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Prospects of a Feminist Foreign Policy for Pakistan: Obstacles and Way Forward

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ABSTRACT

A feminist foreign policy framework is a humane alternative to the conventional foreign policy approach. This idea has gained visible prominence globally as it aims to incorporate gender equality as well as gender sensitivity across the board. Despite these developments globally, the debate on feminist foreign policy remains relatively less prominent in Pakistan's context. Therefore, this study intends to explore the challenges, prospects, and a possible way forward to incorporate components in line with feminist foreign policy within Pakistan's foreign policy framework. A qualitative approach is used with an amalgamation of secondary as well as primary sources comprising existing literature, a field survey based on purposive sampling, and semi-structured interviews. Comparative insights from countries such as Sweden, Canada, Mexico, and Germany are also analyzed to gain deeper insight into the operationalization and limitations of feminist foreign policy approaches to suggest a way forward for Pakistan. It was revealed through the findings that while Pakistan has witnessed gradual improvements in women's political participation and gender-focused policy initiatives, the concept of feminist foreign policy has yet to gain meaningful traction in academic and policy debates. Moreover, it was also argued that, before initiating a debate over the viability of a FFP framework in Pakistan, it is pertinent to build an engaging narrative of acceptance for such a phenomenon and realization of Pakistan's need to adopt one to portray a soft image of Pakistan globally.

1. Introduction

Feminist foreign policy proclaims itself to be a humane alternative to the traditional foreign policy, which usually indulges in aggression, threats, and risks. As Arshad (2019) suggests, it is

an approach and a policy which enhances the daily lived experience of marginalised groups to the surface and facilitates a broader and deeper analysis of global issues.' (Arshad, 2019, Pg. 63).



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This aspect allows policymakers to perceive issues with a different perspective, one that allows them to tackle policymaking with a more gendered approach. As Mazhar et al. al (2022) point out, two components of an FFP are: i- gender equity and ii- gender agency. These two core elements aim to break the grip of male-dominant policies that are currently marginalizing women and minorities.

Feminist foreign policy has started gaining momentum in recent years; it can mainly be seen because of an increasing awareness of women's mainstreaming in the international political landscape (Aggestam et al. 2020). Its sporadic influence can be traced in the fields of human rights, conflict and security via development policies, gradually lined up in foreign policy itself (Thomson 2022). Even though FFP is a recent phenomenon or a result of decades-old policy frameworks for women, it indeed encompasses new branding today. (Zilla.,2022) presents a transformative approach as to how a policy dimension is defined and designated as (feminist) by the governments amidst a foreign policy perspective being largely male-oriented and valuing the privileges, perspectives, and experiences of men over women. However, the definitional complexities and nuances of a feminist foreign policy continue to exist as the aims of every state with a declared FFP are not uniform.

This research attempts to explore the implications of applying a more 'feminist' approach to Pakistan's foreign policymaking and how it may be the way forward for a country troubled by an 'image problem' in a diplomatic world where feminist foreign policy is increasingly gaining traction. This study also intends to analyse the prospect of such an approach to revitalize the country's foreign policy initiatives and the challenges it may encounter in its implementation given its 'feminist' orientation and the dominance of conservatism in Pakistan. The case studies of countries with a declared feminist foreign policy are also studied in detail to evaluate the challenges and impacts they are having after implementing the FFP approach.

However, the statistics vis-à-vis women's representation, leadership, and other programs are not very bleak in Pakistan. The transformative

projection and operationalization are even more required for a better image in the World. A primary study further unfolds how a feminist foreign policy is perceived in Pakistan amidst challenges and the ever-existing way forward. (Ivens, Paassen, 2021).

1.1 Evolution of Feminist Foreign Policy in the World.

The FFP has evolved in two ways: one where some states started to declare their foreign policy as 'feminist foreign policy' right after Sweden in 2014; the others with natural and struggled evolution of states that have all the principles of gender balance, equality, and consciousness intact but never declared one.

The latter began in 2014, when Sweden declared its 'Feminist Foreign Policy' and many other states followed in the footsteps of Sweden. Canada, Mexico, Germany, Luxembourg, and many others are struggling to transform theirs into FFP. Hence, a global hierarchy can be witnessed through this evolutionary growth. As (Thompson. J, 2022) mentioned in her literary piece, FFP feels more appealing today given gender equality, and its operationalization projects a more liberal value system of a state for international norms. It is further argued that the engaging standards of feminist foreign policy signify liberal modernity and observance to the international liberal order when adopted and operationalized by states. It continued to say that this adoption of feminist foreign policy contributes to existing gendered global hierarchies and these states' positions on the world stage.

After Sweden, Canada announced its 'Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP)' in 2017, which primarily emphasized development, and it propelled feminist policymaking while chairing the G7 in 2018. In the same year, many other countries like France and Luxembourg showed serious intentions to adopt FFP, while Mexico announced in 2020, Spain in 2021, and Germany announced a promising new feminist foreign policy in 2023 to hike the participation of women in all sectors.

The purpose of Sweden and other states was not just to deploy a FFP framework in transformative principle but to exude its struggles to live up to the international commitments and pacts for women's

rights and empowerment. (Aggestem, Rosamond, 2019).

What twisted the evolutionary process was Sweden's revert from its pioneered FFP after the change of government to a more right-leaning tilt. However, other states that adopted FFP continue to build their image and programs for a softer image to maintain far and wide.

The other evolution is of those who have never adopted or rather announced one, but follow the principles of bridging the gender gap, advocating women's rights, ensuring the provision of resource allocation for women, mainstreaming women in representation and leadership.

2. Theoretical and Conceptual Construct

2.1 Feminist International Relations Theory

The traditionally male-dominated nature of international politics and foreign policy frameworks is contested by Feminist International Relations Theory. Scholars and theorists who have written extensively on FFRP argue that the international political arena has historically compromised the experiences and perspectives of women and marginalized communities while prioritizing militarized security and state power. This historical prioritization has structured foreign and diplomatic standing, and agendas of states are often shaped by gender hierarchies, ignoring women's engagement in decision-making processes. Therefore, the incorporation of Feminist IR theory is incorporated as it advocates gender-sensitive approaches into international politics to promote inclusivity, equality, and human security. Hence, this theory helps contextualize and gauge why states increasingly seek to integrate gender equality, representation, and rights into diplomatic engagement and global governance (Tickner, 2001; Enloe, 2014). Moreover, employing feminist international relations theory to Pakistan allows the study to examine how gendered power structures influence foreign policy discourse and how greater inclusion may help reimagine women's perspectives towards diplomatic and foreign priorities.

2.2 Soft Power Theory

Introduced by Joseph Nye, soft power, as a concept, refers to a state's ability to obtain preferred outcomes through attraction and

persuasion rather than coercion or military power. It originates from a country's cultural strengths, normative political values, and inclusive approach, allowing it to set the agenda to influence others. (Nye, 2004). It was argued by many scholars that feminist foreign policy has become an approach through which a state's global image is enhanced by portraying commitments to gender equality, human rights, and inclusive governance. The purpose of Sweden and Canada was to frame feminist foreign policy as part of their broader diplomatic distinctiveness and reputation globally. Hence, adopting an inclusive or gender sensitive foreign policy approach can be pivotal to a state's influence and credibility in global governance debates. In Pakistan's context, the relevance between feminist foreign policy and soft power becomes particularly ideal, as improvements in gender inclusion and representation may contribute to strengthening the country's diplomatic image and international engagement.

3. Rationale

Image building, ownership, and projection of the image in today's diverse and global World is a challenge for every state; maintaining a soft image is rather more crucial. In a World, where many states are tagged as male-dominant, extremist, fundamentalist, etc, framing a feminist foreign policy approach can yield multifaceted opportunities and can cause a plethora of challenges simultaneously. The global order at present supports multiple narratives; gender consciousness and gender sensitivity, however, are at the apex. Many states, after Sweden, have followed suit and propagated how efficacious it is for a state to have a gender-sensitive foreign policy to counter socio-cultural, political, economic, and administrative intricacies that hinder the inclusion of a feminist approach into its foreign policy. It was observed how the internal and external image of a state changed after adopting the FFP. Therefore, it is pertinent to investigate the situation, perspectives, challenges, and opportunities the FFP would have for Pakistan. The topic is also brought to study as to how Pakistan can cope with the pace of the modern World and how it is necessary to have a comprehensive idea of the discourses prevalent regarding a feminist foreign policy for Pakistan.

4. Research Questions

- i- What factors contribute to a FFP framework?
- ii- How can Pakistan learn from other countries with defined FFP frameworks?
- iii- What challenges may hinder the adoption of an FFP for Pakistan?
- iv- How may Pakistan's global image change after adopting the FFP framework?

5. Research Methodology

A qualitative research design is adopted to examine the prospects and challenges of an FFP framework for Pakistan. The research involves both **secondary and primary sources**. Secondary data comprises academic literature, policy documents, and international reports on feminist foreign policy. To support the secondary sources, a **primary study is carried out by gathering data** through a small survey circulated among scholars of political science using purposive sampling, along with **semi-structured interviews** with academics and a foreign policy practitioner. Comparative references to countries such as Sweden, Canada, Mexico, and Germany were also used to understand how feminist foreign policy frameworks have been conceptualized and implemented elsewhere. The responses and literature were interpreted through **descriptive and statistical analysis** to elucidate prevailing opinions, challenges, and possible policy directions for Pakistan.

6. Benefits and Challenges to states with FFP Framework: Situating Literature

6.1 Sweden

Sweden was the first to introduce FFP and the first to withdraw it, to start. The recently elected government dropped the term, stating that it was superfluous because the concept and fundamental value of empowering women was already deeply ingrained in the system and that it would not serve its intended purpose. As a result, they will no longer refer to their foreign policy as feminist.

Practically, Sweden's spending of aid on gender equality initiatives abroad has significantly increased because of the adoption of this policy, rising from \$2 billion in 2016 to nearly \$2.7 billion in 2019. Sweden was able to provide humanitarian aid to underprivileged populations and fund a significant number of international

development programs that prioritize gender issues. (George, 2022)

Apart from Aid, Sweden's approach to high-profile diplomatic negotiations was shaped post-FFP launch. It influenced Wahlstrom's blatant criticism of Saudi Arabia's record on women's rights in 2015, which subsequently led to the country's decision to put a closure to a long-standing weapon deal with the Persian Gulf state.

Within the same framework, Sweden also advocated and initiated a UNSC resolution in 2017 to improve sexual and gender-based violence as grounds for economic sanctions. The Swedish government also enhanced the number of women serving as ambassadors to nearly half of all the positions under the feminist foreign policy framework.

Sweden has reached many highs while working along the lines of its self-designed FFP framework both nationally and globally. However, the largest obstacle for Sweden proved to be the shift in leadership; the greatest irony, though, was the example Sweden set for other nations on how to approach their foreign policy by adopting a more feminist perspective. ‘

6.2 Canada's Feminist Foreign and its Local and Global Impact

Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP) took its roots from UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security, which acknowledged that conflict and post-conflict situations disproportionately impact women and children, and that women have a significant insight to contribute to international peace and security (United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, n.d.).

6.2.1 Bird's Eye view of the FIAP:

Six distinct action areas were identified; the FIAP advances a comprehensive approach to international assistance emphasizing: i- Gender Equality to ensure empowerment of women and girls, ii- human dignity, iii- inclusive governance and growth, iv- climate and environment action, finally, v- peace and security for women across the board. (Tiessen, 2019)

(Blatt, 2020) states that Canada is a fascinating case study of the global Women Peace and

Security (WPS) movement is not only shaping international norms for women but also being the second country to officially adopt a 'feminist foreign policy'. By adopting both, Canada has tried to align its international WPS standards and the feminist foreign policy together through different initiatives such as integrating more women in the armed force and the Police Force in Canada. Women are also included in some security operations; however, the struggle is ongoing.

The 2017–2022 National Action Plan on Women, the Feminist International Assistance Plan (FIAP), and the defence strategy's discussion of gender equality are the three blueprints that are commonly regarded as constituting the doctrine of feminist foreign policy in Canada. Plans and priorities for implementation are outlined in the C-NAP on WPS. The focus areas are: eliminating impunity for sexual and gender-based violence during conflict; meeting the particular needs of women and girls in humanitarian arrangements, incorporating sexual and reproductive health; and enlarged women's participation in peace operations; finally, Growth of meaningful participation of women in conflict prevention, resolution, and statebuilding. (Government of Canada 2017).

Although the definition of Canada's (FIAP) is still unclear, several distinct policy branches and sub-branches are beginning to emerge from its undefined waters. Canada is still learning a lot about what it means for a government to be feminist, this hasn't stopped the country from trying to create policies based on the notion that women and girls are essential to both economic prosperity and global security, if not also addressing some additional political rights (Thompson and Asquith 2018). The significance of complementary policies like Op HONOUR stems from the fact that Canada cannot achieve such feminist goals overseas without also addressing the demands of feminist policy at home.

Canada, while trying to align WPS standards and its feminist foreign policy, left a gap in the process of integration, and the literature also seems void of the connection Canada initially intended to establish between both; its feminist foreign policy was an outcome of Canada's position in leading

global WPS goals. However, there are scholarly efforts in identifying Canada's progress in becoming a leader to meet WPS standards and initiating policies to mainstream women, on the other hand, to make sense of its feminist foreign policy. It's also debated that Canada's FIAP shall only succeed if it leaves behind its instrumentalist rhetoric and adopts a more transformative action plan and policy initiatives. The newness and innovativeness FIAP proclaimed itself with is also criticized, and critics say it barely offers anything new compared to what previous policies did in the past (Tiessen.R)

6.3 The FFP of Mexico

Mexico, while adopting a feminist foreign policy, had a completely different dynamic than those who had already adopted one. The adjective of 'Feminist' is an idea closer and more prevalent in the Global North, and a country from the Global South adopting a foreign policy approach tilted towards a feminist idea was a challenge. (International Feminista)

Feminists' holistic action is diverse in Mexico, varying from decades of existence and consolidation. The Women's Movement has struggled tirelessly to develop proposals and request conditions and resources to uplift substantive equality. Significant advances have been witnessed in gender equality through the actions of women in recent years.

Mexico is a signatory to all international treaties related to women's rights reflecting in Mexico's national policy norms for the protection of women, such as the "General Law for Equality between Women and Men (2006), the General Law for Women's Access to a Life Free of Violence (2007), the Federal Law to Prevent and Eradicate Discrimination (2003), the Mexican Official Standards and Mexican Standards (2012, 2015, 2018), Parity Reforms in All (2019). Moreover, the public policies are also in place to protect women's rights and advocate gender equity, translated in their Plan for National Development, the National Program for Equality between Women and Men, Comprehensive Program to restrict, surface, punish and eliminate violence against Women, a gender-sensitive federal budget among others". (International Feminista)

6.4 Germany

Germany's foreign office embarked on a promising journey to adopt an FFP in 2021, designing a noteworthy policy guideline in 2023 presented by the first feminist foreign minister, Annalena Baerbock. The guidelines, spanning around 80 pages, pledge to address power inequalities and discrimination, working towards gender equality both bilaterally and multilaterally. Notably, they emphasize that the safety of women is integral to overall security.

Germany goes beyond many other nations committed to such policies by recognizing the need for arms control, disarmament, an intersectional approach, and consideration of post-colonial realities. The document acknowledges the gender-specific impact of budgets, foreign trade, investments, and climate packages, challenging the notion of gender-neutral actions. However, it falls short of making a strong commitment to an anti-racist foreign policy, especially given Germany's historic responsibility for its colonial past.

Guided by OECD criteria, the policy guide aims to allocate a substantial portion of project funding on a gender-sensitive and transformative basis by 2025. While the commitment is welcomed, there is a desire for a stronger commitment to funding feminist organizations, which have proven to be effective drivers of change. The guidelines recognize the importance of disarmament and arms control in Feminist Foreign Policy, but there is a call for more explicit consideration of the risks of arms facilitating gender-based violence. Additionally, critics discussed that a true framework for feminist foreign policy would require Germany to drastically reduce its arms exports. (Center for Feminist Foreign Policy)

As the policy of Germany is announced recently, it is difficult to gauge the challenges it may come across; however, as a key player in Europe, Germany intends to operationalize all the initiatives taken so far to ensure gender mainstreaming and equality. Germany will make an effort to ensure women's concerns are projected more worldwide, that women are well represented, and that the country's benevolent development funds are allocated more to projects that address gender inequality, as per the guidelines.

7. Principles of a Feminist Foreign Policy (Operationalized)

Mainstreaming gender as an essential strategy to lessen inequalities between women and men was proposed in the fourth International Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995). Governments and other actors were appealed to advocate a proactive and evident approach of gender mainstreaming in all policies and programs. In another way, it was a call to stop treating gender as a peripheral issue and to put it at the center of all programmes, action, and evaluation. The idea that there cannot be sustainable development in the presence of gender-based discrimination is emphasized by gender mainstreaming. Many states, despite practicing international pacts and norms of gender mainstreaming, thought of in placing a FFP framework at the core of their policymaking.

Sweden, being the pioneer of initiating a FFP framework, defined and modeled it on the 4Rs; this served as a beginning point for other states like Germany that wish to pursue a familiar path. The four R's described in Sweden's handbook for FFP are:

- *“Rights:* Promoting so that women and girls enjoy all human rights while combating all forms of violence and discrimination that restrict their freedom of action.
- *Representation:* Advocating participation and influence of women in decision-making processes at all levels and in all areas.
- *Resources:* Ensuring equal opportunities across all genders and equal allocation of resources to promote gender equality. (Handbook of Sweden's Feminist Foreign Policy, 2019)

A fourth “R” for the *reality* of women's and girls' lives was later on added to related to the demands of contextual vulnerability.

The principles primarily focused on.

- a) Intersectionality, Empathetic Reflexivity (Self-awareness of positions and requisites of others), C) Efficacious Representation, D) Accountability and finally E) Active commitment to peace.

Sweden not only presented a comprehensive model and set of principles but designed and projected a substantive trajectory to operationalise

the FFP through programs serving the purpose of ensuring gender sensitivity, gender equality and gender equity. It was this policy brand which influenced and motivated many states to adopt a feminist foreign policy.

8. The Pakistan Perspective

The foreign policy of Pakistan has been largely static ever since the country came into existence owing to the internal and external challenges confronted by the governments and state

institutions. However, an acquaintance to a feminist approach towards the foreign policy framework might help in overcoming the challenges and projecting a soft image of Pakistan internationally. (Najeeb.Z, 2021).

The international image of Pakistan projected through multiple indices and reports is stressful to witness. The following are the international rankings and percentages vis-à-vis gender equality.

Table 1: *Presenting Pakistan's Gender Basis on Global and National Indexes*

Sr.	Gender Basis	Forum/Index	Year	Pakistan's Rank
1	Gender Equality	World Economic Forum	2022	145/146
2	Gender Inequality Index	Human Development Report	2022	161/191
3	Women in Parliament	IPU (International Parliamentary Union)	2019	100/190
4	Women Political Participation	IPU	2019	100/190
5	Recruitment Quotas in Civil Services	Pakistan Federal Government Services	2020	10%
6	Labour force participation	Asian Development Bank	2019	25%

The stats may seem alarming, but in comparison to past reports, there is a significant growth in terms of empowering women. History is evident of the participation of women in leadership and diplomatic roles; the towering personalities of Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah, Begum Ra'na Liaquat Ali Khan, Begum Shaista Ikram Ullah and many more can never be forgotten while tracing back history, that too without the constitutional support for women's leadership. From one female representative in the Constituent Assembly to date, where 89 women are in the legislative business. Pakistan was the first country not only in the Muslim World but among many developed states to have a female premier not once but twice (11th and 13th). A female foreign minister (21st FM) amidst the misconstrued ideas regarding foreign policy to be considered and led by men. The first Human Rights Minister (2018) was Ms.

Malija Lodhi, Permanent Member representative to the UN (2015). First female minister for poverty alleviation and social safety, Sania Nishtar in 2018, and the first female Lieutenant-General, Nigar Johar in 2020, among others. A female speaker of the National Assembly completed the term; women leaders convened the SDGs secretariat and successfully ran the programs under UN Women through parliamentary forums like the Women Parliamentary Caucus. The status of women in leadership and legislative roles is not restricted to national agendas and laurels, but women parliamentarians have been grabbing best female parliamentarian awards from the British Parliament, which is known to be the mother parliament. One of the female parliamentarians had also chaired 'Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians'. Recently, the first female judge

and female registrar of the Supreme Court of Pakistan took charge of the office.

The past two decades have not only seen women being the epicentre in legislation, but certain programs were initiated to ensure public service delivery to all women in Pakistan, mainly assisting women in the rural areas of the country. Plans to accomplish gender equality and women empowerment through awareness campaigns and allocation of budget under their annual development programmes were initiated by the government, civil society and international organizations. Women's participation in employment is also intended to be ensured; to aid this process, a 10% quota for women's employment is also intended to be ensured by the institutions concerned. (Annual Plan 2015-16)

The literature is void of the debate about having or not having a feminist foreign policy of Pakistan, and a gap was also identified in the literature regarding the perspectives, challenges, and possibilities of a feminist foreign policy approach in Pakistan. Therefore, a field survey was conducted to transform a debatable topic in Pakistan through purposive sampling.

8.1 Key Initiatives

- More Participation given to Women in decision-making bodies. (Parliamentary Committees and Caucuses)
- Ownership of women in land
- Daycare facilities for children of working women
- Women crisis centers (Helplines and applications)
- Pro-women programs:
 - i- National Plan of Action
 - ii- Gender Reforms Action Programs
 - iii- Benazir Income Support Program
 - iv- Pakistan Bait-ul-Maal
 - v- National Rural Support Program
 - vi- First Women Development Bank
 - vii- National Commission on the Status of Women
 - viii- Ehsas Program
 - ix- Zainab Alert

Many departments were established in the provinces under the 18th constitutional amendment to empower women. The departments were tasked with establishing secure accommodation for working women coming from other cities and shelter homes too.

When considering the trailblazing nations that implemented a feminist foreign policy framework while exuding their gender-conscious approach as a means of empowering women, Pakistan's situation does not appear wholly hopeless. Using the Swedish Model of the Four R's: Representation, Rights, Resources, and Reality, it can be observed that Pakistan is approaching the goal of fully implementing an inclusive strategy. International reports indicate that the policy approach is still lagging in terms of implementation and efficacy, with hardly any evidence of either being observed.

9. Research Gap

Feminist foreign policy has gained much scholarly attention in countries with an already declared FFP, mainly in the Global North. As the global order is gaining traction on FFP, the literature, however, is void of insights into how this concept may be surfaced or debated in countries where feminist foreign policy has not yet taken agency in mainstream policy discussions. In the case of Pakistan, existing research broadly unfolds and discusses women's political participation and gender reforms, leaving the foreign policy dimension relatively unexplored. This study intends to comb through this gap by exploring the opportunities and challenges of a feminist foreign policy framework in Pakistan and for its global image.

The following results and discussion entail the responses of scholars, their perceptions about a FFP framework for Pakistan, and the possible challenges they may come across while adopting one.

10. Findings and Analyses

10.1 Perception of a Feminist Foreign Policy in Pakistan

1- What is your perception of Feminist Foreign Policy?

20 responses



The first question was asked to measure people's perception about feminist foreign policy, from amongst the options given, majority of the respondents were of the view that it is a 'gender-inclusive policy for international image building', some of them had chosen 'it's a gender-sensitive approach and barely few thought that it's 'gender-inclusivity in policies, programs and actions to ensure gender equality and gender equity.

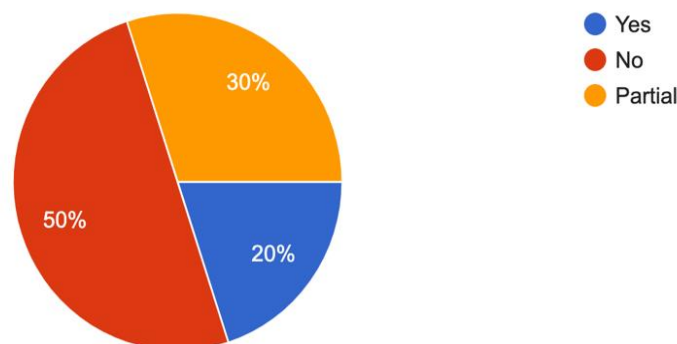
The interviewees had a little similar and a detailed perception of a feminist foreign policy. According to a scholar of public policy, 'a very inclusive policy that takes into consideration the interests and perspectives of women'. The policy does not have to be gender neutral; all the foreign policies

ever made were designed through the male's perspective and lens, with little to no involvement of female policy makers, she added. She further adds that during the Ukrainian war, and the current situation in Gaza, women and children are in bigger number to count in collateral damage taking place, but the policy initiatives to overcome the war damage shall be designed on the lines of gender neutrality, eventually marginalizing women and children. Other respondents were almost of the same view that a feminist foreign policy is a policy that productively and constructively engages women towards portraying a more gender-conscious image of Pakistan internationally.

10.2 Pakistan Foreign Policy Approach

Does Pakistan follow a Feminist Foreign Policy approach?

20 responses



The second question asked was to gauge whether Pakistan follows a FFP approach? Most of the responses chose 'No'; Pakistan does not follow a

FFP approach. Some of them had said 'partial', meaning Pakistan partially follows one, and a small number of the respondents said yes,

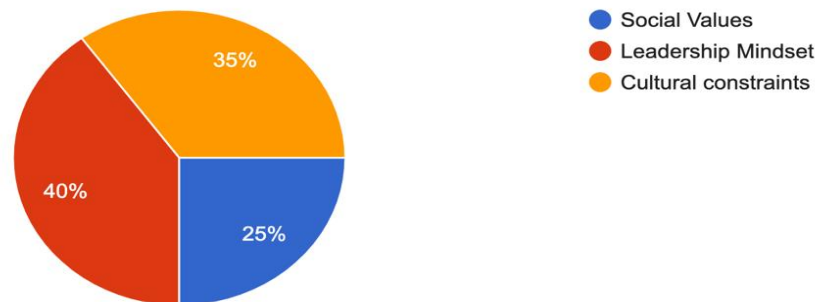
Pakistan is following a FFP approach.

The responses from the interviewees were more comprehensive, as their perspective was oscillating between formally following and, through different approaches, Pakistan's foreign policy tends to be more gender neutral; if not a tendency, then at least it's on the track of mainstreaming gender through many avenues. However, one of the respondents who is heading

10.3 Potential Challenges

3- What can be the major hurdle in the way of adopting a Feminist Foreign Policy in Pakistan?

20 responses



The third question was to speculate the major hurdles in the way if Pakistan adopts. An FFP in the future. The response was mixed; a slight majority was of the view that the leadership's mind set could be a possible major hurdle. Many of them thought cultural constraints could be a hindrance, and a few of them opted for social values as a hurdle in the way of adopting an FFP.

The interviewers believed it's the mix of all the options, as seen in many states that adopted an FFP framework but had to revert after the change of government, one of the respondents quoted the example of Sweden's reversal from a declared FFP as the government changed. The newly elected government was of the view that using

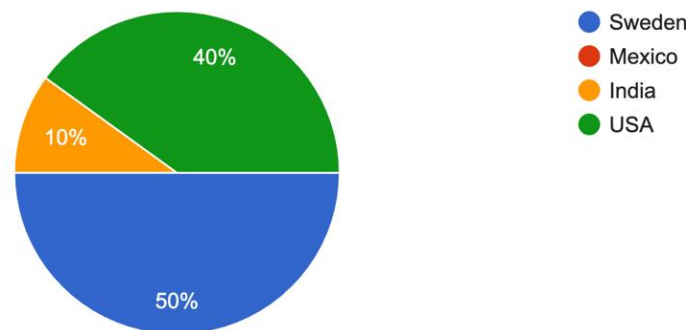
an all women institution was of the view, it's not enough to follow the FFP approach, but to what extent the role and performance of women (where in power position) has been made productive. The official from the foreign office was of the view that Pakistan does not formally follow a FFP approach, however, facts and numbers are progressing in terms of women serving in civil services, heading missions, and in legislation.

'feminist' as an adjective to its foreign policy does not shift Sweden's long-standing efforts to gender equality. Moreover, another response had a different perspective than the options quoted; women's own will to do more and understand their demographic strength in Pakistan. It's women themselves who need to come to lead from the front and perform. The productive use of quotas, she mentioned, is to be valued. Quite similar to this perspective is another one, where it was stated that there are barely any women policymakers and they make up only 20% of the labour force in Pakistan, involving women and their perspective in the process of the FFP framework is the biggest hurdle to consider.

10.4 Potential Inspirational Model

Which country's foreign policy approach do you think Pakistan should follow?

20 responses



This question gave respondents the options of the countries that have and those that have not adopted a FFP framework. The question also aimed to measure whether people have a general idea of the countries with an FFP, and which approach can be suitable for Pakistan. majority of the respondents chose Sweden as the best-suited model for Pakistan to adopt a FFP framework, with the second most popular option being the USA, and the least support was expressed towards India. It is felt pertinent to mention here that among the countries given in the options for the question asked, only Mexico has an operational

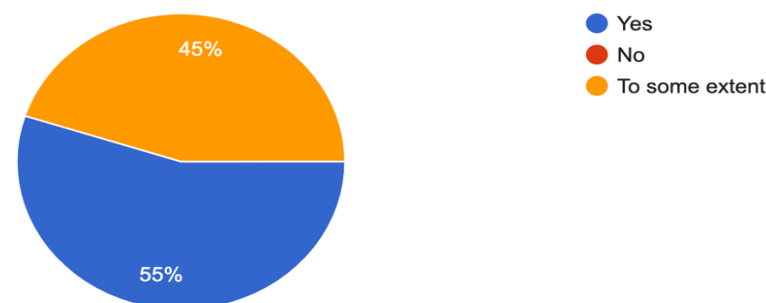
FFP; Sweden was the first country to adopt FFP but reverted to it due to a change of government; the USA and India have never adopted one but claim to practise all international standards and norms of gender equality and gender mainstreaming.

The respondents of the interviews, interestingly, had no choice in mind and believed Pakistan has its own socio-political environment and demographic scales. Policy adoption may have an inspirational approach, but an organic, gradual, and indigenous approach shall be more suitable.

10.5 Navigating the Narrative: An Attempt for Global Image

Would declaring a Feminist Foreign Policy create a positive impact on the image of Pakistan worldwide?

20 responses



As this paper attempts to unfold the possibilities of Pakistan's soft image on international

platforms, the last question was asked to know people's opinion about the impact it would have

for Pakistan to adopt or declare an FFP internationally. There was not a clear majority stating yes or no, but almost a tie, as 55% of the respondents were of the opinion that it would leave an impact internationally, and 45 % thought that it would not have an impact.

The interviewees also had a mixed response to this question but majority believed, before thinking in lines of an image internationally, it is more needful to bring your house in order, just adding feminist perspective to the foreign policy framework shall not create a much difference, betterments and improvisation in creating a gender conscious and gender sensitive approach nationally is more important which would eventually have a positive impact on the image of Pakistan internationally.

After reviewing the literature from the countries with an FFP framework, and the responses of the respondents, it can be analysed that it is more important in Pakistan to start a conversation about gender inclusivity and gender consciousness. The assumed hurdles mainly revolve around the mindset of leadership and deep-rooted cultural constraints, which require immediate attention if FFP is aspired to be adopted. The opinions held in academic circles are clear, but more women in policy domains and more space for women to perform are needed to build a narrative at the state institutions' level. Finally, yet importantly, efforts should be made to prevent the aspiration of some feminist agendas regarding "women outnumbering or outweighing men" and to actively contribute to the creation of a more gender-conscious society to improve its reputation internationally.

11. The Way Forward

The challenges mentioned above to have or not to have a feminist foreign policy approach are deep-rooted. According to one of the respondents of the interview, 'a dialogue or debate on a feminist foreign policy is a very advanced concept for Pakistan if not alien. The major challenge, according to her, was that the 'acceptance of female mainstreaming' is more crucial. Once the narrative building and consolidation of this idea gains traction in Pakistan, only then can the agenda be brought to the table for further deliberation'. The following are the long-term and short-term policy recommendations for Pakistan

to: establish a debate on feminist foreign policy and then to contextualise the pros and cons in Pakistan:

11.1 Opportunities and Prospects:

11.1.1 Extracting lessons from best practices (Applicable)

Like other systems Pakistan has adopted from the West, such as 'Parliamentary form of government, federal framework, bureaucratic structure, bicameral legislature', adopting another one with organic evolution shall be beneficial for Pakistan.

11.1.2 Internal and External Benefits for Pakistan's Soft Image

An orientation towards a feminist foreign policy will essentially prioritize gender balance, resulting in more opportunities, empowerment, and social justice for women. Enhancing women's participation in socio-economic and political spaces may result in the provision of rights for other women, reducing gender-based violence, leading towards an inclusive society. Moreover, by investing resources in women-centric and women-led programs, the barriers attached to women's provision of rights shall be dismantled. A feminist foreign policy approach can prioritize health issues of women concerning reproductive healthcare, maternal and psychological and addressing gender-based health disparities. By ensuring these measures, Pakistan can inch towards achieving SDG 10 in the global context.

Finally, incorporating a gender perspective in foreign policy may help promote peace and security in Pakistan as women across the globe have shown a positive role in the processes of peacebuilding.

The internal benefits would naturally reflect on Pakistan's image internationally. Reforming the conditions of women internally would elevate Pakistan's ranks on international indices, placing Pakistan's soft image in the right direction.

11.1.3 Socio-cultural Impact:

The socio-political impact of adopting a feminist foreign policy in Pakistan shall be transformative. An FFP framework does not attempt to challenge the existing culture and traditions, but it dismantles traditional gender norms in general. An FFP framework seems promising in promoting the idea that women are also entitled to have equal

rights, opportunities, and agency in all aspects of life. This paradigm shift may result in demystifying the perception of gender roles in

terms of better education, employment, and participation in decision-making processes.

11.1.4 Policy Options

Short term Policy Options	Long Term Policy Options
Collaborations with CSOs and INGOs for Advocacy campaign	Legislative Policies - Ensuring Representation and Inclusion - Legal Reforms to prevent violence against Women.
Awareness campaigns for Women Empowerment	Gender Mainstreaming - Women in Leadership - Gender-Responsive Governance mechanism - Foreign Aid Programs for capacity Building
Media campaigns for gender sensitivity in policy making	Women Inclusion in Conflict management and Peacekeeping
Gender-Conscious and Gender Responsive foreign policy trainings	Women Inclusion in Science, Tech and Entrepreneurial Diplomatic Initiatives

Even though an FFP will not eliminate gender inequality or the effects of various oppressive systems, it could be a vital tool in the efforts to reevaluate international security and conventional foreign policy. It enables policymakers to create policies that are more inclusive. An FFP presents significant alternatives and alternative perspectives on urgent global issues like misinformation, armed conflict, socioeconomic inequality, and climate change. An FFP, viewed through a feminist lens, has the power to redefine international relations beyond states and to involve local and community organizations in the process of rethinking and contributing to solutions.

12. Conclusion

There has been growing consciousness around gender equality as a policy concern within the international community for decades under the efforts of the UN, ranging from Mexico in 1975 to date in the form of SDGs. However, there is no uniform perspective or definitive contextualization of FFP in the world, despite being practiced in more than ten countries presently; the reason being the state's indigenous idea of an interest in adopting an FFP according to their own socio-political and economic dynamics. The foregoing discussion in this paper has shown

that interest in an FFP framework by some states of the world thus far has been oriented towards mainstreaming of women in all aspects of life. Although it's a recent phenomenon, the idea and approaches are taking turns and gaining footing widely. It was also evident through the literature that states with an FFP framework are struggling with operationalization, and Sweden, being the pioneer, had to revert its FFP framework after a change of government. It was clearly proclaimed by the newly elected government that Sweden has lasting policies in accordance with global norms set for Women; hence, no need to adjectives it as 'feminist' when all standards are being met successfully.

The paper attempted to delve into possibilities of a feminist foreign policy for Pakistan and analyze the existing literature. A wide gap was identified in the literature supportive of a FFP framework for Pakistan. The primary and secondary sources revealed that before engaging in a debate over having or not having a FFP framework, it is pertinent to initiate a literary and evidence-based debate on FFP and where Pakistan can be positioned internally within this framework. It was concluded from the interviews and facts researched that Pakistan's foreign policy approach is not ignorant of a feminist approach; there has been comprehensive progress observed in

perpetual terms and aspiring to elevate further. Nonetheless, in addition to the anticipated efforts by male individuals in positions of authority, it is imperative to guarantee that women in such roles (whether through quotas or direct election or recruitment) optimize their positions effectively and adhere to the principle of 'women empowering women.'

Finally, while the adoption of a feminist foreign policy framework holds the potential to positively shape both Pakistan's internal governance landscape and its international image, any meaningful progress in this direction will necessarily be gradual, requiring careful navigation of the country's socio-political realities and deeply embedded cultural norms.

Conflict of Interest

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