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FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY:
THE CASE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

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Feminist Foreign Policy: The Case of the European Union

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Abstract

Across the world, an increasing number of voices call for a Feminist Foreign Policy to address global trends such as populist nativism, the crackdown on fundamental rights, structural inequality or masculinised understandings of security and protection. Having stipulated that it wants to be an effective actor in ensuring global peace, this paper critically analyses the European Union's contribution to gender equality and women's empowerment through its foreign policy. Relying on the rich toolkit offered Foreign Policy Analysis and the UNDP Gender Results Effectiveness Scale, the following pages scrutinize the budgeting, policy, and workforce of the European Union to conclude that EU's Foreign Policy fails to address root causes of inequality, and, in some areas, it aggravates patriarchal and neoliberal structures. Framed within the greater IR debates on the role of human rights promotion in the relations between states, the findings suggests that the empowerment of the subaltern by the EU is pursued due to its added value to Western liberal policy objectives rather than as a matter of human justice at the international level. Consequently, the paper provides evidence in support of the rational realist argument that normative ideas are captured by powerful foreign policy actors to legitimize their egoistic interests.

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List of Acronyms

AD: Administrator (Permanent Official Category within EU)

AST: Assistant (Permanent Official Category within EU)

CFSP: Common Foreign and Security Policy

CFFP: Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy

CSDP: Common Security and Defense Policy

EEAS: European External Action Service

EU: European Union

FFP: Feminist Foreign Policy

FG: Function Group (Contract Agent Category within EU)

GAP: Gender Action Plan

GEWE: Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

HR: High Representative

IR: International Relations

LGBTI+: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex people

ODA: Official Development Aid

OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PESCO: Permanent Structured Cooperation

UNDP: United Nations Development Program

UNSCR: United Nations Security Council Resolution

WMD: Weapons of Mass Destruction

WPS: Women Peace and Security

1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose

This paper aims to provide a critical analysis of the European Union's (EU) engagement with Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP) through the European External Action Service (EEAS), which under the Commission's umbrella, is responsible for the execution of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), the agreed foreign policy of the EU. The purpose of the paper is to identify and analyse any gaps in the formulation and implementation of EU's Feminist Foreign Policy in effectively promoting gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE). In other words, this paper asks: does the EU Feminist Foreign Policy contribute to changes in norms, power structures and roots of inequality that promote GEWE? And argues that not only the EU Feminist Foreign Policy fails to be gender transformative but, in some cases, it reinforces gender inequality. To do so, this paper will start by defining key terms (Section 2.1) and reviewing the state of the art of the debates around Feminist Foreign Policy (Section 2.2). After outlining the theoretical framework (Section 2.3), methodology and limitations (Section 2.4), the paper will proceed to analyse the EEAS commitments and actions to foster gender equality in foreign aid (Section 3.1), security policy (Section 3.2), and internal human resource dynamics (Section 3.3). Section 4.1 provides a discussion of the analysis and suggests areas for further research on an integral EU Feminist Foreign Policy. The conclusion (Section 4.2) summarizes the argument and frames this paper's contribution within the larger International Relations (IR) debates on the role of human rights advocacy and promotion in the relations between states.

1.2. Timing

Recent developments make the discussion around a European Feminist Foreign Policy particularly pertinent at this point in time. Increasing number of voices call for a Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP) to address global trends with detrimental gender implications. Amongst the most recent phenomena, growing nativist populism in Western countries (Euronews, 2020) has brought about a sharp political backlash against women's and LGBTI+ rights (Provost and White, 2017). Hungary's ban on LGBTI+ content across the school curriculum being the most recent example. Meanwhile, COVID-19 and the subsequent socio-economic crisis is widening structural inequalities, disproportionately affecting women. Constituting 70% of health professionals worldwide, women are more prone to the virus (New York Times, 2020) whilst those confined at home with abusive partners have been victims of a staggering gender-based violence across nations (Sixth Tone, 2020). Simultaneously, conservative governments have restricted access to women's reproductive rights and support systems to domestic violence survivors by labelling these services as 'non-essential' (CFFP, 2020:13). This contrasts with the classification of arms producers as essential services across countries, triggering profound debates

across policy circles, civil society organisations and societies on the role of states in guaranteeing the safety of their citizens, particularly the most vulnerable ones, beyond traditional conceptualizations of threats (Acheson, 2020). For authors such as Sjoberg (2006), Wichterich (2016) and Aggestam et. al. (2019), the intersectionality of feminism incorporated into foreign policy provides an opportunity to address these issues and beyond. For instance, the introduction of the *Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda* in foreign policy is perceived to hold the potential to convert conflict into sustainable peace (Peace Women, 2021). The vision of a fairer society embodied in feminist values, along with a call for redistributions of capital and power, can reconcile the tension between individual emancipation and collective equality behind national and global cleavages.

As a major international actor with the capacity to influence normative behaviour through soft and hard power (Elcano Institute, 2020), the momentum forged by these simultaneous developments is conducive and demanding of the adoption of an EU foreign policy that is feminist. The Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy asserts that “there cannot and will not be peace without feminism” (2020:13). Consequently, if the EEAS wants to be an effective actor in ensuring global peace, as stipulated in its own *Global Strategy* (EEAS, 2016a), this is a suitable moment to hoist an EU Feminist Foreign Policy.

2. Conceptual Framework

2.1. Definitions

2.1.1. Foreign policy and Foreign Policy Analysis

Foreign policy is the collective strategies, actions and approaches conducted by an independent actor in its relations with external entities in international relations (Hill, 2003; Smith et. al., 2016). Consequently, Foreign Policy Analysis is a branch of IR that is interested in developing theories and examining empirical evidence on how such actors make such foreign policy. As Morin and Paquin develop in their book (2018), Foreign Policy Analysis examines the decision-making processes through a rich toolbox that incorporates not only the study of international and domestic politics but also the agency of individual leaders, the role of bureaucracies, ethical considerations, or the effect of reputation, among others. This paper, hence, becomes a piece of foreign policy analysis by examining the agency of the EEAS in formulating and implementing a FFP and the values, tools, incentives, contexts, and actors that accompany such processes.

2.1.2. Feminist Foreign Policy and Feminist Foreign Policy Analysis

Feminist Foreign Policy is the collective set of actions and approaches conducted by an independent actor – in this case the EEAS – in international relations that seek to eradicate the discrimination against women (Bergman, 2020:217). For feminist organizations such as the Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy, FFP is a holistic political structure rather than a limited course of action

(2020). This conceptualization entails an intersectional framework that elevates women's as well as other marginalized groups' experiences to the centre of the policy. In this way, FFP requires a practical component. As Ridge et. al. put it, "if the application of a feminist foreign policy doesn't change practice, it isn't feminist" (2019:05). Consequently, FFP demands a departure from the traditional practices of foreign policy to interrogate the underlying hierarchical system, address the roots of discriminations, and revert unequal gender norms. As follows, FFP is proposed as the antithesis and the solution to patriarchy, colonization, heteronormativity, capitalism, racism, imperialism, and militarism (Tickner, 2014). A foreign policy analysis of FFP, hence, must have an explicit focus on how gender is fundamental to foreign policy objectives, discourses, and processes. In such fashion, this paper declares itself overtly feminist. The following pages open the black box of EEAS and provide a critical analysis of the impact of gender on the motivations, processes, and outputs of the EU's Feminist Foreign Policy.

To be sure, the author of this paper is fully aware that the EU has not officially adopted a Feminist Foreign Policy. Nevertheless, this paper considers that interrogating EU policy through the lens of feminist foreign policy analysis is a legitimate endeavour for the following reasons. First, any policy — whether gender-blind or gender-targeted — and hence all EU foreign policy, has gendered implications. The effect of any action is different on men, women and other individuals within the gender spectrum and hence can be analysed through a feminist approach that seeks to unpack precisely those differences. Second, the EU is increasingly developing a body of gendered policies, such as the *2020-2025 Gender Equality Strategy*, the *Gender Action Plan III* or the *Work-Life-Balance Directive*, whose resulting gender transformative effects in policy objectives, discourses and processes must be scrutinized. Third, the impulse toward feminist foreign policy in the world, and particularly EU, suggests that the EEAS is moving towards a Feminist Foreign Policy. For that purpose, it is not difficult to imagine that the foundation for an EU FFP would be such prevailing gendered policies, making a thorough feminist audit of current doctrines all the more crucial.

2.2. Feminist Foreign Policy debates around the World

The adoption of a Feminist Foreign Policy, however, does not automatically imply that the actions of an actor abroad contribute to changes in the norms, cultural values and power structures behind gender inequality and discrimination. In fact, since Sweden announced in 2014 that it would apply a Feminist Foreign Policy, a fierce debate erupted regarding the responsibilities and the meaning behind adopting an FFP. The Swedish announcement had a call-to-action effect in Canada, France and Mexico who have already adopted a FFP and triggered others like Luxembourg, Spain, and most recently, Cyprus to follow such path (Gouvernement de Luxembourg, 2019; Gobierno de España, 2020; Abramian, 2021). Nevertheless, critical literature questions whether having heads of state declare that the national foreign policy is feminist is enough to conclude that such policies do indeed contribute to GEWE (Enloe, 2014; Scheyer and Kumskova, 2019).

First, the policies adopted by these countries have been criticized for reproducing binary conceptualizations of gender (Connell, 2009; Lind, 2016). Thompson and Clement (2019) denounced that none of the Feminist Foreign Policies adopted so far account for the differentiated needs of the LGBTI+ community and hence fail to be intersectional. Cis-hetero-normativity not only excludes lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender, and queer identities in the reformulation of hierarchies at the international level but also exerts discriminatory control over their sexuality, marriage, and identity. In addition to the rigid distinction between the feminine and the masculine, FFPs, such as that of Canada, lack focus on men and boys, which leave the underlying patriarchal culture unaddressed and places the responsibility of inequality on women (CFFP, 2020). Radical feminist literature emphasizes this point, whilst advocating for the abolishment of gender as the only way forward (Urbinati, 1991; Knopp, 1994; Popa, 2011), a proposal that has not been picked up yet by any country.

Second, feminist organizations such as the Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy (2020) and Reaching Critical Will (2017) defend that a truly Feminist approach requires a step away from militarized strategies in foreign policy. For Patterson, “to prevent war is to fight male power” (1981 cited in Hooks, 1995:59), which rests on the ambition of achieving a fully demilitarized and WMD-free international arena, as the nuclear mentality is perceived as the epitome of male-defined constructs of domination (Koen, 1980). Nevertheless, except from Mexico, none of the states who have adopted a FFP are signatories of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and, today, there remains a clear lack of appetite to end the existence of armies (UNTC, 2021).

Third, authors critique that FFPs have externalized the problem of inequality without addressing it domestically (Marquez-Guajaro, 2020; Naves, 2020). Examples of this lack of national action include unstopped arm exports to authoritarian regimes that systemically infringe women’s and LGBTI+ rights (Irsten, 2019), the containment policies towards migrants or asylum seekers, and discriminatory practices against first-nation communities at home (Amnesty Canada, 2021). These recurring issues have been highlighted to argue that feminist rhetoric in foreign policy announcements is followed by “business as usual” actions (Thompson, 2020:04; CFFP, 2020:13), that render the resulting foreign policy not feminist, as it doesn’t change practice (Ridge et. al., 2019:05). Mexico exemplifies this paradox. Authors question whether the Mexican Foreign Affairs Ministry can credibly promote gender equality abroad whilst owning the world’s highest rate of gender violence (Marquez-Guajaro, 2020). Hence, as Aggestam et. al. put it, FFP by states across the world “can be criticized for not sufficiently matching their care for distant women living in conflict or poverty-struck zones with an empathetic commitment to their own” (2019:32).

The recent self-framing of the EU as a “champion” of women’s rights and equality both internally and externally (EU Commission, 2015a:16) immerses the EU in the debates mentioned above. The EU Commission’s new priorities have declared an intersectional approach to the climate emergency,

democratic capacity-building and equal opportunity (EU Commission, 2019a). The new *Gender Equality Strategy for the 2020-2025 period* (EU Commission, 2020a) presents a distinct feminist vision for the EEAS. Recognising gender as “socially constructed” (Ibid:01), the *Strategy* comprises the most progressive approach to gender equality taken to present by the EU diplomatic service, and the overall executive branch of the Union. The core ambition of fighting discrimination and promoting gender equality by safeguarding fundamental rights (EU Commission, 2020b) provides a robust baseline to construct an EU Feminist Foreign Policy. Hence, the wide range of initiatives and extensive legislation that incorporate a gender perspective must be scrutinized as part of the debates on FFPs. To do so, this paper takes a critical foreign policy analysis approach to the EU Feminist Foreign Policy and assesses how such policy is articulated, how it unfolds and who are the key actors making the decisions that aim at GEWE.

2.3. Theoretical background

The feminist foreign policy debates around the world fall within greater debates on the role of human rights promotion in IR. On the one hand, FFP is ethically defended in the stream of IR, the constructivist one, that considers ideas as important determinants of government policy (Goldstein & Keohane, 1993:03). Ideas, defined as the beliefs held by individuals that help explain foreign policy outcomes, are considered influential in establishing roadmaps about foreign policy goals and can, ultimately, become embedded in political institutions (Ibid). FFP theorisation is built on an ethical framework of a relational ontology, which embraces the stories and lived experiences of women and other marginalised groups at the receiving end of foreign policy conduct. In this way, feminist scholarship argues that identities and states are socially constructed within gendered practises and power relations (Sylvester, 1994). As ethical foreign policy, the conduct of FFP is seen as inductive of pro-equality transformative change in global politics through an altruistic duty to protect the rights and interests of others by deconstructing such hierarchies, often in areas of little economic or geo-strategic interest (Aggestam et. al, 2019).

On the other end of the spectrum, the rational realist one, authors argue that ideas are just “hooks” used by powerful foreign policy actors to seize popular attention and legitimise their egoistic interests (Shepsle, 1985:233), often arising from economic neoliberalism (Muehlenhoff, 2017). The logic of anarchy leaves little opportunity to pursue foreign policies with ethical considerations and thus ideas such as feminism are epiphenomenal as they do not serve a causal role beyond validating the actions of those with most material power (Waltz, 1959). Consequently, FFP is understood as encompassing broader utility functions of power. Pragmatism cuts through notions of global ethical obligations and FFP is manipulated in states’ international behaviour to pursue self-help, survival, security, and the maximization of national interests defined in terms of power. Some authors argue this manipulation of the ethical discourse arises unconsciously as gender cosmopolitanism has invaded public discourse and

educational institutions in Western countries (Hall and Rodriguez, 2003). FFP, hence, becomes a collective myth that affects the conceptions of self-interest but does not alter the primacy of national interest in the interaction between states.

In weighing the two sides of the scholarly spectrum for the case of the EU FPP, this paper argues that the fight against structural causes of gender inequality follows an instrumental logic that serves an economic neo-liberal rationale. This understanding aligns with the scepticism of feminist scholars who approach with suspicion the commitment of liberal states to promote gender equality (Richards, 2012).

2.4. Methodology

With the desire to address this debate in a rigorous and systematic way, this paper builds on the analytical framework laid out by Bigio and Vogelstein (2020). Their research provides a comprehensive framework to analyse the manner in which GEWE is integrated into Foreign Policies. According to their study, governments have undertaken three key changes. First, states resort to gender **budget** allocations to ensure that the goal of gender equality is sufficiently funded through, for instance, aid targets and equality funds. Second, governments have enacted a range of **policies** that provide guidance and accountability to gender mainstreaming commitments. And third, governments have promulgated feminist **leadership** through the establishment of high-level positions oriented towards equality. Although the framework was developed to structure a set of recommendations that would introduce gender mainstreaming in US Foreign Policy, it reflects on the practices of other countries with a FFP model. For instance, Swedish three Rs – resources, rights, and representation – (Government Offices of Sweden, 2019) equate to Bigio and Vogelstein’s budget, policy and leadership respectively demonstrating its relevance beyond the US context. Accordingly, this paper builds on Bigio and Vogelstein’s three-fold angle to assess EU’s application of a feminist perspective across its foreign policy.

Ergo, the analysis unfolds as follows. Section 3.1 examines the place that gender equality holds in the EEAS’s foreign aid and developmental budgets. Section 3.2 analyses the role of gender in defence and security policies. Section 3.3 looks at the gender parity and representative schemes within the human resource structures of the EEAS. Moreover, each of these sections is divided in two levels of analysis that reflect two steps of the foreign policy cycle: formulation and implementation. The former produces a concrete proposal acceptable to the parties on the table whilst the latter constitutes the application of such proposal with impact on the ground (Morin and Paquin, 2018). The choice to analyse both steps in the EEAS foreign policy cycle responds to the demonstrated departure (Alden and Aran, 2016; Smith, et. al., 2016), including in the case of the EU (Bicchi, 2010), of implementation from formulation as new factors intervene such a bureaucratic units, contextual limitations, or lack of political will. In this way,

the paper provides a comprehensive assessment of EEAS's Foreign Policy contribution in theory and in practice towards gender equality.

The paper relies on several sources and a rich toolkit. The analysis draws from an array of second-hand literature that incorporate a wealth of inputs such as interviews with EEAS staffers or the experience of CSOs on the ground, along with CFFP's relevant research "A Feminist Foreign Policy for the European Union" 's (2020) valuable insights and sources. Aiming to provide a unique contribution, the paper goes beyond previous work and unpacks the language used in policy formulation and incorporates statistical data to examine key aspects of implementation results. The paper refers to the UNDP's Gender Results Effectiveness Scale (2021) to capture the degree to which the EEAS contributes to gender mainstreaming. According to the Scale, gendered interventions can be categorized as: gender-negative (inequalities are reinforced), gender-blind (fails to acknowledge the differentiated needs of women), gender-responsive (addresses differentiated needs but not underlying structures of inequality) or gender-transformative (targets the root of inequalities) (Ibid:01). A truly feminist EU Foreign Policy would fall under "gender-transformative", a concept used by the EEAS itself too (EU Commission, 2020c:03).

2.4.1. Limitations

The word count limitation implies that this paper cannot do justice to the complexities and nuances that a feminist policy as the official EU Foreign Policy would entail. This is furthermore impeded by the lack of consensus around definitions, scope, and implications of feminist approaches (Mulinari and Sandell, 1999). Considering that FFP requires an intersectional and transversal approach, the study of only foreign aid, security policy and human resource patterns fails to analyse the emergence (or lack of thereof) of feminist approaches across all networks, schemes, and initiatives of the EEAS. A comprehensive assessment of the EU's foreign policy contribution to GEWE would require the study of: additional fields such environmental policy, enlargement, culture, A.I., etc; the evolution of the gender perspective across the policy cycle beyond formulation and implementation; all policy instruments (i.e., sanctions, trade, diplomacy, tools of coercion) and a disaggregated analysis across units and contexts.

Second, the desk-research methodology used to produce this paper also limits the range of perspectives considered to those pre-selected by other authors. Not

producing its own body of primary data, this paper runs the risk of reproducing the biases of previous literature leading to duplicated and skewed results. This is particularly the case as the voices of those most impacted by the EU Feminist Foreign Policy — the subaltern women and individuals — remain at the margins in the literature. The analysis of the paper attempts to correct those tendencies by taking a critical approach to second-hand literature and placing women's and marginalized groups' experiences at the centre of the analysis.

Lastly, the in-built biases of Bigio and Vogelstein's framework must be acknowledged. Implicit in the three-fold structure is the centre role of the state (or relevant independent actor) as the primary transformative platform for gender mainstreaming abroad. Feminist literature, however, contends that institutional and state-centric frameworks are not conducive to the promotion of feminist agendas since they are embedded within patriarchal structures (Goldstein and Keohane, 1993:26) and marginalize non-governmental actors (Muehlenhoff, 2017). Although the EU is an institutional structure and will be analysed as such, this paper will also consider the manner in which it embodies and reproduces oppressive power logics and will include the insights of the feminist civil society.

Considering these limitations, this paper must be framed as a valuable starting point to analyse the EU Feminist Foreign Policy, one that calls for further analysis with expanded scope and the incorporation of key stakeholders.

3. Analysis

3.1. Budgeting

3.1.1. Formulation

The relationship between gender equality and EU's foreign policy finds its longest history in development cooperation. As explained by the CFFP (2020), the EEAS has resorted to several budgetary mechanisms to promote gender mainstreaming abroad, including stand-alone funds for women's rights programs and civil society organizations on the ground, earmarking a percentage of foreign assistance funds to support gender-equality, or conducting gender assessment audits before committing development funds. Initially, the EEAS based her gender promotion abroad through a

Women-in-Development logic that focused on integrating women in economic development through women-only projects that would generate economic opportunities to women in male-dominated developing countries (Braithwaite, 2000). Since the World Conference on Women in Beijing, EU has been pushed to shift the focus onto the structural conditions and power imbalances that create the male-dominated environment in the first place. Placing gender relations as a central subject of development aid induced the Gender-and-Development strategy (Debusscher, 2011:39).

The formulation of the *Gender Action Plan III (GAPIII)* (EU Commission, 2020c), the new plan to promote GEWE through all external action of the EU, strives at articulating that step forward but fails to abandon the Women-in-Development spirit and, hence, cannot be casted as gender-transformative. On the one hand, *GAPIII* introduces a gender perspective across all actions taken by the EEAS, aiming at a cultural and normative change. In the words of Ronner-Grubačić, the EEAS Adviser to the Secretary-General for Gender and Diversity, the *Action Plan* integrates both a “strong signal” and an “operational roadmap” that advances a more inclusive, peaceful, and prosperous world society (Ronner-Grubačić, 2021:14:50-15:27). *GAPIII*'s ultimate objective is to dedicate 85% of development budgeting to gender issues by 2025. Nevertheless, in presenting such goals, the EEAS omitted that the 85% mainstreaming target was already listed in the Gender Action Plan II with due date of 2020 (EU Commission, 2015b), thereupon the 85% target is a moratorium in the promotion of GEWE rather than a sign of ambition. Further, the effectiveness of the goal itself must be questioned. As women's rights organisations highlight, a percentage target without a target for spending “misses the point entirely” (Concord Europe, 2020:02) as it disregards the funding needs on the ground and could remain insufficient to induce gender transformative change.

Recognising the “socially constructed” nature of gender, GAPIII’s key innovation is the inclusion of men and boys as drivers of change as well as an emphasis on the “intersectional” sources of discrimination including migration, ethnicity, religion, indigeneity, along with considering the rights of the LGBTI+ community (EU Commission, 2020c:02-03). Nevertheless, a quick scroll down the document that enunciates the policy unveils a reproduction of conservative narratives by presenting exclusively the stories of women who have thrived in male-dominated contexts, see Image 1. For instance, featured are a group of Yemeni women who successfully provided solar energy to their community through an

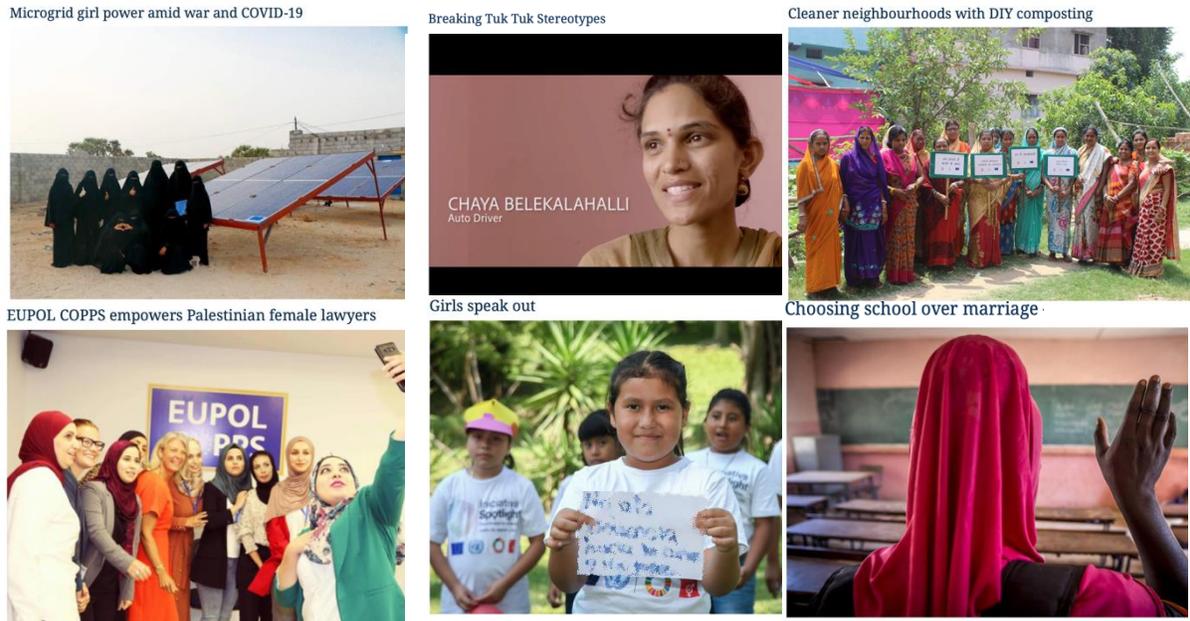


Image 1: EEAS-reported examples of its work that exclusively feature women as drivers of gender equality, whilst claiming Gap III “actively engages men and boys” (EU Commission, 2020c:02)

EEAS-funded women-only project or Chaaya who became an auto-rickshaw driver thanks to EEAS-funded electric cart in the male-dominated service sector in India, but no story of men accountability or positive masculinities can be found. While these interventions might benefit vulnerable women, they do not reflect a departure from the Women-in-Development logic and fall short to propose large-scale shift in the structural drivers of inequality that would be considered gender transformative.

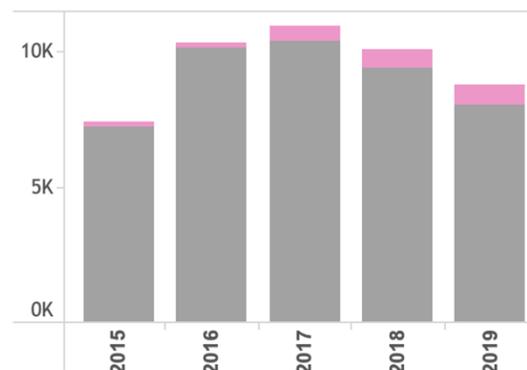
Additionally, EEAS gendered budgeting mechanisms present women as neoliberal subjects, making equality an instrument to achieve economic development rather than as a human rights goal to strive for, which aggravates current inequalities. *GAPIII* underscores that “bringing an additional 600 million women online could increase global GDP by €13 billion” (EU commission, 2020c:20). In other words, the provision of funding towards gender mainstreaming abroad is formulated as a scheme that maximises human capital (Debusscher, 2011). The neoliberal logic is such that, the technologization of women brings “benefits to public health, education, employment, entrepreneurship, community

welfare and social life” (EU commission, 2020c:20) without questioning the political choices and structural hierarchies that impede the access to those services to women in the first place. Similarly, Orbie (2013) demonstrates that gender equality in the context of Euro-Mediterranean Cooperation is equally articulated in the language of achieving market objectives of economic growth, trade enhancement, removal of barriers for economic cooperation, or the increase of mutual production. Those objectives are arguably more geared towards enhancing capitalistic structures that benefit EU commercial flows than advancing the rights of subaltern women and marginalised groups. This self-interested formulation can also be found in the External Investment Plan. Adopted in 2017, the External Investment Plan seeks to attract public and private investments for small businesses in the EU’s Eastern and Southern Neighbourhoods as well the Sub-Saharan African Region. Besides, the proposal affirms such investments will “contribute to countries’ development in other ways”, listing gender equality as one of the aimed developmental ends (EU Commission, 2017b:02). Such phrasing points at a clear neoliberal rationality that assumes that economic doctrines can provide solutions to structural problems of inequality and lack of opportunity. This is problematic as it mobilises women to enhance market value and leaves aside critical aspects to equality such as social justice and the large sectors of women for which the structural barriers impede responding to the self-optimising and entrepreneurial women imaginary encouraged by EEAS funding schemes. Under this imaginary, economically marginalised individuals are made responsible for their economic emancipation and fail to provide political solutions to the reasons for that marginalisation in the first place, such as the lack of access to education, reproductive health, harassment, or responsibility over domestic care duties. The narrative of empowerment through EU budgets disseminates an asymmetrical power relation between those empowering and those to be empowered, where the former imposes a specific self-interested understanding of empowerment to the latter. In this case, empowerment is expressed in neoliberal terms by assuming that there is no difference in how women relate to the state or the market, and hence it does not propose a structural change but rather the management of the existing situation of male domination, failing to be gender-transformative and thoroughly feminist.

3.1.2. Implementation

The implementation of the gender budgeting schemes also suffers from key issues that hinder transformative feminist results. The delay in 5 years in having 85% of all new budgeting contribute to gender mainstream is just the tip of the iceberg of poor EEAS delivery of gender mainstreaming Official Development Assistance (ODA).

Although bilateral allocatable ODA with a gender focus has doubled since 2015, the OECD data presents sharps fluctuations and partial



Graph 1: EEAS’s Aid trends 2015-2019 (USD million); in pink aid that has gender as a principal object. (OECD, 2021)

regressions in the delivery of gender budgets, which goes against the consistent efforts required for sustainable transformations in gender relations. For instance, in 2019, 57.8% of the EEAS bilateral allocable aid significantly considered gender equality, which decreased from 2018, when the number reached 63.1%, to then increase again to 64% in 2020, far from the 85% goal. Further, out of this, only 4.8% pursued activities that had gender equality as the principal objective, meaning that the main aim of the project was gender equality. Although this is a welcomed increase from the 2% in 2017, it remains below the Development Assistance Committee average of 5.5% (OECD, 2021), see graph 1. What makes things worse, a recent study by Oxfam revealed that 25% of all self-reporting of the gender marker was not accurate as it overestimated the share of activities with gender as a principal objective (2020), which questions the validity of the numbers presented by the OECD itself and gathered in graph 1. The small (and potentially even smaller in reality) share of ODA with gender as principal object demonstrates that the EEAS is funding gender mainstreaming mainly by adding a pinch of gender into gender-neutral aid schemes, which imply that development budgets do not target GEWE sufficiently to be gender transformative. Such approach was coined as “add-women-and-stir” (Chappell and Guerrina, 2020:07) and continues to introduce a Women-in-Development logic that fails to transform the inequality structures in the development countries. In fact, applying “add-women-and-stir” logics reproduce economic and social vulnerabilities by promoting the pervasive neoliberal myth that girls and women are responsible for their own emancipation (Muehlenhoff, 2017:160) since, with some external support from the EEAS, they could overcome their marginalisation. In this way, the EEAS places responsibility of achieving equality on vulnerable groups and prevents the diplomatically unpopular tasks of demanding domestic governments to address structural inequality as well as being held accountable for the negative spill over effect that EU’s neoliberal capitalism and EEAS containment policies have on women in developing countries. Additionally, funding schemes implementation fail to be truly intersectional, as the EEAS projects remained very timid in addressing gender issues of sexuality, and efforts on LGBTI+ issues remained dispersed, only addressed at the micro-level (Particip GmbH, 2020). All this together help us understand why the latest independent evaluation on the EEAS’s efforts towards women’s empowerment and gender equality has labelled them “slow and uneven” with limited successes (Ibid:03).

Further, a closer look into the OECD data hint at the application of a geopolitical logic that does not respond to the prioritization of the most vulnerable women. Having Turkey, Morocco, Syria, Serbia, Egypt, Tunisia, and Georgia as the top receivers of gender-focused aid (OECD, 2021) and considering their strategic positioning vis-à-vis Europe and the migration flows suggests that gender aid performs a purpose well beyond gender equality. In particular, the absence of countries such as Mexico with the highest femicides rate or Chad and Yemen with the world’s lowest Gender Equality Index demonstrates that not only gender prioritization in development aid is an afterthought but also, it is used to occlude co-optation strategies with key geostrategic neighbours that have little to do with gender equality.

Additionally, implementation on the ground lacks a clear strategy on how to tackle gender equality in individual countries, with leads to a lack of appropriate response to the differentiated needs of women and marginalised groups across contexts. This is caused by an “insufficient understanding of context and little use of gender analysis to inform country strategy objectives, programmes, projects and dialogue” (Particip GmbH, 2020:19) and an overall lack of results measurements that hinders EEAS’s assessment of achievements, identification of barriers and incorporation of lessons learnt (Particip GmbH, 2020:23). The later was also highlighted by the EU parliament itself (2019) and backed by Davis’ research that showed gender analysis does not precede the delivery of gender funding (2018). The lack of systematic reporting structures for the EEAs funds towards gender equality programs leads into limited accountability by national authorities, field offices, civil society organisations, and private partners. The lack of ex-ante and ex-ort gender impact assessments for the EU-funded programs imply that lessons learnt on gender are not incorporated into subsequent budgetary schemes, which generates negative feedback loops in the foreign policy cycle of the EEAS. Hence, almost 30 years later, the independent evaluation on EEAS GEWE results concluded that “visible results at the macro-level have been limited” (Particip GmbH, 2020:04); in other words, EEAS funding schemes’ implementation has not been gender transformative.

As a positive prospect, the EEAS has maintained a consistent focus in resourcing gender-based violence through its foreign policy, becoming a major partner of UN Women. For the period 2012-2019, the EU contributions summed up to a total of 245€ million, making it one of the top 10 donors. Unlike to financing channelled through ODA, partnership with UN Women has had as principal objective GEWE and a non-statist edge (UNW, 2021). A great example is the signature program, the Spotlight Initiative (2017), which aims at the eradication of all forms of violence against women and girls through a global and multi-year program. This can be considered one of the “innovative ways” highlighted by Bigio and Vogelstein (2020:17) in which gender equality can be addressed transformatively in foreign policy.

3.2. Policy

3.2.1. Formulation

Although the EEAS is nominally committed to “systemically mainstream human rights and gender issues across policy” and the *WPS Agenda* (EEAS, 2016a:11), the policy formulation that guides EEAS’s actions abroad fails to be feminist as it is gender-blind, inattentive to structural inequality and reproductive of patriarchal logics.

Counter Terrorism codes point at first issue in the EEAS’ policy formulation: gender-blindness. As found by Davis (2018) and highlighted in CFFP (2020), the *2005 Counter Terrorism Strategy* as well as the *Directive of the European Parliament and EU Council on combating terrorism*, key guiding documents

for the EEAS work to prevent and address violent extremism, have no single reference to women or men. Similarly, auxiliary documents, such as the *Supporting and Preventing of Radicalisation Leading to Violent Extremism*, ignore the gendered dynamics behind radicalization. Although, at least, recognise that women can become members of extremist organizations (EU Commission, 2016a:03). To make things worse, the *Strengthening Resilience to Violent Extremism* programme proposes empowering women economically as a valuable (and sufficient) strategy to avoid the expansion of violent extremist ideologies economically (EU Commission, 2019b), clearly displaying a neoliberal rationale behind EEAS policy that fails to acknowledge the unique needs of women at risk of radicalization.

A second issue in the formulation of EEAS policy is the lack of consideration for the underlying structures of inequality, evident in the articulation of conflict prevention policies. Davis convincingly demonstrates that gender analysis is dismissed as irrelevant in the planning of conflict prevention interventions (2018:02), which implies that such initiatives hereinafter reproduce the gender power knowledge structures to the detriment of women. Similarly, the 2018 *Conclusions on the Integrated Approach to External Conflicts and Crises* directed to the EEAS, does not recognize structural gender inequality as a key issue in conflict-affected societies and only superficially refers to the *WPS Agenda* in the introduction (Council of the EU, 2018:03). This lack of consideration for structural discrimination is particularly striking for two reasons. First, the aforementioned documents were developed after the adoption of the *UNSCR 1325*, which the EU itself signed. Second, the *EU Global Strategy* (EEAS, 2016a) does recognize the gendered dimensions of conflict and the *Concept Note on Strengthening EU Mediation and Dialogue Capacities* (EEAS, 2009) placed the responsibility on the EEAS to guarantee that conflict mediation missions account for gendered experiences of violence and peace. It follows, that the frameworks that aim at transforming the structures of gender discrimination remain at the periphery of the conflict prevention, mediation, and crisis policies which at the core fails to incorporate transformative articulation.

Third, the solutions proposed by the EEAS policy formulation reproduce masculine and patriarchal logics, that aggravate power relations. As identified in CFFP's research (2020), since 2016, European states have intensified their cooperation around hard military security in the name of a protecting citizens from external threats. Such recent intensification is evident if we compare the *European Security Strategy* (Council of the EU, 2013) to the *EU Global Strategy* (EEAS, 2016a): the former's objective was to "secure Europe for a better world" (Council of the EU, 2013:03), whilst the latter no longer aims at contributing towards a better global framework and focuses exclusively in building a stronger Europe supported by an EU defence community (Davis, 2018:09). For Hoijtink and Muehlenhoff (2019), the EEAS's militarism permeates policy formulation across areas, as can be observed in the response to the migration crisis. The EEAS has systematically presented a militaristic policy to migration as the most empathetic response since it "protects migrants, especially women and

children” (Ibid:11). However, the formulation of *CSDP Operation Sophia* to gather intelligence (against EU privacy norms), and line-up ships, planes, and naval resources in coastal borders (EEAS, 2016b) the month after at least 850 migrants died in the Mediterranean, reproduces patriarchal understandings by presenting women as victims in need of EU saving from dangerous men of colour that “might be terrorists” (Stoltenberg, 2016:01). This relies on a sharp distinction between genders and the denial of women’s subjectivity, since for policy formulation purposes, they only exist in relation to men. Hence the normalization of militaristic approaches to security reproduces narrow definitions of masculine and feminine characteristics, and the power of the former over the latter, which prevents any progress towards feminist transformation.

3.2.2. Implementation

The gender-blindness, lack consideration of structural inequality and reproduction of patriarchal and militaristic logics at the formulation stage lead into significant challenges in sustainably fostering gender equality in the implementation of the EEAS policies.

The gender-blind formulation of Counter Terrorism policy causes poor implementation of an FFP. The “persistent invisibility of gender” is illustrated in the EU’s Radicalisation Awareness Network which has systematically overlooked the interactive relationship between gender and radicalization (Werner and MacRae 2014:01). The consequence is that no anti-radicalization initiative addresses violent masculinities, and all programs lack a gendered in the judiciary and penitentiary treatment of members of terrorist organizations (CFFP, 2019:32). This contrast with the tactical use of gender dynamics by radicalizing groups such as the Islamic State or Boko Haram. As demonstrated by the *UNSC* (2019), radicalization networks pin on hyper-masculinity and male disempowerment to attract men whilst successfully recruiting women by capitalizing on their social marginalization. Hence, incorporating gender considerations into policies is an essential part of addressing the root causes of radicalization and inequality that the EEAS fails to do in practice.

The lack of consideration of gender structures has drastic effects in the EEAS peacebuilding and conflict prevention work. By being gender-neutral, the EEAS’s interventions not only fail to acknowledge the distinct needs of men and women during episodes of violence intensification but also reinforce the structural gender inequalities. CFFP’s research found that The EEAS’s mediation practices have repeatedly framed the participation of women in conflict resolution as the means to account for the experience of women during conflicts, but their right to influence the pacification processes is not subsequently incorporated (2020). In other words, the EEAS includes women to merely hear their experiences but not to ensure that their vision for the future is included going forward. The consequence is peace agreements that look no different from those created without female presence.

The lack of inclusive peacebuilding also leaves the LGBTI+ Community's, needs unattended. In fact, only 14% of the LGBTI+ CSOs in conflict areas that underwent an EEAS mediation process considered that the EEAS mission had successfully guaranteed human rights for LGBTI+ individuals in the post-conflict scenario (ILGA-Europe 2016:15). Consequently, the EEAS precipitates gender-negative effects as the mediation practices reinforce binary understandings of gender and enact male-dictated peace agreements.

Lastly, the focus on militarized responses leads into closer ties with the defence industry, to the detriment of feminist objectives. Along the stronger Europe narrative, the reference to the generation of income, employment and tax revenues across member states normalized the growth of the militaristic culture and EEAS support for defence, weaponry, and intelligence sectors (Besch and Oppenheimer, 2019). Such pro-industry neoliberal approach is reflected in the increasing tendency to cooperate with defence and weapon manufactures and the creation of the European Peace Facility (Hojtink, and Muehlenhoff, 2021). The Facility serves as centre for training and weaponry supply to partner militaries and armed units. This goes against the spirit of a FFP as encouraged militarism entails detrimental consequences for the most vulnerable groups, including women. Some of the gender-negative effects of militarism include: 1) enhanced impunity of military forces, which are notorious for their abuses on women in conflict zones; 2) facilitation of repression against civil society, critical actor in defending women's right; 3) recipients countries can gain hard influence that diminish EU's normative power on human rights; 4) diversion of resources from healthcare, social investments and education towards militaries, and 5) despite claims of tight control, arms transfers can be counterproductive by arming terrorist groups, inciting violent conflict and creating new migration waves, all of which has a particularly tenacious effect on women (Burke, 1988; Stavrianakisy, 2016; Meinzolt and Hjärtström, 2019). As feminists advocate for human security approaches (Tripp et. al., 2013) the emphasis on militaristic practices goes against a feminist implementation of the EU Foreign Policy.

3.3. Gender Parity inside de EEAS

3.3.1. Formulation

The third FFP mechanism highlighted by Bigio and Vogelstein relies on promoting feminist presence in the human resource structures, particularly in leadership positions, to reinforce the gender mainstreaming agenda at the highest level (2020:03). The *Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025* emphasises that "there are still far too few women in leading positions" (EU Commission, 2020a:13) and that the EU institutions must not "be exempt from ensuring gender balance in leadership positions" (Ibid:14). Taking it a step further, the strategy declares that the EEAS (and all Commission's Directorate

Generals) will lead by example by reaching gender parity at all levels of management by the end of 2024 (Ibid). Different strategies are mentioned to achieve such goal ranging from female leadership capacity-building to ensuring equal representation in any events organised by the Commission, including the compulsory training on unintended bias in selection panels implemented by the *Gender and Equal Opportunities* Task Force (EEAS, 2020:19). The policy formulation, however, ignores key issues that would require addressing structural barriers faced by women going into or already at the EEAS, which the Oireachtas coined as the five Cs: Confidence, Childcare, Cash, Candidate Selection and Culture (2013). The focus on affirmative action-like hiring practises and equal pay for equal work proposed in the *Gender Equality Strategy* only touches upon two of those, Candidate Selection and Cash, and therefore, does not formulate holistic solutions for gender inequality at the human resource level of the EEAS.

The *Gender Equal Strategy* does not present an action plan to address a key issue preceding hiring practices: the minority of female applicants, particularly for managements posts, generally attributed to issues of Confidence. As the EEAS Human Resource Report details, for all the AD and AST/SC posts advertised within 2020, women made up 41% of the applicants to non-management vacancies and only 25.5% of the management positions (EEAS,2020a:13). However, no plan is formulated to address the lack of female candidates, which suggest the gender targeted formulation will not transform structural issues. Further, the *Strategy* frames parity as equality, nevertheless, parity is a just a requirement for equality, which means attention must be placed in addressing issues that arise after the hiring of female staff too. Culture and Childcare are central to this. Regarding culture, equality must also be promoted in the norms governing workplace dynamics through, for instance, gender training and no-tolerance approach to harassment, none of which are suggested in the *Gender Equality Strategy*. Gender consciousness across all facets of the workplace is integral to equality and yet the EEAS's policy formulation reproduces the assumption that the presence of women in its workforce is enough to contribute to gender equality. On childcare, flexible work arrangements and additional services such as nurseries are not contemplated in the Strategy and yet are indispensable to guarantee that female staff is retained once hired. Additionally, although the intersectionality of gender is recognised in the *Gender Equality Strategy* (EU Commission, 2020a:02), the *Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion* (EU Commission, 2020d) and *Strategic frameworks*

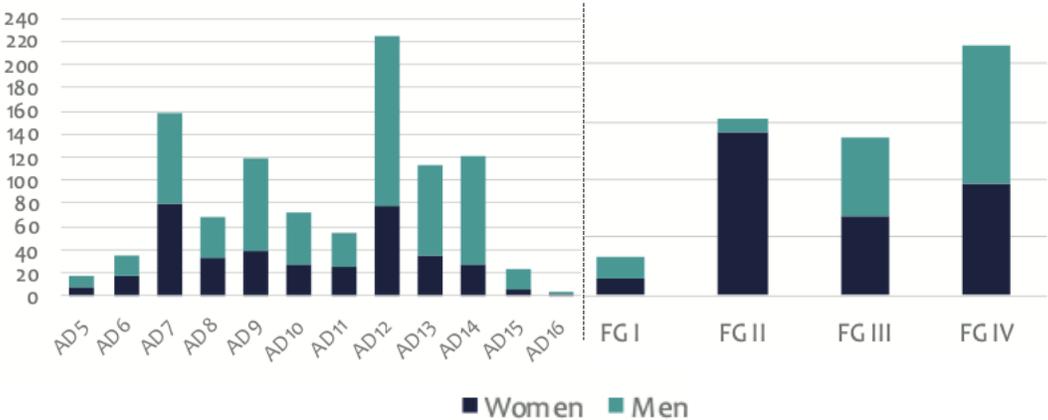
on disability, LGBTI+, Roma inclusion and children’s rights (EU Commission, 2020e) were not linked to the *Strategy* in its conception, which means that the notion that equality is exclusively about women continues to predominate policy articulation and hinders a transformative approach to continuous lack of parity within the EEAS.

3.3.2. Implementation

As the *Gender Equality Strategy* recognizes, there is absence of parity within the EEAS. Although 48.65% of EEAS staff are women (EEAS, 2020:47), there remains concerning gaps that reveal the presence of a glass ceiling faced by the women behind the formulation and implementation of the EU Feminist Foreign Policy.

As illustrated in Graph 2, in 2020, women constituted 37.3% of the AD positions with parity only barely achieved at the lower grades. In the AD5-AD8 bracket, women made up 49.64% of the workforce, a number that goes down as we go up the ladder, being 35% in grades AD9-13 and only 23% for AD14-16. Similar dynamics can be found at the AST/SC categories. Despite a majority of women in the lower ranks, 66.2% for AST2-9, men made up 66.7% of grades AST10-11. Likewise, although women constituted 59.4% of contract agents, men prevailed in the top two grades: 54.9% in FG III and 58.9% for FG IV (Ibid:47-48).

At the delegations and field missions, the gap vis-a-vis the goal of reaching parity by 2024 is even



Graph 2: AD and FG grades disaggregated by gender (EEAS, 2020:47-48)

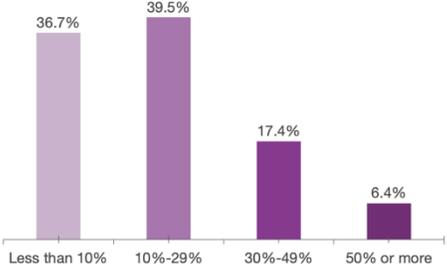
greater. At the outset, the share of EU Female Ambassadors is only 27%. In the 11 civilian missions currently deployed by the EEAS, female personnel make only 25%, there is just 3 women in the deputy heads role and none as Head of Mission. Not surprisingly, out of the current military operations, none are led by women either (Kruse and Pietz, 2020). At this point it is essential to highlight that the UN is delivering female leadership at a much better higher than the EU. Currently, one third of all UN Heads

of peace operations and special envoys are women, and parity has been achieved at the deputy head position (Ibid). The much higher presence of women in the UN Missions, some of whom are European, demonstrates that the poor implementation of gender parity is not an issue of unqualified candidates but of insufficient political will. The implementation of gender parity depends on the nominations by member states, some of which repeatedly produce candidate list with extremely low female-to-male ratio that are then accepted by the EEAS without reproval.

Furthermore, EEAS workforce dynamics reproduce rigid gender roles. Seconded military experts, critical actors in EEAS crisis response, are 75.2% men which reinstates patriarchal ideologies of male protection over vulnerable women (EEAS, 2020:48). Similarly, 98.6% of the local agents hired as drivers are men despite parity in the local agent hiring patterns — 54.5% female (Ibid) —, which signals that, even when men and women are in the same category each is assigned the tasks stereotypically attached to their gender. Further, it must be noted that all above-mentioned data, extracted from the EEAS Human Resources Report 2020, was only disaggregated in the men-women register, reinforcing the already diagnosed binary conceptualization of gender across the EEAS.

Lastly, EEAS gender ambassadors, a key leadership mechanism highlighted by Bigio and Vogelstein (2020:03), are not effectively pushing for gender mainstreaming through the Foreign Policy apparatus. Ronner-Grubačić, the EEAS Adviser to the Secretary-General for Gender and Diversity, exposed this phenomenon. In a conference organised by GlobSec, she celebrated the fact that 13 new Heads of Delegations were women (2021:54:12). However, as the LSE Associate Professor Bicchi reminded her, the real number is 6 female Heads of Delegation to 13 male Heads (2021:56:10). Although empirically anecdotal, the confusion points to a lack of rigorous monitoring within the gender equality promotion structures of the EEAS, missing the opportunity to push for gender transformative parity.

Undeniably gender equality goes beyond parity numbers, after all men can be feminist executors of foreign policy too should they possess gender sensitive expertise. Nevertheless, Deiana and McDonagh’s convincingly argue that is still lacking at the EEAS after studying the fieldwork application of the *WPS Agenda*. They found that although key policy documents such as the *UNSCR1325* are circulated broadly amongst staff, interviewees within the EEAS recognized not having read such documents. Asked for the definition of *WPS*, interviewees tended to present it as something connected exclusively to the UN, or to be applied at their discretion (i.e., “keeping an eye on gender differences” (2018:44). The notion that gender mainstreaming is something sporadic to be looked at occasionally is illustrated in Graph 3 that gathers the responses to the question, “what is the proportion of an average work-week spent on gender equality activities?” posed to EEAS Headquarters and Delegations by the independent evaluation of the EU’s external action support to GEWE between 2010-2018 (Particip GmbH, 2020). Reportedly, staffers counted the total number of dossiers that involved women’s participation under their responsibility to answer the question, without realising all actions are gendered. The underlying assumption within the EEAS, thus, is that working with women suffices to advance an FFP. Framing gender as a “women’s issue”, according to Enloe, is mobilized to “leave masculinity and male privilege ‘off the hook’” (Enloe, 2018:04) and, given male domination over EEAS leadership, this implies that the power hierarchies are not transformed in favour of a feminist EEAS.



Graph 3: Reported share of work week spent on gender equality by EEAS staff (Particip GmbH, 2020:30)

Taken together, the absence of women at leadership positions and a clear failure to transversally institutionalise gender mainstreaming within the EEAS’s work continue to perpetuate gender inequality despite claims of a more gender sensitive EEAS. A male-dominated leadership and mindset reinforces the patriarchal power structures behind inequality and discrimination. Considering that EEAS emphasizes the role of gender equality in leadership for peace and prosperity abroad, the absence of such parity within the EEAS raises the question of double standards and fails to be gender transformative both at home and overseas.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

4.1. Discussion and Recommendations for Future Research

As the analysis has shown, the EU Feminist Foreign Policy falls very far from being gender transformative. Considerable challenges in the formulation and implementation of the Foreign Policy impede that EEAS interactions abroad intersectionally eradicate discrimination in the three areas considered by building on Bigio and Vogelstein's framework: budgeting, policy, and human resources. Gender-blindness, lack of consideration towards structural inequality, cis-heteronormativity and neoliberal assumptions continue to linger on EU Foreign Policy formulation and implementation. Therefore, even when EEAS strategies are allegedly successful (i.e., hindering migrants from reaching the coast or enhancing economic development in neighbour countries), they lead into adverse situations for women and vulnerable groups, by reinforcing structural gendered inequalities. For instance, the EEAS aggravates inequalities by enhancing EU's military capabilities under a rhetoric of strategic autonomy or encouraging neoliberal logics that essentialize the subaltern women and sidestep the EU's responsibility for their vulnerability. Taken together, these dynamics inhibit an effective and comprehensive FPP, and hence the EU does not outdistance the criticism received by other foreign policy for their insufficiently transformative approaches.

This analysis does not aim to render the significant developments of the last decades within the EEAS, and the EU more broadly, irrelevant. To the contrary, the limitations of word count and diversity of inputs imply that this paper strives to be a valuable starting point for further research and developments of the EU Feminist Foreign Policy. Undeniably, the raise of gender mainstreaming initiatives, strategies and consciousness place the EEAS in the right direction towards a gender transformative Foreign Policy. Indeed, several mechanisms mentioned in this paper such as *GAP III*, the *Gender Equality Strategy*, the *Spotlight Initiative* or the *Gender and Equal Opportunities Taskforce* must be recognized as imperfect but essential starting points for an EU Feminist Foreign Policy. Nevertheless, while these praiseworthy developments took place, the number of global actions by the EEAS on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights decreased (European Parliament, 2019) and no female candidate for the Secretary General position was found. The different rhythms in gender mainstreaming across EEAS are both logical but also dangerous as they create internal contradictions and sometimes, as demonstrated with the "add-women-and-stir" budgeting logic, inequalities are reinforced. Hence, it is indispensable that a

truly feminist approach is incorporated at all stages of the foreign policy cycle, covering all initiatives, tools, and actors. After all, as pointed by several research pieces, adopting a FFP is thoroughly in line with the values the Union is found upon and her “identity as a normative power, at whose heart is equality” (Guerrina and Wright, 2016 in CFFP 2020; MacRae, 2010; Pollack, and Hafner-Burton, 2011; Woodward and van der Vleuten, 2014). In fact, the Article 2 of the Treaty of the EU already outlines that the Union builds on the “respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities” (European Union, 2012).

From the analysis of this paper, it follows that euro-policymakers, however, have insufficiently assimilated that an integral feminist approach by the EEAS has the potential to genuinely implement EU’s core values and contribute to a more peaceful and prosperous global order, also for women and marginalized groups. Policy development inquiry must open the door to an EU Feminist Foreign Policy that bases its interactions with states, multilateral institutions, and non-state actors in a non-binary gender conceptualization that places the marginalized groups at the centre. Academia plays a fundamental role in encouraging that process. Future research must explore how, having intersectional lens, EEAS feminist actions abroad can reverse the structural direct and indirect violence caused by hetero-patriarchy, capitalism, racism, and militarism in the world. Moving forward, it is essential that feminist research closes the knowledge gap and spells out that an EU Feminist Foreign Policy will certainly contribute towards a global inclusive peace that incorporates social justice and the elimination of all structural inequalities including those of rights, opportunities, ends and resources for everyone regardless of their gender, age, ability, race, sexuality, and class both inside and outside Europe.

Further research and political redesigning are needed as a truly Feminist Foreign Policy also demands a reconsideration of the scope of the EEAS’s initiatives. The analysis of this paper has identified five priority areas that would set the EU on course to adopt a comprehensive FFP and would benefit from the attention of academic and policy circles: 1) the EEAS must redefine an inclusive, intersectional, and

comprehensive definition for gender and guarantee the institutionalization of the understanding that gender includes the rights of the LGBTI+ community and the accountability of men. 2) EEAS efforts to promote development and peace must have a gender perspective from the formulation stage that considers the gender dimensions in the systems of power of violence, peace, and empowerment. 3) The solutions to international challenges must prioritize human security over militarized approaches in foreign action. Through pacifist approaches the EEAS would be able to re-direct financial resources gender-sensitive civilian threat prevention (including climate change) and reduce the influence of the military industrial complex over Foreign Policy decisions. 4) Promote feminist leadership at all political levels as well as the male ownership of the feminist agenda and values across institutional circles. 5) Accompany gender mainstream work with a set of publicly monitored targets with context specific timelines for transformative impact (for gender indicator design see Thompson, 2020). Defining realistic benchmark in consultation with key stakeholders, particularly Civil Society Organizations, is essential to keep governments (inside and outside Europe) accountable on their commitments towards equality.

These five priorities are by no means exhaustive and should be read as an invitation for horizontal consultations with gender experts, diplomats, civil society, beneficiaries and beyond.

4.2. Conclusion

This paper has critically analysed EEAS contribution to gender equality and women's empowerment through foreign policy. The rich toolkit of FPA — from discourse analysis to quantitative empirics — has scrutinized the budgeting, policy, and workforce of the EEAS to conclude that EU's FFP fails to be gender transformative, using the UNDP Gender Results Effectiveness Scale as reference point. At the formulation stage, the issues emerge from a flawed understanding of gender, inattention to structural inequality and the prioritization of neoliberal interests. Moreover, the implementation widens the gap between the progressive narrative of high diplomatic circles and the long-established

de-contextualized “add-women-and-stir” practices, subordination of women in peacebuilding, transfer of inequality liability to the subaltern, lack of accountability, heightened militaristic approaches and insufficiently gender-sensitive workforce. These issues, along with an underrepresentation of women in the EEAS’s senior management positions and country mission, demonstrate that gender mainstreaming remains in the margins of the EU Feminist Foreign Policy. Consequently, the EEAS not only fails to be gender transformative but in some areas is gender negative, as it aggravates inequality to the detriment of women and marginalized groups, whilst benefitting patriarchal and neoliberal structures.

The conclusions of this paper must be framed within the greater IR debates that discuss the role of human rights promotion in the relations between states. The paper suggests that the fight against structural causes of insecurity (of which gender inequality is just one example) by multilateral institutions (with the EU as case study) follows an instrumental and neo-liberal economic logic that fails to put the most vulnerable at the centre. Consequently, the empowerment of the subaltern is pursued due to its added value to Western liberal policy objectives rather than as a matter of human justice at the international level. This situation creates an evident double standard that, beyond being morally reprehensible, enhances development stagnation, inequality, and insecurity. For instance, countries without rigorous human rights doctrine capitalize on such contradictions to erode the normative power of liberal institutions and continue implementing policies that discriminate the most vulnerable whilst non-state violent actors equally captivate the frustration of those caught between the narrative of equality at the highest diplomatic levels and their marginalization in policy and practice. In this way, multilateral institutions not only fail to effectively fight structural causes of insecurity but in fact, enhance old ones and create new ones.

In conclusion, this paper provides evidence in support of the rational realist argument that normative ideas are captured by powerful foreign policy actors to legitimize their egoistic interests. The duty towards the most vulnerable gets lost amidst the pursue of power in the international arena. The space limitations of this paper prevent decisively concluding whether this instrumentalization of the human rights doctrine arises unconsciously as result of the cosmopolitan discourse in liberal institutions, but

we see hints of a collective myth in the self-perception of these institutions who define themselves as “champions” in defending and promoting the rights of others (EU Commission, 2015a:16). The increasing recognition of the relational and socially created ontology of the oppressing systems of power in the official narrative, however, is encouraging. This is an essential first step to place the lived experiences of the subaltern at the centre of foreign policy regimes that promote human rights for all. Feminist constructive research has the potential to contribute to this transformation by spelling out a re-envision of national, regional and global interests away from power to elevate equality as the foundation for a peaceful world.

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