

Expanding the Ambit of Feminist Foreign Policy in India: An Intersectional Framework for Non-Traditional Security Challenges

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Abstract

This article considers the necessity of expanding the feminist foreign policy (FFP) framework as a response to emerging non-traditional security challenges facing India. Instead of gender and security being viewed in binary terms, I suggest an intersectional approach that includes human rights, sustainable development, and inclusive governance structures. Using a comparative analysis of existing FFP approaches, and examining India's development partnerships, climate diplomacy, health cooperation, and trade agreements, I demonstrate the potential for allowing a more expansive feminist framework to strengthen India's ability to respond to complex security challenges while addressing equitable outcomes for marginalized groups. I argue that India's growing footprint at the global level, provides both opportunity and accountability to develop innovative pathways for feminist foreign policy that go beyond Western frameworks.

Introduction

We are experiencing unprecedented challenges in the contemporary international system that are affecting non-traditional aspects of security and moving further from traditional definitions of security and traditional response policies. As India emerges as a prominent global power and expands its presence within multilateral organizations, the nation has a unique opportunity to develop transformative approaches to international relations. However, the presence of traditional structures of power and narrow definitions of security can still limit policy frameworks in response to interrelated challenges that impact marginalized populations disproportionately.

The concept of feminist foreign policy has gained traction around the globe; however, it is still bound by Western interpretations, and binary conceptions of gender that do not capture the complexities of contemporary security challenges and power structures. Due to these limitations, the focus on non-traditional challenges, namely climate change, pandemics,

economic hardships, and forced migrants, becomes very evident. Specifically, these threats require a purposeful understanding of the intersectional vulnerabilities that accompany the challenges, and the systemic positions of power and privilege that shape the security context. This paper asserts that feminist foreign policy in India requires considerable expansion to take into account the rising non-traditional security threats. By employing an intersectional lens to consider how vulnerability is multilayered and the threats to security are interwoven, India can create more robust policy responses that advance national interests and global equality. This shift is not simply a question of morals; it is a strategic necessity as it responds to complicated threats posed to humanity in the 21st century.

Historical Foundations and Conceptual Developments

First Movers and Institutional Memory: India's interaction with feminist perspectives within international relations originally predated current conceptions of feminist foreign policy by many decades. Dr. Hansa Mehta's timely

intervention to change international law's language in the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1947-48) stands as an early demonstration of India's involvement with feminist arguments in international law. Dr. Mehta's successful move to change Article 1 from "All men are born free and equal" to "All human beings are born free and equal" represents a cornerstone in feminist foreign policy practice (Patel, 2023).

It serves as a historical example of India's potential for international leadership on gender issues, but transformative policy development has not undertaken the charge to build on this legacy. The absence of progress from early iterations of progressive positions in India to present-day silos of policy is illustrative of the structural limitations operating within international relations discourse and practice.

Theoretical Foundations and Disciplinary Convergences:

There are various disciplinary traditions that offer the theoretical foundations for extending feminist foreign policy, which provides a rich analytical frame for managing contemporary security dilemmas. Feminist international relations scholarship has created a rich space for addressing masculinist tendencies of state actors and excluding gender from the security discourse (Tickner 1992; Enloe 2014). Constructivism provides useful methods of analysis, including consideration of how security as a concept is socially constructed and offers possibilities for developing and institutionalizing alternative conceptualizations of security. The further addition of Gramscian analysis into the feminist and constructivist approaches offers a way to recognize how hegemonic structures maintain authority through cultural and ideological mechanisms while suggesting pathways of counter-hegemonic resistance in the form of feminist policy frameworks.

Finally, this interdisciplinary approach recognizes that feminist foreign policy cannot be completely understood using a single theoretical prism, but rather through synthetic frameworks that are capable of engaging with the complexity of contemporary international relations. The

potential for feminist, constructivist, and critical theory to be able to be synthetic, provide analytical methods to understand the structural impediments to feminist policies but also provide analytical tools for experiments in social change.

Conceptual Framework and Definitional Specificity

Redefining Feminist Foreign Policy: Feminist foreign policy has been couched in essentialist views of gender, and often has an overly simplified focus on formal representation. Feminism can, and should, include much more than symbolic inclusion; this study takes a broader definition that focuses on structural change. Feminist foreign policy captures "a bottom-up re-thinking of traditional power structures, not limiting, or often binary, interpretation of the word 'Feminist, to include a more intersectional ideology" that centres human rights and recognizes unequal impacts on vulnerable populations. This definition emphasizes multiple important aspects of structural analysis which looks at power in an intersectional way, intersectional sensitivity recognizing how compounding forms of oppression are interrelated, and the transformative element that its approach seeks transformation, not marginal change. All of these aspects provide contrast to liberal feminist approaches that use discourses of either acceptance into the status quo, or against the status quo roots of inclusion in current norms or institutions.

Non-Traditional Security and Human Security:

The expansion of boundaries of security as a concept, beyond military challenges, is significant in theorizing and practice of international relations. Non-traditional security assesses issues like climate change, pandemics of infectious disease, economic inequality, social displacement, and scarcity of resources - often disproportionately impacting and creating vulnerabilities for marginalized groups that necessitate collaboration for action.

Human security provides a framework for analysis of security issues that is premised in realizing, and prominent as central, health and

welfare of peoples and communities, as posed to state security. This is a strong connection with feminist foreign policy, as human security in security discourses poses the experiences with marginalized groups as notably reflective of neighbouring areas of social action, and is a through line of security for all peoples and communities. Conceptually and theoretically, the linkages between feminist foreign policy and human security are emerging in policy practice as possible sources of emergence for different theorizing and factions of practice.

Intersectionality and Implicit in Policy:

Although the proposal of intersectionality was articulated by Kimberlé Crenshaw to recognize how identity categories such as race and gender intersect to mediate or shape experiences and life chances, intersectionality provides a rationale of working through the implications of security issues. Intersectional analysis includes consideration of how many issues mediated by various forms of oppression by gender, class, ethnicity, faith, nationalism etc. can intersect to create vulnerabilities, or resilience.

This analytic is quite explicitly calling us out of the dualistic positions in embedded thinking about both gender and security. Both are variably relevant and context dependent. When we think about best and effective policy addressing unique and different experiences of security for different communities, this blur of boundaries in policy responses has no binary and different groups differences in the ways in which policy can differently realise security and tenderness.

Literature Review and Analytical Gaps

Current Scholarship and Theoretical Gaps:

Our current scholarly understanding of feminist foreign policy has developed our understanding of the relational aspects of gender and international relations, and dispersed some significant analytical gaps. Most current literature has examined issues of gender in the context of feminist foreign policy by only analysing the political and institutional aspects of representation and inclusion, hence why Baruah and Bhidé (2022) refer to this as "tokenism", as

they do not recognise power relations relevant to their engagement.

Unquestioning the use of existing models of feminist foreign policies, or Western models of feminist foreign policy, creates additional siloed thinking about feminist foreign policy, which prevents understanding how feminist foreign policy will account for new and diverse cultural and political contexts. Sweden's feminist foreign policy was a new model of a feminist foreign policy approach, then making sense of Sweden's own unique political and cultural context to align with domestic political context. Just as Canada is an example of a feminist international assistance policy which offers significant insights of the Canadian political context coupled with different constraints from emerging 'geopolitical powers' like India.

Analytical Gaps of Non-traditional Security:

Behera's (2004) assessment of traditional security and non-traditional security issues that are often treated and studied as binary, and also fail to engage with any gendered, non-traditional security issues, illustrates an important implication for how this study can learn from gendered analytical as a gap this study wishes to redress. The segmentation of security issues undermines the inter-connections of realisations of human security, as linked with traditional security issues, restricted in pathways for effective policy strategies for these issues in their totality.

The current scholarship on India's foreign policy has similar constraints, with gender analysis almost completely absent from the field of international relations. Although research on India's trade policy, climate diplomacy work, and development partnerships has developed much further, gender/ feminist analyses remain limited, thus providing openings for original analytical contributions.

Theoretical Synthesis and Innovation: This article contributes to this body of scholarship by developing and expanding synthetic frameworks that synthesize feminist, constructivist, and critical traditions to examine foreign policy challenges. Using the feminist paradigm to

synthesize an understanding of contemporary security challenges, rather than to treat these theoretical traditions as competing paradigms, is an important unique contribution.

The integration of intersectional analysis in studies of foreign policy also represents a unique way of contributing, as bodies of work that consider intersectional frameworks to alter international relations theory and analysis have yet to be fully realized. This synthesis can provide analytical frameworks that share where the complexity of security challenges originates, and proposes policy frameworks to respond to their complexity.

Methodology and Research Design

Comparative and Cross-Cultural Methodology:

This academic study uses comparative methodology to assess different implementations of feminist foreign policy across different nation-states. By assessing frameworks of policy, institutional structures, and indicators evaluating outcomes that operate across, or within different country contexts, the comparative method is concerned with both identifying and sharing examples of best practices, while remaining cognizant of the need to be contextually responsive.

The cross-cultural element of this study is important to note here, as feminist principles can manifest themselves differently across cultural and political contexts. The comparative methodology taken in this study does not presume that women or feminist agency functions or is manifested as in Western models, but rather will investigate how feminist principles could be interpreted and enacted within different cultural frames, while retaining their underlying commitments to equity and justice. Interpretive Social Science Approach

The interpretive social science approach values the understanding of social phenomena through the meaning and lived experience of participants, rather than simply as an observed behaviour. In particular, this interpretation acknowledges the limitations of only using measurable indicators of policy success, and that policy is only successful

when policies translate to something relevant to a community's lived experience.

In terms of feminist foreign policy analysis, interpretive approaches begin to lay the groundwork for a deeper understanding of how policies impact different populations that have been marginalized in different ways, and how policy approaches are understood and implemented. Interpretive approaches put an emphasis on participatory methods of inquiry, and the production of knowledge at the community level.

Feminist Research Methodologies: Feminist methodologies emphasize participatory approaches, reflexivity, and power within the research process. This approach recognizes that no research is objective and, therefore, the social positionality of the researcher will always shape their analysis of research produced, requiring explicit consideration of how research questions are produced, and how findings and analysis are interpreted.

Feminist methodologies applied to foreign policy analysis require critical consideration of the voices included in policy discussions, and which perspectives hold value in decision-making processes. This encourages a deeper appreciation for including the voices of individuals who may be marginalized in policy development and evaluation.

Case Studies of Implementing Feminist Foreign Policy

Gender-Relevant Climate Diplomacy: The climate diplomacy initiatives pursued by the country of India highlights both the opportunities and challenges that continue to remain in approaches to examine gender in environmental policy. The International Solar Alliance example of the "Solar Mamas" initiative operated out of the Barefoot College, in Ajmer, Rajasthan, represents an innovative method of connecting climate action with gender empowerment. This project trains women from developing countries to set up and maintain solar panels, producing environmental benefits and economic benefits for marginalized women. The commencement of the project included a focus on training local

women as master trainers, which creates sustainable mechanisms for knowledge transfer, and builds local capacity. However, the limited scope of these projects highlight the need to systematically engage with gendered considerations in climate policies across India and beyond, and identify scales of intervention that are more significant in the context of broader promises made on climate change.

The project's ability to deliver meaningful impact is indicative of some of the most critical principles for feminist climate policy, including: community-based delivery systems that build local capacity; engagement with local women that uses economic empowerment strategies to provide sustainable livelihoods; and systematic and equitable engagement with marginalized peoples through knowledge transfer mechanisms. These principles could be used to identify how to develop feminist climate policies, and could be upscale and used in further India's climate diplomacy agenda.

Development Partnerships and Gender:

India's development partnerships which are implemented through Lines of Credit (LOCs), Grant-in-Aid programmes and the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Programme has opened up some important opportunities for gender to become systemic. Current actions under Goal 5 indicate capacity for gender responsive development partnerships, and demonstrates areas for improvement.

There are also the India-UN Development Partnership Fund and multilateral initiatives through G20 and IBSA, which allow India to pursue initiatives focused on promoting gender equality across energy, business, agriculture, and infrastructure. However, the focus on gender remains largely superficial, that is to say, much of the emphasis remains on women's engagement rather than addressing structural inequalities. More robust approaches would require formal gender impact analyses on all development programs, planning processes that would include 'marginalized' communities, and outcome measures that count both quantitative aspects of category inclusion and qualitative measures of

empowerment. Developing regional modalities of cooperation, such as the proposed non-governmental gender and development dialogue under the BBIN Initiative, would provide opportunities for more formalized gender integration.

Health Diplomacy and Pandemic Response:

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the gendered nature of health emergencies and showcased potential feminist policy responses. Canada's response to the pandemic utilizing a feminist international assistance policy response, which included \$1.5 million to the WHO and \$40 million for shelters for women and for centres for sexual assault, exemplifies how feminist frameworks can enhance the effectiveness of pandemic responses.

India's health diplomacy initiatives, including vaccine diplomacy and health system strengthening programs, provide opportunities for the same gender-sensitive approaches. However, most initiatives are still not addressing how health emergencies impact women and, disproportionately, community populations on marginalized spectrums of identities, upon which the health emergency response relies on, thereby undermining the overall effectiveness and sustainability of the health emergency response. A feminist perspective to health diplomacy would require that there would be no undue differential impact on pooled health emergency populations, the exclusion of gender-based violence prevention measures in health emergency responses, and any health system strengthening approaches be participatory plans to ensure they reflect the needs and the preferences of the communities.

Trade Policy and Gender Mainstreaming:

India's growing number of free trade agreements is providing considerable opportunities for gender mainstreaming that are still being underutilized. Gender integration into trade policy is the natural follow-on to India's national commitment to "women led development" and existing processes for gender budgeting. Current negotiations with the UK, EU, Canada, Gulf Cooperation Council, Israel, and Australia

are providing immediate opportunities for gender linked provisions. These include gender integration in the preambles and general aims and objectives of agreements; cooperation clauses that include gender as a component; and provision specifically to enhance women's participation in the economy.

Establishing gender chapters in trade agreements consume some of the objectives to improve the economic empowerment of women; raising levels of labor standards; provide means to address gender-based discrimination in trade related employment; and the means to audit gender impact in the policy areas engagement in trade. However, all these measures should be designed to ensure they are not just tokenism, and are aimed at substantive changes in the negotiations.

Regional Cooperation and Institutional Innovation

BRICS and Gender Mainstreaming: India's chairmanship role in the BRICS represents opportunities to trail blaze different pathways to gender mainstreaming within cooperation frameworks involving emerging economies. These pathways include approaches to development financing that are gender-sensitive; technology transferring in a gender-sensitive way; and sharing knowledge in ways that are gender-sensitive that build new modalities of South to South cooperation.

The BRICS initiatives currently being undertaken in the New Development Bank and the BRICS Partnership for a New Industrial Revolution provide possibilities for moving gender perspectives to the forefront of emerging economies cooperation framework. However, these institutions are fundamentally male-dominated and follow-up initiatives are often traditional economic indicators which tend to marginalize gender.

More systematic gender integration into BRICS will require:

- Gender focal points in BRICS;
- Gender sensitive indicators to measure effectiveness of cooperation; and

- Space for civil society to engage in BRICS.

These mechanisms could be a pathway for both women's and gender rights based ideologies to formally engage with the institutionalization of BRICS principles that could then serve as both examples of articulating gender friendly cooperation models within institutionalized emerging economy frameworks.

South Asian Regional Cooperation: South Asian regional cooperation initiatives, including both SAARC and sub-regional initiatives such as the BBIN Initiative, are opportunities for developing regional strategies for feminist foreign policy. Engagement with various intersecting challenges among South Asian countries, ranging from climate vulnerability, economic inequality, and social dislocation, make regional cooperation necessary, and would benefit from a feminist policy approach to these interconnected issues.

A proposed non-governmental gender and development dialogue across the BBIN Initiative, is an example of a new civil society platform for exploring regional cooperation; and may allow the introduction of non-governmental regional cooperation that adds women-led components to inter-governmental regional cooperation in a way that advances different interests and brings different issues into regional policy dialogue.

Engagement in regional cooperation around non-traditional security threats a feminist foreign policy approach would bring relevance to consideration of how these threats intersect with communities across a regional reality, as well as how regional responses can be constructed to promote equity and inclusion. Feminist foreign policy frameworks allow us to unpack these realities while trying to identify ways to strengthen policy responses.

Challenges and Constraints to Implementation

Structural and Institutional Barriers: The implementation of extended feminist foreign policy is faced with considerable structural and institutional barriers within the foreign policy

establishment of India. Women's existing marginalization across policy institutions, coupled with a historically male-dominated international diplomatic and security institutions, and in some cases the prioritization of traditional security issues over non-military threats has an exacerbating effect related to institutionalization of feminist policy perspectives.

The challenges related to bureaucratic inertia or risk-averse institutions are known to resist policy innovations, particularly innovations that challenge existing processes. Institutional change to promote feminist policy perspectives require: 1) policy reform, and 2) changing the institution's culture to address the possibility and acceptability of alternative views of security, effectiveness, and legitimacy. Additionally, the establishment of professional training programs and capacity-building initiatives for diplomatic representatives, the development of gender-sensitive policy analysis tools, and the establishment of an institutional framework for implementation of feminist policies, are vital strategies for addressing these barriers. However, as with training and capacity initiatives, the extent to which these resources develop will depend on the ongoing commitment to political engagement and institutional leadership.

Political and Cultural Constraints: Feminist foreign policy also faces political and cultural constraints that require caution. In particular, feminist policy initiatives may be dismissed by conservative political forces as Western impositions or an attack on local cultures. This requires careful framing of initiatives that reflects the longstanding feminist traditions in the location and engages with the cultural norms as compatible.

Establishing culturally appropriate feminist policy frameworks can only come from engagement with local women's movements and feminist organizations/civil society organizations that understand the specific constraints and opportunities of the context. This can emphasize the indigenous feminist traditions while avoiding cultural relativism and Western imperialism.

Examples of political constraints include that, in most cases, the incentives produced by elections do not provide sufficient incentive for foreign policy innovation, nor do they see feminist foreign policy as a priority among competing electoral priorities by the government. Furthermore, developing a constituency for feminist foreign policy requires promotion, public education, and evidence-based advocacy that demonstrates the benefits for Canadians of this type of foreign policy approach for the government.

Resource and Capacity Constraints

Implementing an expanded feminist foreign policy will require significant investment on human resources, institutional capacity, and program funding that exceeds existing budgets. The gender expertise of the diplomatic institutions, development of monitoring and evaluation systems, and funding feminist programs are all very resource intensive.

Existing budgets for foreign policy initiatives presently do not include gender related costs, meaning that gender mainstreaming will likely be ineffective. The advancement of gender-responsive budgeting for foreign policy also has the potential to enhance resource allocations and at the same time reaffirm the institution's commitment to the principles of feminism.

Capacity constraints include not having sufficient personnel with diplomatic capacity and expertise in gender issues, along with limited access to tools for gender-sensitive policy analysis. Investment and effort directed toward education and training programmes to develop partnerships between the Department of Foreign Affairs and international academic institutions and civil society organisations to develop frameworks for knowledge sharing, has the potential to alleviate these constraints.

Policy Recommendations and Implementation Options

Institutional Reform and Capacity Building: The successful application of an expanded and fully formed feminist foreign policy in India requires rigorous institutional reform within the foreign policy establishment.

For example, the establishment of a formal gender unit within the Ministry of External Affairs, staffed with gender expertise and given appropriate resources, could serve as a policy centre to offer research, analysis and other forms of support to assist with policy development and implementation in this area.

Another possibility to help with institutional reform and capacity building is to incorporate gender training into foreign policy diplomacy education programmes for both new hires and existing personnel for the Department of Foreign Affairs. This may build institutional capacity to apply feminist policy analysis and develop feminist policies, by equipping current and future personnel with information and training on gender theory and the practical application of developing gender-sensitive policy.

The existing frameworks for gender-sensitive policy analysis, including impact assessments and monitoring indicators, would need to be further developed to adequately implement feminist policy. Each tool should seek to accommodate gender-sensitive policy development for multiple areas of policy, accompanied by regular updates based on plan implementation experiences. Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships

Feminist foreign policy depends on multi-stakeholder partnerships. A feminist foreign policy needs partners which include civil society organisations, academic organisations and international partners which already have rigorous feminist policy frameworks. Such partners contribute expertise, resources, and legitimacy to feminist policy work.

Civil society partnerships would be particularly meaningful because they will help ensure that feminist foreign policies actually respond to the needs and priorities of marginalized communities. Institutionalising civil society input into the foreign policy decision process through the creation of a formal mechanism for consultation, or an advisory committee where civil society actors would have an active role, would be very constructive.

International partnerships can provide opportunities for valuable learning and technical assistance from states that have enacted feminist foreign policy initiatives. Ideally, these partnerships will draw from one another, rather than focus on one way of drawing from former colonizers. Indian innovations could benefit feminist foreign policy formation elsewhere.

Pilot Programmes and Scaling: Engaging in pilot programmes in select policy areas would promote the effectiveness of feminist approaches while building institutional confidence and capacity. Successful pilots could then be scaled, and adapted, to other policy areas, and provide momentum for institutional change more broadly.

The selection of policy pilot areas should focus on policy areas with the potential of rapid success, while also addressing meaningful policy problems. Climate diplomacy, health cooperation, and trade policy offer great potential as initial pilot areas due to existing policy attention and widespread opportunities for gender inclusion. Scaling practices should include provisions for capturing lessons from pilot programs, ways to adapt effective models to other contexts, and strategies for building political and institutional buy-in for scaling up. Ongoing evaluative work to track and document pilot practices would contribute to a burgeoning literature on feminist foreign policy.

Future Directions and Research Agenda

Theoretical Development and Innovation: The field of feminist foreign policy will continue to expand with theory development, interrogations of how we understand the relationships between gender, security, and international relations will also develop theoretically. Future work should focus on the ways feminist principles may apply to nascent policy areas, such as artificial intelligence governance, space policy, and cyber security.

The combined use of intersectional analysis and foreign policy studies are a significant area for theoretical innovation. Future work could examine how various forms of marginalization connected and interacted with one another to

shape foreign policy and foreign relations, and how policy design may or may not serve the needs of these various forms of marginalization.

Non-Western feminist foreign policy theories can contribute to processes of decolonizing international relations scholarship, whilst providing alternative routes to understand contemporary challenges. Non-Western feminist foreign policy theories should be informed by indigenous feminist traditions and work with a global feminist scholarship, rather than simply taking critique or lessons from the global North.

Empirical Research and Policy Evaluation:

Building evaluation for feminist foreign policy will need attention to informed evaluation methods, indicators of quantifiable performance or assessment of qualitative impacts. Future research should focus on how to build an evaluation framework which can capture multi-layered assessment of policy impact.

Comparative research on different implementations of feminist foreign policy, such as through the examples above, will be able to identify political and practical challenges and successes and maintain structural or local limitations within frameworks for response or hope although it understands the contextual differences. Community policy examples, with all of their successes and failures and challenges, will add to the knowledge of what feminists do and do not want to happen.

Longitudinal studies of the impacts of feminist foreign policy will be able to provide insights into impacts and the longevity of impacts. Longitudinal research would include an extended period of documentation and data collection for several years and decades.

Policy Innovation and Experimentation

There is a key area for future development in developing new policy tools and mechanisms for feminist foreign policy implementation. This can involve new diplomacy methods, new funding mechanisms, and new partnership structures.

The use of technology in feminist foreign policy implementation can create new opportunities for innovation and new challenges. Digital diplomacy tools, social media engagement

strategies, and data analytics can enhance the effectiveness of policy, but require consideration of issues such as the digital divide and privacy.

Any development of regional and global networks of feminist foreign policy practitioners would allow for knowledge sharing and collaborative engagement on problems that they are tackling. These networks can involve government and non-government actors working on issues that pertain to feminist foreign policy.

Conclusion,

The expansion of India's feminist foreign policy framework to address non-traditional security challenges represents both a necessary and significant opening for transformative action. The complexity and interrelatedness of contemporary security threats related to climate change, pandemic diseases, and economic inequality demand policy approaches that can address the complexity of threats while taking into account factors that undermine equitable outcomes for marginalized populations.

This analysis has shown that the traditional security frameworks and existing narrow conceptualizations of feminist foreign policy cannot adequately respond to non-traditional security threats. A potential response includes the continued development of intersectional approaches that combine feminist, human security, and critical theory frameworks in ways that provide a more important set of analytical and policy tools. India's growing global status brings both opportunities and obligations to lead innovative feminist foreign policy alternatives that move away from Western paradigms without abandoning fundamental commitments to equity and justice. The historical example of Dr Hansa Mehta's impactful intervention when the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was drafted, confirms India's potential for global leadership on gender, and the recent advances in climate diplomacy, development, and regional cooperation provide building blocks for additional feminist policies.

But there are considerable and systemic challenges related to gender equity, and the fulfillment of India's feminist foreign policy

objectives will require continuing commitments to institutional change, building capacity, and sustaining multi-stakeholder partnerships. The structural and cultural obstacles to feminist policies are considerable and we cannot new and innovative programming without working through them. Constructing pilot programs, building learning networks, and generating political and institutional will are critical elements of the process to induce momentum for change.

By pursuing feminist foreign policy, at minimum India could improve our capacity to manage complex security issues, improve equity for women and marginalized populations, and contribute to global innovations in international relations theory and practice. As Kofi Annan noted in a different context, there can be no sustainable security without addressing and addressing the needs and experiences of all people, especially those who bear the burden of established power relations.

Moving forward will require additional theoretical thinking, action-oriented research, and policy experimentation. Integrating an intersectional framework into foreign policy research, developing appropriate conceptual frameworks for gender-sensitive foreign policies, and establishing valid methodologies for evaluating are essential, and actionable, research priorities.

Ultimately, extending feminist foreign policy agendas in India is not just about achieving a policy program, but a deep -- and long overdue -- transformation in how we think about international relations. At its essence, reforming international relations means focusing on human dignity, equity, and justice. This radical reorientation of our thinking will take a community commitment across a spectrum of individuals, positions, agencies, and interests, but it is worth the investment of sustained change that promises opportunities for India, the international community, and marginalized peoples.

The global realities of the twenty-first century compel us to seek innovation in policy responses

that move beyond conventional ways of thinking and approaches to practice. Feminist foreign policy, especially if developed in intersectional ways, offers pathways forward to creating any number of innovative responses while ushering the rights-based transformation necessary to create more equitable and sustainable international systems.

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