable (suggesting little agency) but also upheld as essential for peace and security (assuming agency). FFPs are adopted to address the problem of women's vulnerability but the state is the source of this vulnerability, given the disproportionately harmful impacts of nuclear weapons on women and children. An FFP is pursued as a means of managing image and enhancing prestige

⁶⁷ Sweden Ministry for Foreign Affairs (note 45), p. 72.

⁶⁸ German Federal Foreign Office (note 24), p. 27.

within the rules-based international order, but nuclear weapons continue to be pursued for similar reasons. How can prestige be enhanced in both ways at the same time? The current piecemeal approach to adopting an FFP and the relative silence on the discourse on nuclear issues allows for coexistence but not the resolution of these tensions. The question therefore arises whether the discursive spaces of the NPT and the TPNW provide lessons for proponents of FFPs on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, specifically by narrowing or broadening the frame of how nuclear issues are discussed.

A discursive opportunity?

It has been demonstrated above that an FFP cannot be assumed to evoke any specific meaning in relation to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. An FFP requires contextualization within the power politics, alliance structures and symbolic significance of nuclear weapon politics. For this reason, this paper has located different feminist visions within specific state FFPs to demonstrate the need for a non-monolithic understanding of FFP and feminisms.

The above analysis also shows that the NPT discourse does not interact with FFP and that FFP sidelines the nuclear issue. The parallel discourses on FFP in international politics and gender in the NPT mirror one another, however, even if they do not intersect. This provides an opportunity to assess the discursive limits and opportunities of both discourses, particularly when thinking about bringing FFP discourse to other forums for nuclear weapon politics, such as the TPNW.

The emphasis placed on women's inclusion and participation in states' FFPs reflects the way gender has been incorporated into the official NPT discourse. States have articulated their FFPs as related to women's disproportionate vulnerability in the face of conflict and fragility, but also in terms of their inclusion in foreign policy institutions. A study of NPT discourses shows that women feature in a way that reflects FFP articulations. Specifically, the label 'women' is used when acknowledging the gendered impacts of nuclear weapons on women and girls, and is also used in relation to diversifying participation in and perspectives on the NPT—where the inclusion of women is the primary instrument to this end.⁶⁹ The equitable inclusion of women in nuclear governance

structures is important but the emphasis placed on women's participation in FFP and the NPT risks exacerbating the 'add women and stir' approach. This fails to engage with the existing gendered dynamics and systems of meaning that structure the nuclear space and instead prioritizes the inclusion of a homogenous group of women without deconstructing the existing dynamics that structure knowledge production, behaviour and participation.⁷⁰

The emphasis on women's inclusion and participation in the NPT and FFPs is also important with regard to the WPS agenda and how this accounts for the existence of nuclear weapons. Indeed, as noted above, states' FFPs are often regarded as a continuation of their WPS commitments. The WPS agenda has also been raised in official NPT discourses, through gender perspectives arising from state obligations under that agenda. Beyond the need for women's participation in nuclear policymaking and institutions, however, what the WPS agenda means for nuclear weapons remains unclear. The subject of nuclear weapon non-proliferation and disarmament within the remit of FFP risks arriving at an impasse if FFP continues to be framed as the continuation of WPS. Tying FFP to WPS and women's participation parallels how gender has been tied to WPS and participation in the NPT context. This narrow discursive frame based on a liberal feminist understanding of equality as inclusion risks limiting the imagination of alternative nuclear futures and reducing the scope for feminist transformation.

Despite the risk of FFPs mirroring the limits of current approaches to WPS, there is also an opportunity for states to leverage FFP as a means of pursuing disarmament; for instance, by using the FFP discourse as an instrument through which awareness of foreign policy, and of nuclear weapons more specifically, aligns with the feminist vision of 'knowledge as emancipation'.⁷¹ It follows that the broader trend for exploring FFP could be operationalized as a space for improving knowledge around nuclear weapons among the general public. The Swedish handbook contained promising language on increasing knowledge on the gendered impacts of proliferation, suggesting that knowledge dissemination could have offered a tangible platform for Sweden

⁷⁰ See e.g. Hurlburt, H. et al., 'The consensual straitjacket', New America, Washington, DC, 5 Mar. 2019.

⁷¹ Tickner, J. A., 'Feminism meets International Relations', eds B. Ackerly, M. Stern and J. True, *Feminist Methodologies for International Relations* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2006), p. 28.

⁶⁹ Brown and Considine (note 8).

to further develop its state feminism prior to its renunciation. This approach could be taken up by other states committed to an FFP.

Furthermore, in the light of the role of feminism in instigating the TPNW, it is worth considering how an FFP could be leveraged to advance disarmament goals in discursive terms. As noted above, the TPNW can be understood as a feminist response to the challenge of nuclear weapon non-proliferation and disarmament. This relates not only to the role of transnational feminist movements in negotiating the treaty, but also to how the treaty highlights the disproportionately harmful impacts of nuclear weapons on women, children and indigenous groups. Intersectional and anti-militarist feminists have noted that the TPNW and its discourse seek to delegitimize nuclear weapons by stigmatizing their possession and removing their prestige. This ‘discursive shift’ was developed as a challenge to the ‘cognitive dissonance of deterrence’ on which contemporary nuclear weapon politics relies.⁷² An FFP offers another platform for delivering this discursive shift for nuclear non-possessor and TPNW signatory states.

The discursive opportunity offered by FFPs also creates the space to set out new ways of thinking about the complex and gendered problems presented by nuclear weapons in feminist terms. For instance, FFP emphasizes the vulnerability of women and seeks the implementation and protection of their rights, including sexual and reproductive health rights. The NPT official discourse now acknowledges the gendered harms of nuclear weapons, and the disproportionate impact of ionizing radiation on those with a uterus, and on children. At the same time, nuclear weapons policy is still siloed from other areas of foreign policy, and also in relation to other policy areas such as the environment and public health. The emphasis on, and recognition by states of, sexual health and reproductive rights presents an opportunity to evaluate the challenges presented by nuclear weapons within the remit of health policy. This could contribute to a contextualization of nuclear weapons as social objects that should be understood not only in terms of the security assurances they might deliver, but also in terms of the public health and environmental threats they represent. Thus, states’ communications on their FFPs might provide new means for bringing the issues

of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament to the public while diversifying policy responses.

IV. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

FFP provides an opportunity for policymakers to engage more comprehensively with nuclear issues by decoupling them from defence and security policies, and instead broadening the frame to consider nuclear weapons as referent objects of environmental, health and social policy. To do this, states should work to shift the language on militarism to a focus on human security, in which health, social and environmental security are key pillars, particularly when seeking agreement on common language in institutional forums such as the NPT. Similarly, by broadening the frame of the issues explored in relation to nuclear weapons, states can actively disrupt the image of nuclear weapons as inconsequential, and instead highlight the pressing need for a more effective non-proliferation regime and a renewed emphasis on nuclear disarmament.

FFP adopting states should formally consult with experts in this area in civil society in order to better understand the transformational lens of FFP for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. Civil society sets an aspirational agenda for the possibilities of feminist approaches to foreign policy that sidesteps the discursive limits imposed on state actors. Increased collaboration with civil society actors, such as research institutes, academia and advocacy organizations, should form the basis for a creative exercise whereby states can map alternative feminist futures. EU member states should use the EU as a platform for initiating these consultations, and for bringing together both FFP and non-FFP states with differing perspectives on nuclear weapons. This is not to naively suggest that foreign policies would internalize these ideas, but to start a collaborative conversation about the multiple ways to incorporate feminist ideas into foreign policy and to reflect on what FFP is beyond the *inclusion* of women. This could include, but would not be limited to, considering the insights of post-colonial and intersectional feminisms. Formal consultations with civil society would also allow policymakers to locate the feminist aspects of their work in both form and content.

European FFP states should show political leadership by acting to meet the commitments of the EU’s

⁷² Acheson (note 5), p. 245.

Action Plan on and strategic approach to WPS.⁷³ The language in the plan focuses on the root causes of conflict and militarism, which opens up discursive space to consider the role of nuclear weapons in maintaining security and insecurity. European FFP states should lead dialogue on how non-proliferation and disarmament commitments can be reconciled with the WPS agenda. At the same time, states should use consultations and intra-European dialogue on FFP as a vehicle for collaboration on non-nuclear issues, in order to leverage space for future collaborative dialogue that cuts through the current division between proponents and opponents of the TPNW. Such consultations would also contribute to delivering on the European Parliament's Resolution on the Gender Action Plan, which 'insists on having a feminist foreign policy on disarmament and non-proliferation'.⁷⁴

European and NATO FFP states could also show political leadership by meaningfully engaging with the TPNW and its states parties. Mexico, Chile, Colombia, Liberia and Libya are all nuclear non-possessor states outside the extended deterrence of the USA. All but Liberia have signed the TPNW, and Mexico and Chile have ratified it. Arguably, these states could be more vocal in tying their FFPs to their commitment to nuclear prohibition through the TPNW. Indeed, the discursive risk of FFP falling into the trap of becoming another 'add women and stir' endeavour could be countered by tying it to the discursive shift sought by the TPNW—bringing prestige to the practice of prohibiting nuclear weapons rather than possessing them.

The TPNW remains contentious and divisive, particularly among NATO members, and between NATO members and TPNW signatories. Participation in negotiations and meetings of TPNW states parties as observers by some NATO states, such as Germany, provides a small window of opportunity for norm entrepreneurship by TPNW states. Within these spaces, TPNW states could announce their renunciation of nuclear weapons in FFP terms, and signal new and creative thinking about state approaches to FFP at the same time as about nuclear weapons. This would also contribute to the formation of a critical mass of anti-militarist FFP aligned with the goal of nuclear disarmament.

⁷³ Council of the European Union, EU Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (WPS), 2019–2024, 11031/19, Brussels, 5 July 2019.

⁷⁴ European Parliament, The EU Gender Action Plan III, European Parliament resolution of 10 March 2022 on the EU Gender Action Plan III (2021/2003(INI)).

V. CONCLUSIONS

Ultimately, the analysis of FFP in the current nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament contexts raises key challenges for operationalizing feminist approaches to security and defence policies. This paper shows that FFP could either entrench the contemporary nuclear order or drive its disruption. The course of FFP in relation to nuclear issues will depend on the vision of the feminist goals adopted by the particular state. This raises questions regarding what a state's self-designation as feminist specifically means for its nuclear weapon politics. It also requires that different feminisms should be located within the broader FFP discourse and calls attention to the possible futures these visions either preclude or prescribe.

The emphasis on women's participation as essential for FFP and for non-proliferation and disarmament places the participation of women next to complex and unresolved challenges, and contributes to ideas around the impact of 'adding women and stirring' in the nuclear field. It suggests that a diversity of perspectives can provide a silver bullet for challenges that have been created in the absence of consultation with—and importantly to the detriment of—marginalized groups. Without detracting from the importance of diversifying the nuclear space, it is useful to question and challenge the extent to which global challenges and their resolution should fall to historically minoritized and marginalized groups or individuals. This is significant in terms of how it might shift the onus or responsibility for these tasks, but also in terms of the assumptions made within this discursive framing about women's agency in non-proliferation and disarmament initiatives more broadly.

The ideological spectrum of feminisms inherent in the current FFP approaches revealed above demonstrates that the way in which nuclear weapons are treated by contemporary FFPs is both inconsistent and equivocal. Nonetheless, this allows states to use FFP as a means to navigate some of the tensions at the heart of relying on nuclear weapons while pursuing a feminist agenda. FFP provides a discursive opportunity to avoid the current impasse in the WPS agenda as it is playing out in the NPT and another platform for advocates to stake their claims on nuclear disarmament through the TPNW. If FFPs are being adopted by states for the purpose of gaining prestige, leadership or even legitimacy on the global stage, now is a critical moment for feminist researchers and advocates alike

to highlight this co-optation and promote the value of collaborative and non-militarized approaches to pursuing peace and security. The TPNW is a forum where a shift in the values associated with nuclear weapons is already under way. Fundamentally, the efficacy of a feminist approach to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament depends on the question of whether possession of nuclear weapons is understood as at odds with feminism. This contentious question goes to the heart of reconciling feminism with FFP and nuclear weapon politics. The more nuanced approach to this question, promoted above, is to ask which feminisms are at work and why. This question provides an opportunity to imagine novel pathways to meeting non-proliferation and disarmament commitments.

ABBREVIATIONS

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
EU	European Union
FIAP	Feminist International Assistance Policy
FFP	Feminist Foreign Policy
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NPT	1968 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
RevCon	NPT Review Conference
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
TPNW	2017 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons
WPS	Women, Peace and Security



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A EUROPEAN NETWORK

In July 2010 the Council of the European Union decided to support the creation of a network bringing together foreign policy institutions and research centers from across the EU to encourage political and security-related dialogue and the long-term discussion of measures to combat the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and their delivery systems. The Council of the European Union entrusted the technical implementation of this Decision to the EU Non-Proliferation Consortium. In 2018, in line with the recommendations formulated by the European Parliament the names and the mandate of the network and the Consortium have been adjusted to include the word 'disarmament'.

STRUCTURE

The EU Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Consortium is managed jointly by six institutes: La Fondation pour la recherche stratégique (FRS), the Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (HSFK/PRIF), the International Affairs Institute in Rome (IAI), the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS-Europe), the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) and the Vienna Center for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation (VCDNP). The Consortium, originally comprised of four institutes, began its work in January 2011 and forms the core of a wider network of European non-proliferation and disarmament think tanks and research centers which are closely associated with the activities of the Consortium.

MISSION

The main aim of the network of independent non-proliferation and disarmament think tanks is to encourage discussion of measures to combat the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems within civil society, particularly among experts, researchers and academics in the EU and third countries. The scope of activities shall also cover issues related to conventional weapons, including small arms and light weapons (SALW).

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