

Feminist Foreign Policy: A Comparative Study of Nepal and Sweden

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LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

I certify that this dissertation entitled “Feminist Foreign Policy: A Comparative Study of Nepal and Sweden” was prepared by Ms. Kartika Yadav under my supervision. I hereby recommend this dissertation for final examination by the Research Committee, Department of International Relations and Diplomacy, Tribhuvan University, in fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of MASTER’S IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND DIPLOMACY.

Professor Khadga K.C., Ph.D.
Supervisor

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is my own work and that it contains no materials previously published. I have not used its materials for the award of any kind and any other degree. Where other author's sources of information have been used, they have been acknowledged.

Signature:

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Kartika Yadav

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ABSTRACT

This research was conceptualized to understand how gendered power relations affect international politics and foreign policy through predisposed notions and socially constructed gender norms and roles.

Nepal's foreign policy has primarily been dominated by dealing with geopolitical threats and discoursing on maintaining equidistance with its two neighbours- China and India. Its key occupation has been on how to assert its independence when two strong forces constantly pose a threat due to its landlockedness and trade dependence. In the wake of this scenario, a feminist foreign policy seems out of touch in the realpolitik being practised, and hence hardly any focus has been given to it- except for the recent quota system in politics, administration and other state structures and institutions. This research aims to delve deeper into how gender power relations undergird male dominated values and ethos in foreign policy on why it is necessary to bring about a radical change in the foreign policy of Nepal i.e. through a Feminist Foreign Policy.

This research looks into Sweden's feminist foreign policy, the framework it has adopted, and the areas of its operation. Through the gauging of how foreign policies of both countries differ and coincide, the research aims to enunciate the necessity of Nepali foreign policy to include women as active actors by building on feminist theory of international relations.

Keywords: Feminism, Foreign Policy, Gender, International relations, Nepal, Sweden

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS/ ACRONYMS

FP- Foreign Policy

FFP- Feminist Foreign Policy

GDP- Gross Domestic Product

IR- International Relations

NLFS- Nepal Labour Force Survey

SNA- System of National Accounts

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Introduced in the nineteenth century, feminism in international relations theory is a particularly new phenomenon. The history of feminism has been divided into three waves primarily with a fourth one emerging in the recent years. The first occurred in the 19th and early 20th century advocating for women's right to vote. The second wave in the 1960s and 1970s was concerned with women's liberation movement for equal legal and social rights. The third wave taking place in the 1990s was a continuum to the second one (Humanities, 2018). The three waves of feminism across the last few decades helped women assert their rights in domestic politics, and establish their place and position in the world with time. A fourth wave is also believed to have propagated in 2012, which basically called for "justice against assault and harassment, for equal pay for equal work, and for bodily autonomy". The feminists of the fourth wave have focused on sexual harassment, body shaming and rape culture and have often used print, news, and social media to collaborate and mobilize, speak against abusers of power, and provide equal opportunities for girls and women (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2019).

Nepal- a country with almost 300 years of history, has had a rich and profound past, with the country going through extensive socio-political changes over time. The foreign policy of Nepal however has never been explicitly stated except in a few remarkable moments. Its geostrategic location for instance, since its unification been a matter of reflection and talk. Any discussion over Nepal, its foreign policy or its security strategy primarily only revolves with its tricky location that lies between China and India.

This research aims to uncover why Nepal needs to look beyond its immediate physical proximities and security strategy and focus on a feminist agenda when it comes to its foreign policy. The provision of reservation to ensure female participation in politics, administration and

other state apparatus has only now helped in a sort of parity in these areas, but how far has it gone to actually include their voices, opinions, and perspective in effect? Hardly. This research will focus on the equality of opportunity and equality of outcome are still two polar ends in practice. Emphasizing on feminism and the fact that it is more than merely for women, and their issues and Nepal should prioritize a feminist foreign policy for a structural change in the way it deals with its national politics, economics and society as a whole.

The traditional and quite necessary elements of “sovereignty”, “territorial integrity”, “independence”, and “economic wellbeing and prosperity” in a foreign policy have always been on the Nepal’s agenda. Even with the current Government of Nepal whose aim is “Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepalis”, a similar rhetoric can be observed. However, the problem has always been that any government or leading entity has only focused on the whats and not hows. There is an urgency of formulation of a target group with initiatives and activities that uplift their status, and on a tangible level in a sustainable manner.

The premise of this study is how the social norm has ascribed traditional gender roles to men and women, with men having the control over resources and women being primary caretakers of the family, with no self- agency of her own. A World Bank study “On Norms and Agency: Conversations about Gender Equality with Women and Men in 20 Countries” covered 20 countries in all world regions, where over 4,000 women and men, in remote villages and dense urban neighborhoods, in more than 500 focus groups, discussed the effects of gender differences and inequalities on their lives. It found out that “despite diverse social and cultural settings, traits and expectations of the ideal “good” woman and “good” man were remarkably similar across all sample urban and rural communities. Participants acknowledged that women are actively seeking equal power and freedom, but must constantly negotiate and resist traditional expectations about what they are to do and who they are to be.” (World Bank, 2012). In doing so, Sweden being

the pioneer country in explicitly launching its foreign policies as a feminist one, its FFP is studied and exemplified.

Statement of the Problem

The substratum of this study will be how Nepal has not paid due attention to its female population and their true empowerment. Representation in politics and other state apparatus like the bureaucracy has ensured participation, but the politics of gender, which “comprises a closer look at the power relations behind definitions of—and presumed causal relations between—sex, gender, and sexuality” (Encyclopaedia, 2008) in practice, is still dominant. A major argument presented for this is that women, even the ones in power, is their inability to effectively use their positions for effecting change. It should however be understood that women have not been capacitated for the role. In order for a woman to contribute meaningfully, there needs to be quality education, liberty to exercise decision-making, conducive social conditions to exercise her free will and agency. In the name of representation, women are being catapulted from homes to figures managing the affairs of the state without fulfilling the gap of equipping them with the necessary resources, grooming, freedom or the confidence to tackle on the matters at hand.

Therefore, it is imperative for the feminist agenda to be a top priority in the foreign policy of Nepal, if it wants equal and sustainable development to take place.

Research Questions

1. What is the scenario of women in state apparatuses in Nepal and Sweden?
2. What are the strategic approaches that can be employed in a feminist foreign policy?
3. Why is a foreign policy with a feminist agenda necessary for the overall development of a country by looking at the best practices of Sweden?

Objective of the Study

1. To assess the current scenario of women in state apparatuses of Nepal and Sweden.
2. To analyze how power relations between men and women lead to the formation of values of a country's policies- domestic and foreign- that are negligent of women's identity and existence and their needs to co-exist.
3. To explore why a foreign policy with feminist agenda is necessary for the overall development of a country by looking at the best practices of Sweden.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Critiques to main approaches of Mainstream IR

Feminist IR theorists have criticized the realism theory of IR due to its state-centric approach. Classical realism which was mainly based on the works of Thucydides, Machiavelli and Hobbes typically lies on assumptions of human nature, but human nature as the nature of man (Shepherd, 2010). The argument that traditional IR theories have only ever been concerned about conflict, anarchy, competition and fear has been put forth by feminist IR scholars (Aydin, 2016, p.2). Moreover there is the criticism that there is a gendered division of responsibilities and rights. While reproductive rights are assigned in the private sphere to women, the public sphere which include duties and decision-making of citizenship, such as serving state as soldiers and conducting international politics, is usually appropriated to men (Aydin, 2016, p.2).

Emergence of Feminist International Relations

The feminist approach in the field of international relations has been traced back to various sources. According to Thorburn (2000), there are five factors to understand the Feminist International Relations. The first one is that it began with the international feminist movement of the early 1970s, both in the academy as well as in the field of women of women and development as marked by the first United Nations Conference on Women (1975) and the United Nations Decade for Women 1975-1985. The Women in Development (WID) movement which evolved into Gender and Development (GAD) movement started a process of academic and policy research which by the end of 1985, led to an understanding that “women’s lives cannot be understood part from a gender approach that looks at the power relationships between men and women” (Thorburn, 2000, p. 2-3).

The second factor is the end of Cold War where the shift of issues and priorities from the militaristic and ideological confines of the East- West divide opened a space in which other international issues could be explored such as: considerations of the environment, the drug trade, economic globalization, demographic issues, and ethnicity. Another factor is that as the subject matter of international relations changes in the post-Cold War era, and as issues of human rights, the environment, migration, and democratization move to the fore, women's issues cannot be ignored anymore. A fourth factor of considering the beginnings of feminist international relations is as a matter of natural progression- that feminist incursions into international relations are merely the final crumbling of this last bastion of the social sciences (Thorburn, 2000, p.3). The fifth rationale for the development of feminist approaches to international relations is the growing presence of women as political actors in the international arena, which can also be considered as an outcome of the aforementioned factors. Research says that while a "hegemonic masculinity" still persists in the field of international relations, more women in the field allow not just the evolution of norms and behaviours that are typically characterized as "feminine" but also a discourse that is freer of gendered restrictions in general (Thorburn, 2000, p.3). Although the number is not equal, or even close to being equal, representation of women to men in governmental and foreign policy decision-making positions, the number of women has increased significantly with time. For instance, the proportion of ministries run by female ministers world-wide doubled from 3.4% in 1987 to 6.8% in 1996, and in 1997, fifteen countries had achieved a representation of 20 to 30% women at the ministerial level (United Nations, 1997).

Various developments have led to the legitimization and formation of a coherent sub-field in international relations. Writers have pointed to gender issues and the absence of women's

lives and experiences. The theoretical foundations of international relations are male-defined and constructed around male-female dichotomies that define male as the “other”. Joan Wallach Scott, a leading feminist theorist, locates gender and its power dynamics in international relations theory and practice, arguing that the power relations inherent in international structure and politics are legitimized in terms of relations between men and women, and that the legitimizing of war has been carried out in gendered terms (Scott, 1988, p.13-37).

J. Ann Tickner (1991), Rebecca Grant (1991) and Christine Sylvester (1994) have looked at the theoretical foundations of international relations to understand the absence of women’s and gender issues. They argue that these issues shape and are shaped by international forces, although thus far they have been seldom, if ever, considered.

Fred Halliday (1991), Rebecca Grant, and Kathleen Newland (1991) have suggested areas of inquiry that come out of the gender bias inherent in international relations theory. Halliday describes three main areas for feminist inquiry in international relations: the gender specific consequences of international processes, women as actors on the international scene, and gender components of foreign policy issues. Grant and Newland propose that feminist concerns in international relations include migration issues, the gendered sexual division of labour, women and development, and women’s rights as human rights (cited from Thorburn, 2000, p. 5-6).

Cynthia Enloe, a prominent scholar in the field of international relations, argues that gendered stereotypes of masculinity and femininity provide the framework for the empirical work on U.S. foreign policy attempts to show how women- in their roles as diplomats’ wives, prostitutes at overseas military bases, secretaries in U.N. missions, and migrants who work as domestic servants to middle-class North Americans-shape international system in fundamental

ways, because they provide the means for the conduct of “official” international relations (Thorburn, 2000, p.6).

Another stream in the literature falls under the broader definition of international relations, looking at non-state actors. Christine Sylvester’s feminist analysis of international relations theory brings her to the conclusion that feminist international relations has different understandings of cooperation and reciprocity. Her work suggests, the main difference between the international feminist literature and the feminist international literature is the much broader scope of the former. International feminists address topics and issues of an international nature, as well as inter-state issues, while feminist international relations is more restricted to state level actions and processes. (Thorburn, 2000, p. 6-7).

Though feminist work in international relations begins from the notion that it is a male-dominant discipline and practice, this approach analyzes not only the discourse as it regards women, but the way in which power relations between men and women shape and are shaped by the international relations theory and practice (Thorburn, 2000, p.7).

Gender Stereotyping and Leadership

Executive and managerial power positions of the state has almost never been held by a female in Nepal. Matters of foreign affairs and defense are some of the most critical pillars of state which determines the country’s operations at a wider level. To understand that women have never been in that capacity to bring to the table their ways of working, their understanding and experience in terms of foreign affairs is hugely discouraging and reflective of the dire state the status of gender equality is in the country.

The gender stereotyping of women as “weaker and emotional” beings has superfluously categorized them as “unable” to carry out the state’s affairs. The socio-cultural norm of women

being the primary and oftentimes the sole caretakers of households has also been another factor for the dearth of women working outside of their homes. Thus, overcoming such age old biases should be a state wide organizational commitment and females should be supported through mentorship and leadership development. Unless there is a bias reduction in the existing and future perception of people, there will not be a conducive environment for transformational leadership where men and women have both capacitated themselves for being leaders.

Intersectional Feminism

The Oxford Dictionary defines intersectionality as the “interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage; a theoretical approach based on such a premise”. Sprouting from the 1989 paper entitled “*Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics*” by social theorist Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, the theory of overlapping of gender identities, races and class, amongst other factors in relation to structures of oppression for women was spelled out, necessitating a scrutinization on these social systems and discrimination against women. The problematic understanding of gender, race and economic status as mutually exclusive categories has been highlighted in the paper by Crenshaw (1989).

Whilst the paper is primarily focused on the experiences of Black women, the analysis can be tallied with the lives of other non-White females across the world, like South Asian women, who live under conditions of economic depravity and social oppression.

Gender and International Political Economy

The study of gender and international political economy can be traced directly to the Women in Development (WID) and Gender and Development (GAD) movements, which started

as questions about women's role in development and the impact of gender dynamics and women in particular. The main issues under consideration in international political economy are the gender dimensions of economic globalization, neoliberal adjustment, and the politics of development (Bakker, 1994, p.577-603). Also, there is a consistent focus on interrogating the state as a locus of male power, a reproducer of gender hierarchies, and analyzing its bureaucratic barriers to gender equality (Staudt, 1997). In developing countries, this approach is especially relevant due to the primary composition of economic issues like trade, development aid, and poverty and has been supplemented by new developments in feminist theorizing in economics (Staudt, 1997).

Feminist Foreign Policy

An exclusively feminist foreign policy (FFP) was first introduced by the Government of Sweden (a coalition of the Social Democrats and the Green Party) in 2014 that contained "methods and experiences, and is intended as a resource in international work for gender equality and all women's and girls' full enjoyment of human rights". The aim of the feminist foreign policy is "to combat discrimination against women, improve conditions for women, and contribute to peace and development".

A feminist foreign policy in practice focuses on asking about gender in all situations: men and women having access to treatment, vulnerabilities of men, women, girls, and boys in humanitarian crises, data disaggregation by gender, representation and balance within international organizations, and ensuring that financial resources are in place to support gender equality initiatives and research (Irwin, 2019).

Sweden has made progress in terms of human rights, freedom from violence, participation in peace efforts, political participation, economic empowerment, sexual and

reproductive health and rights since the implementation of the FFP in 2014 making a mark at multilateral, regional and bilateral levels, and in relation to all the objectives of the Foreign Service's action plan (Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 2017). Sweden has carried out a number of exemplary initiatives around the world, especially the countries in need. For instance, a Swedish-backed programme is estimated to have prevented thousands of unwanted pregnancies and unsafe abortions in East Africa. Similarly, it has also pushed through a new “advisory function and plan for gender equality, and contributed to the EU’s follow-up of violence in conflicts and gender mainstreaming in its external crisis response” (Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Sweden, 2018).

Following in Sweden’s footsteps, Canada, France and Australia are some of the countries which have also taken steps towards a gender equal and feminist foreign policy (Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy, 2018).

Having said that, the Swedish FFP does not come without its critiques especially when it comes to arms exports of Sweden and its migration policy, which have gendered consequences (Sundström, M. R. & Elgström, O, 2019).

Gendered Political Institutions

Going beyond categorizing the attributes of some unique women in male-dominated institutions and beyond counting the number of women at various levels to explore the gendered culture of the institutions and how the particular institutions interact with the larger culture is important to really understand why women face major hurdles on their way to being a part of the political system (Kenney, 1996, p.446). Gendered institutions can be understood as “gender being present in the processes, practices, images, and ideologies, and distributions of power in the various sectors of social life” (Ackner, 1992, p. 567).

Sexualization of labor, sexual violence and construction of gender identity in childhood topics of learning are some of the reasons behind the gendering of institutions in the society. When it comes to politics, in spite of a greater social acceptance of women politicians, “women still felt, as did their sisters in the seventies, that politics was a place that was, in many respects, hostile to women” (Kenney, 1996, p. 448). Society’s views in particular about women’s roles as leaders and as warriors is still limited. Acker mentions how it is “necessary to go beyond gender as category, social role, or identity in order to understand how gender differentiation and women’s disadvantages are produced. For instance, the processes creating and maintaining sex segregation are complex and vary with time and place having as much to do with employers’ calculations of their advantage and their exploitation of gender differences as male workers’ collective creation of their identities as men and workers or females workers’ identification with their domestic roles. This sort of conceptualization, qualitative and historical studies are required to comprehend concrete practices and processes” (Ackner, 1992, p.566).

The significance of numbers and percentages in affecting policy change and more far-reaching structural change was explored by Thomas (1994). She did not present the story of the gender integration of state legislatures by identifying individual women in each state or legislature nor did she focus on the culture of particular institutions to show how tokenism operates in those settings or how particular institutions are gendered (Thomas, 1994). Society’s attitudes about women’s roles (or the numbers of women) as the causal agent determining the degree to which women’s agenda will be furthered within the institution.

Similarly, Epstein (1993) explores how gender differences are constructed, deployed, and recreated in a number of scenarios and settings. Understanding structural changes such as industrialization, economic growth, or the demands of a wartime economy for domestic labor,

analyzing attitudinal changes in women's role in society and monitoring the numbers and positions of women in institutions are all important information for understanding how institutions are gendered.

In explanation of what "gendered" means, it is that "all people within the institution have a gender, and that there is no universal category of foreign service officer, reporter, law partner, or legislator. Women report clearly being seen and treated as "women holders" of a role. Work is part of the construction of masculinity for many workers" (Kenney, 1996, p. 455). Kenney further goes on to explain that jobs, and even institutions, have gender, and that institutions will mount great efforts to contain threats to the gendered identity of the institution. Also, the experience of individuals is said to vary according to the gender. "Not only will women most likely have fewer opportunities than men, but their perceptions of the obstacles and the existence of circumscribed opportunities will vary by gender" (Epstein, 1993, p.214).

Also, it is found out that "men's perceptions of women's hurdles do not coincide with women's perceptions of them. Male officeholders saw less sexism and stereotyping of women than did the women themselves, and they often perceived that women had to exert greater effort to prove competence. Also, men expressed less belief than women in stereotyping or sexism and then identified areas of deficiencies for women that tended to conform to stereotyping" (Kenney, 1996, p.456).

Also, political institutions produce, reproduce, and subvert gender. Different researches show that gender is not a static thing that inheres in a biological category of women but rather something that is socially constructed, variable and is subject to negotiation. In saying that an institution is gendered, it is recognizing that "constructions of masculinity and femininity are

intertwined in the daily culture of an institution rather than existing out in society or fixed within individuals which they then bring whole to the institution” (Kenney, 1996, p.456).

According to Kenney, there are three theoretical insights that can be driven, thus. They are:

(i) Numbers affect power in institutions: In Kanter’s *Men and Women of the Corporation* claimed that women’s behaviors and ability to affect change as well as the way other actors in the institution perceive them, and how they perceive themselves, depends on their number in the institution. To understand how institutions are gendered, one must first know the proportion of women. Also, if they are merely tokens or minorities or at parity is also a factor to be considered. Another factor is to really understand if the institution is uniform, skewed, tilted or balanced. Thomas reflects how the number of women legislators determines not only whether they can pass their priority legislative agenda items and get members of the dominant group to support their aims, but also whether women have any hope of changing the structures of the institutions and the rules of the game (Kenney, 1996, p.457). Similarly, McGlen and Sarkees (1993) contrast the number of women at the Departments of State and Defense to explain differences in initiatives to improve the status of women.

(ii) Numbers affect the culture of an institution: Kanter remarked there is more than merely asserting that women’s numbers determine whether they can affect policy changes within an institution. Sociologist Steiberg has noted, “Integrating women into male institutions cannot be reduced to majority X’s and minority O’s. The number of women determines the room available for individual self-expression, the kinds of work they are asked to do, how their contribution is judged, and the extent to which they are included in informal channels of power” (Kenney, 1996, p. 457). Similarly, Nelson goes on to assert that “All of social life is gendered, reflecting the

differences between and among women and men in activities undertaken, opportunities available, outcomes experienced, and values held and assigned to them (Kenney, 1996, p.457).

(iii) Gender has no universal content- it is produced and reproduced in daily interactions: Feminist theorist and historian Joan Scott defines gender as “having two parts and several subsets. They are interrelated but should be analytically distinct. The core of the definition rests on an integral connection between two propositions: gender is a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, and gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power”. There is also an argument that attributes associated with men and women and deemed masculine and feminine vary, not just across time, culture, race, and class but institution. The meaning of that is what it means to be masculine, as well as which jobs are reserved for men is in part, institutionally specific. Also, the meaning attached to these attributes is continually renegotiated and reinscribed.

Although one’s gender is incompatible with one’s role, and on a daily basis this point is made repeatedly in subtle or overt ways- the content of the specific shortcomings of the non-dominant group member will vary from institution to institution. For instance, if a woman foreign policy expert’s competence is ever established, rather than subject to continuous challenge and need for proof, she will be regendered as a man, or alternatively a third sex (McGlen and Sarkees, 1993, p.99-100; Robertson, 1992, p.224). Through recoding of the competent woman as an honorary male, the job and the qualities associated with it remain gendered as male (McGlen and Sarkees, 1993, p.35).

(iv) Gender is oppositional and hierarchical: Simone de Beauvoir’s concept of the “Other” argues that “gender was not only socially constructed and contingent, but that the genders were not reciprocal: what it is to be a man is to be not a woman. Men are defined and define

themselves in opposition to a set of categories assigned to women, usually whatever qualities or characteristics are less valued for the fully human, rational, creative, or competent.

(v) Masculinity is constructed and fiercely defended: Psychoanalytic accounts of the construction of masculinity helps to explain the special humiliation that male law students experience when they do less well than women in an environment in which all students are ranked competitively against one another. “The presence of women who are as competent and productive as a man is a devastating blow to the psyche of a lot of men who thought only men could be soldiers. It is a real blow to the ego of many males that women are doing so well in the military” (McGlen and Sarkees, 1993, p.128). Understanding the process of “othering” helps to account for the virulence of the opposition to women’s full inclusion and participation as majority leaders, foreign service officers, etc. The opposition exceeds what one can rationally comprehend as merely an interest in monopolizing economic power (Kenney, 1996, p.460).

(vi) Political institutions can be theorized as workplaces: Sociologists like Cockburn document how work is intertwined in the construction of masculinity itself (Kenney, 1996, p.460). The connection between masculinity and certain jobs is most clear in those jobs intricately association with waging war (Cooke and Woollacott, 1993), however sociologists who study workplaces other than the military document this interconnection. Viewing political institutions as workplaces also enables to draw on the sophisticated body of work on employment discrimination. Certain jobs are more masculine or feminine than others are reserved for one group rather than another with alarming consequences for women’s pay and opportunities. Shultz argues that one’s career aspirations, interlinked as they are with one’s gender identity, change over time in response to work experience. “The workplace, just like political institutions

is believed to be gendered. Gender is continually produced in the workplace rather than something existing, stable and fully formed, before one's entry in it" (Kenney, 1996, p.461).

(vii) Gender is reinscribed: Understanding the process of "othering" helps to understand the construction of certain occupations as masculine and also the deep-seated opposition to women's participation in them, but it also explains why the "continued gendering of institutions will reinscribe notions of gender that lead to women's subordination rather than liberation" (Kenney, 1992, p.461). While substantial progress for women in achieving electoral office, political appointments, it is also carefully documented by theorists of how gender is reinscribed in the institutions in pernicious ways. Sociologists note that when women enter certain jobs they often cease to be stepping stones for higher positions (Cockburn, 1991, p. 49; Steinberg, 1992, p.579). Cockburn's research showed that in the four institutions she studied, sexism was not confined to the older generation of power holders who would eventually wither away (Cockburn, 1995, p.165), but rather being reproduced in new, "virulent" forms that are appropriate and effective for the late twentieth century (Kenney, 1996, p.461).

(viii) Institutions will try to contain progressive change: Political institutions are in a very real sense constructed on the basis of women's exclusion (Kenney, 1996, p.461). Cockburn and Bell caution against "seeing progress with numbers as the end of gendering in institutions". Instead, the gendering will alter to accommodate changes in membership simultaneously disadvantaging the newcomers. At some point, the point at which women go from minority to parity as per Kanter, more than the masculinity of individuals is at stake. The gender ethos of the entire institution is threatened. Cockburn argues that at this point the dominant group will work to contain the threat (Cockburn, 1991, p.68-69).

Thus, women's experiences in male-dominated institutions have changed over time. Political institutions are gendered, and scholarship on it should treat gender as a "continuous, variable, and tenacious process that, while usually leading to women's disadvantage, is challenged, negotiated, subverted, and resisted" (Kenney, 1996, p.463).

CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research will employ a comparative approach focusing on foreign policy of countries that have employed a feminist foreign policy- notably Sweden.

The foreign policy framework of Sweden has been chosen to discuss in order to form the basis of analysis for the proposed research. During the course of the proposed research, the variables that will be analyzed will include the strategies and new foreign policy approaches implemented by Sweden. Likewise, the role of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Sweden and Nepal will be analyzed according to how effective they are in facilitating feminist foreign policy strategies to influence behavior or outcomes.

The methodology applied to this proposed research will be qualitative in nature whereby scholarly articles and writings related to the research subject; and mostly official documents, statements pertaining to the aforementioned countries will be the dominant source of analysis. As such, in carrying out its content analysis, the research will sift through what the different actions are being implemented towards a feminist foreign policy or even gender mainstreaming in development actions.

Research Design

The researcher has used comparative research method in this study to understand how gendered power relations have accumulated most if not all decision making power in the hands of men, how a Feminist Foreign Policy has been devised in Sweden to tackle the problem, and why it would be essential to have a framework as such in Nepal itself.

The number of women in state apparatuses will be the unit of analysis.

Methods used to collect data research instruments

Secondary data has been collected with data extracted from government portals, websites, archives and international sources.

Methods used to analyze data

Comparative method of analyzing data from Nepal and Sweden has been used.

CHAPTER 4. FEMINISM AND FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY

Feminist Theory in International Relations

Feminism propounded in international relations theory in the 1960s and 1970s. It emerged in the international relations theory substantially after the end of the Cold War, when the idea of viewing state as the mere actors in international politics started being felt obsolete. The propagation of human security subsequently also cultivated a growing space for women's perspectives to be included in international politics and thus, giving rise to feminism incorporated into mainstream IR theory. Feminist theory of international relations basically looks into the international relations through the lens of "gender and equality". It observes how international politics affects and is affected by both men and women.

Feminist theory in international relations challenges the traditional notion of IR which focuses narrowly on men as active actors in the international politics and excludes women from what is considered "high politics" i.e. matters pertaining to sovereignty, the state and military security. Women's absence from decision-making and institutional structures is a primary setback in equality.

Another dimension to this is that gender is a socially constructed concept that assigns particular characteristics to men and women. Examples of masculinity being equated with "rationality, power, independence and the public sphere at large", whereas women being associated with "irrationality, in need of protection, domesticity and the private sphere".

Emerging in the 1970s, feminist theory in international relations gradually gained ground

Feminist theory in response to international security also emerged with the realization that “propagation of military violence has always been a resolutely male affair”. The knowledge that was constructed with the pretext that war is a result of males’ inherent aggression and can only be associated with men and masculinity has been challenged by the feminist theory (Tickner, 2004, p.1). The simple truth is that war, diplomacy and all forms of security related jobs and positions have been taken over by men with little to no women being involved in this sector until recently. Such prolonged practices have reduced women as having absolutely no idea or concern with state security matters, thus limiting their roles even in the future.

Feminist Discourses/ Types of Feminist Theory of International Relations

A number of theoretical approaches build on the Feminist theory of international relations. Delving deeper into the various types, liberal feminism talks about removing legal and other forms of obstacles that deny women from the same rights and opportunities as men. Problems of refugee women, income inequalities between men and women, human rights violations incurred disproportionately by women like trafficking and rape in times of war are investigated in this theory (Tickner, 2014, p.261).

Another theory is the Feminist critical theory which is believed to have sprouted from the Gramscian Marxism. The ideational and material manifestations of gendered identities and gendered power in global politics is explored. Further, the theory also suggests that gender is constituted by the “ideas that men and women have about their relationships to one another” (Tickner, 2014, p.261-262).

The theory of Feminist social constructivism is built upon social constructivism. It iterates the study of the processes whereby ideas about gender influence global politics, as well

as the ways that global politics shape ideas about gender (Tickner, 2015, p.262). In *The Global Construction of Gender* (1999), Elisabeth Prügl, a feminist constructivist, analyzes the treatment of home-based work in international law. Pertaining to the fact that most home based workers are women, regulations on this type of employment is a crucial subject for feminists. Home based is not treated as “real work” because it takes place in the private productive sphere of the household rather than the more valued public sphere which concerns wage-based production. Prügl’s arguments show how notions of femininity have led the international community’s debates about institutionalizing home-based workers’ rights (Tickner, 2014, p.262).

The Feminist poststructuralism theory claims that reality is understood through the use of language. The relationship between knowledge and power i.e. those who construct meaning and create knowledge eventually end up gaining a great deal of power in the process. In this context, feminist poststructuralists claim that men have generally been seen as the knowers and their lives has revolved in the public sphere. In contrast, women have not been viewed either as knowers or even as the subjects of knowledge.

In Post-colonial feminism, the colonial relations of domination and subordination, established under European imperialism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is studied. The claim that Western knowledge and feminism has constructed knowledge about non- Western feminism is made in this theory. Women’s subordination should be addressed within their own specific cultural context, rather than through a universal understanding of women’s needs (Mohanty, 1988).

Concept of Foreign Policy

Foreign policy is understood as a subset of public policy that deals with matters outside national boundaries: It is a goal-oriented or problem-oriented program by authoritative

policymakers (or their representatives) directed towards entities outside the policy makers' political jurisdiction" (Hermann, 1990). A foreign policy is a set of pre-designed strategies that are implemented systematically to deal with a country's relationships with other nations. It determines the way a country reacts with the world.

Concept of Feminist Foreign Policy

A feminist foreign policy is defined as a foreign policy that "prioritizes the full implementation of international and national commitments to advance human rights-that includes gender equality" (Shoemaker & Dharmapuri, 2016). This kind of a foreign policy engages with civil society, namely women activists, as well as a policy that offers opportunities in leadership positions for men who endorse and promote gender equality (Shoemaker & Dharmapuri, 2016).

According to Jolyn Shoemaker and Sahana Dharmapuri, a feminist foreign policy has two central policy goals:

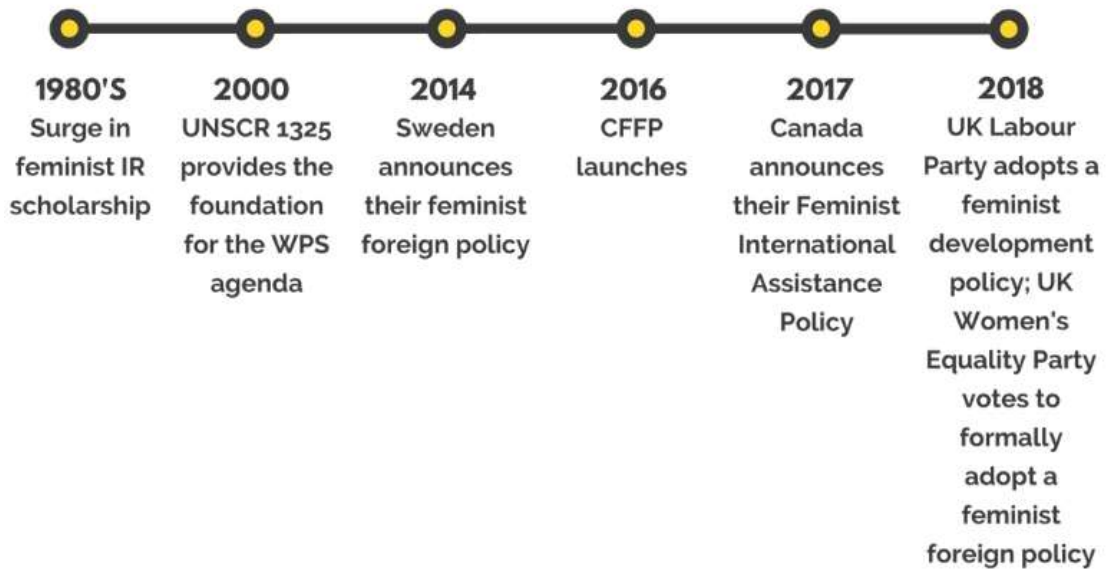
- (i) Gender parity (increased opportunities for women in leadership positions), and
- (ii) Gender sensitivity (examining the impact of foreign policies in terms of perpetuating or alleviating gender equality)

Evolution of Feminist Discourse in Foreign Policy

Feminist discourse initiated in the 1980s with feminist IR scholarship taking stride. The UN Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security (UNSCR 1325), and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), were benchmarks for moving the gender equality agenda forward in conflict and post-conflict situations (UN Women, 2006).

The discourse also revolved in the domain of politics, and foreign policy subtly in many instances around the world like Hillary Clinton's pledge to treat women's issues as central to

U.S. foreign policy. However, the feminist discourse only gained solid ground and attention in 2014 when the Swedish red-green coalition government adopted a feminist foreign policy. The Center for Feminist Foreign Policy was subsequently launched in the year 2016. In 2017, Canada joined the bandwagon with its own emphasis on gender equality with Canadian Prime Minister Trudeau championing the cause. According to the Government of Canada, their policy “seeks to eradicate poverty and build a more peaceful, more inclusive and more prosperous world. Canada firmly believes that promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls is the most effective approach to achieving this goal” (Government of Canada, 2018). The U.K. Labour Party adopted a feminist development policy (Osamor, 2018), and the Women’s Equality Party voted to formally adopt a feminist foreign policy. Countries such as Australia, France, New Zealand have also been following suit for a robust foreign policy that focuses on women’s issues and ensures their participation in decision-making. France has produced an “International Strategy on Gender Equality”. The French policy only deals with foreign assistance though.



Source: Center for Feminist Foreign Policy, 2018

Feminist Foreign Policy and Global Practices

Sweden was the pioneer in introducing a full-fledged Feminist Foreign Policy in its country in the year 2014 by its Social Democratic Party. In 2017, Canada also announced its Feminist International Assistance Policy which focuses on action areas of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, human dignity, growth that works for everyone, environment and climate action, inclusive governance, and peace and security (Government of Canada, 2017).

Similarly, the Labour Party of Britain explicitly introduced feminist international development policy, with an aim to increase funding by threefold for grassroots women's groups. The budget proposal put up new resources for ODA and embraced a benchmark of 95% of spending of its foreign assistance budget for gender equality as a primary or secondary goal (Thompson & Clement, 2019).

Also, France has introduced an International Strategy on Gender Equality. It deals with foreign assistance basically (Thompson & Clement, 2019). The policy was first promulgated in 2007 with the current version launching in 2018 till 2022. It mentions a number of gender related priorities to be addressed through foreign assistance. The Strategy aims to increase bilateral and programmable ODA that contributes to gender equality from a baseline of 30% in 2018 to a total of 50% in 2022. The Strategy consists of five thematic pillars and three guiding principles. They are: healthcare for women and girls, including comprehensive family planning, access to sexual and reproductive health, and reduced maternal mortality rates; access to education, including access to and improvement of comprehensive sexuality education; raising the legal age of marriage to age 18; vocational training and employment opportunities; and improvements to infrastructure that enable access to remote rural areas (French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, 2018).

Although foreign policies have brought in gender issues at the surface level, explicitly devoting foreign policies through direct and higher involvement of women in decision making for what goes on in a country in relation to its neighbours and the world is yet to be observed. Many women are now being elected as world leaders across the world which shows the growing attention to women and their issues being recognized and dealt with. However, foreign assistance spending is one of the few indicators to evaluate the lengths to which countries are committing resources to their feminist foreign policies and a lot remains to be done (Thompson & Clement, 2019). More countries need to follow suit as well in order to bring about tangible, note-worthy and large-scale changes for gender equality and empowerment.

Gender differences in Foreign Policy Attitudes

A causal model for gender differences in foreign policy attitudes was developed by Lise Togeby, a prominent professor of political sociology, who proposed various reasons for women being distant from mainstream foreign policy affairs. Biological differences and early socialization of women to take care of the baby, family is one of the factors for women to have stayed far from politics and foreign policy issues because of their mothering and peaceful nature. A consequential factor can be family obligations for women living in traditional households where they do not venture in the outer world. Similarly, large involvement of women involved in professions of the caring industry like nurses, primary school teachers, etc. (Togeby, 1994, p.382-384). Due to these reasons women have had a distance from foreign policy issues and many of them are unaware of the proceedings of it. Women's values, political ideology and involvement is believed to be an outcome of the aforementioned factors whereby women are directly or indirectly pushed into the "private" sphere of life.

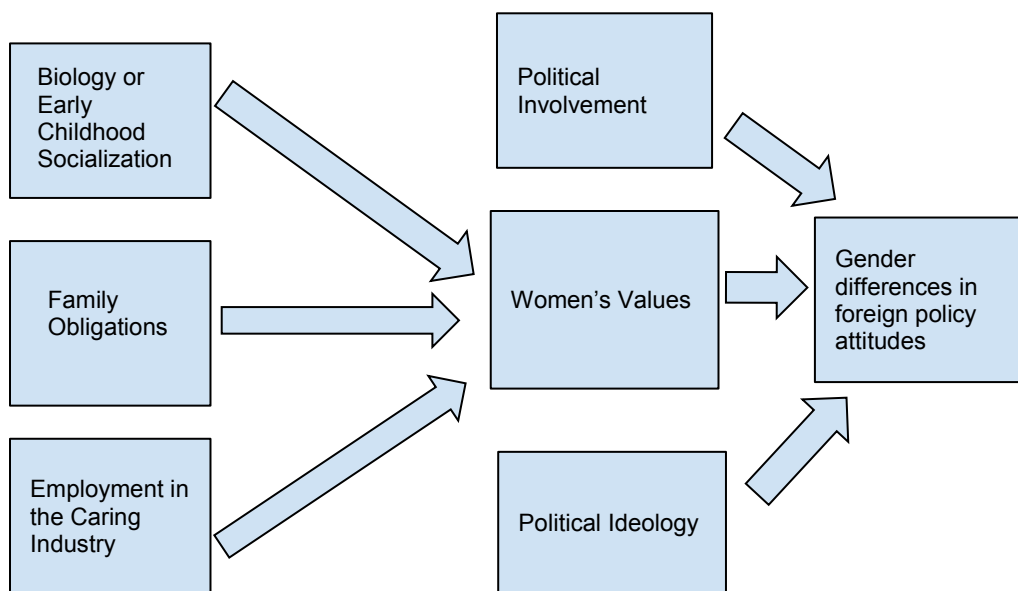


Figure 1: Causal Model for Gender Differences in Foreign Policy Attitudes

As shown in the figure above, gender differences in foreign policy attitudes are a result of many factors, primarily the way women are conditioned and socialized into taking care of the family and household, and not so much in politics or decision-making outside of their homes. The gender differences in employment and professional training is also believed to create an attitudinal difference about foreign policy in men and women (Togeby, 1994, p. 384). The new roles in the labor market and political life explains the gender gap in foreign policy (Togeby, 1994, p.387).

CHAPTER 5: FEMINISM IN SWEDEN’S FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY

Swedish Foreign Policy

Sweden has adhered to its longstanding policy of neutrality ever since the Napoleonic Wars (1803–1815). It remained neutral during the entire course of World War I (1914- 1918) as well as during World War II (1939-1945) (Andrews, 2018). Although Sweden’s policy of neutrality and “non-belligerency” has been questioned especially due to its favoring of Germany and Western Allies. Yet, its major peaceful and non-involvement in war throughout the years speaks for its policy of neutrality.

Sweden is also one of the European Union member countries that identifies itself as a neutral country still along with Austria, Ireland, Finland, and Malta (Heinikainen, 2019).

In 2002, Sweden revised its security doctrine which basically “pursues a policy of non-participation in military alliances but permits cooperation in response to threats against peace and security”. The Swedish foreign policy pays close attention to foreign trade opportunities and world economic cooperation welfare. Maintaining a high standard of living is a priority for which Sweden requires heavy expenditures on social, and defense spending (MfFA, 2019).

Feminism in Sweden’s Foreign Policy

Sweden’s Feminist Foreign Policy is an actionable blueprint that involves asking about gender in all situations: treatment, vulnerabilities of men, women, girls, and boys in humanitarian crises, data disaggregated by gender. In addition, representation and gender balance at WHO and within other international organisations, ensuring that the financial resources are in place to support gender equality initiatives and research are also some key matters at hand when it comes to the FFP (Irwin, 2019).

The core of Sweden's Feminist Foreign Policy undertakes 3 Rs into consideration, namely: Rights, Representation and Resources. It is further implied that the FFP is based on the Reality that people live in, thus addressing matters of intersectionality of women across the world.

It is the first ever explicitly formulated foreign policy that focuses on equality and tries to improve on conditions where women enjoy equal rights and a true sense of representation.

The objective areas of the feminist foreign policy have been stipulated for the time frame of 2015- 2018, with the action plan containing six areas of intervention:

- (i) Full Enjoyment of Human Rights
- (ii) Freedom from physical, psychological and sexual violence
- (iii) Participation in preventing and resolving conflicts, and post-conflict peacebuilding
- (iv) Political participation and influence in all areas of society
- (v) Economic Rights and Empowerment
- (vi) Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) (MfFA, 2018)

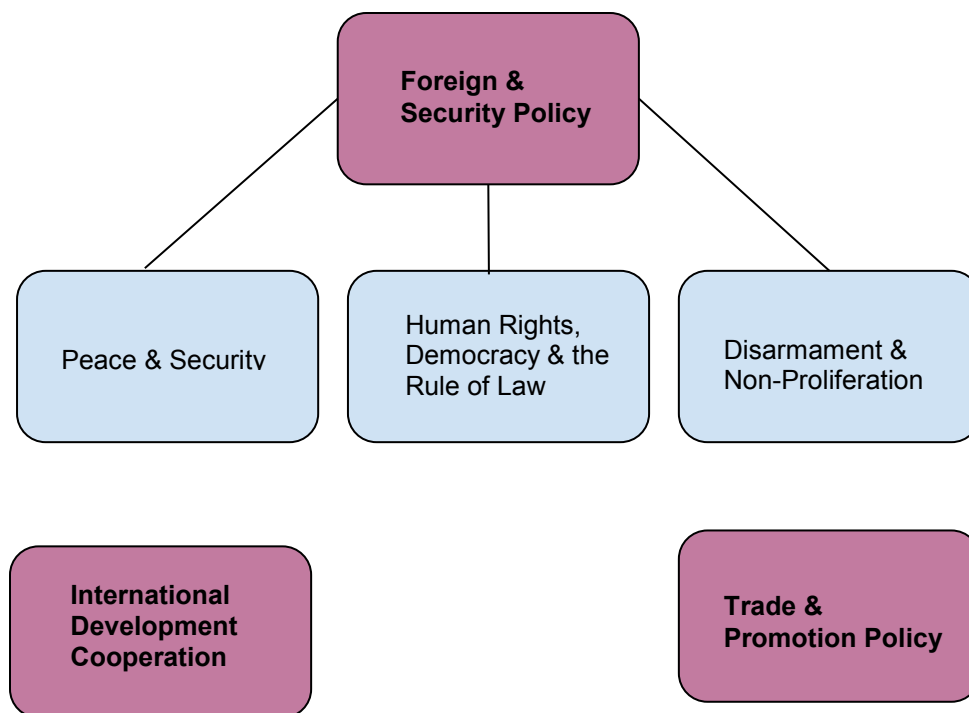


Figure 2: showing working methods within the various subsidiary areas of foreign policy of Sweden

The highlight of Sweden's FFP is that even in the working methods of the defined subsidiary areas of foreign policy, tangible actions are implemented with women as key actors. For instance, in foreign and security policy, three areas are taken into consideration, namely: Peace and Security, Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law, and Disarmament and Non-Proliferation. Recognizing men and women are affected by war and crises in different ways, and have different opportunities to influence peace work, and the fact that women had largely been left out from most peace negotiations, the Swedish FFP has reviewed its work with women, peace and security, including financing, seconding Swedish experts and training Swedish and international actors. Also, the initiatives of the Swedish Women's Mediation Network and providing technical support and advice to countries seeking to establish equivalent mediation networks. There is also a new national action plan on women, peace and security, which was

adopted in 2016. The action plan entitled “*Women, Peace & Security: Sweden’s National Action Plan for the implementation of the UN Security Council’s Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security 2016–2020*” targets “women’s influence and participation in peace process, conflict prevention, improved protection against violence and integrating gender equality perspectives into all peace and security work” (Government of Sweden, 2017). There is a number of initiatives made by Sweden in the area of peace and security like championing the UN Security Council’s inclusion of information from representatives from women’s organizations in its analyses. Also, Sweden advocated for sexual and gender-based violence having become a separate listing criterion in a UN sanctions regime. It also contributed towards women’s participation in peace work in a number of countries including Afghanistan, Colombia, Mali and Syria, along with creating a more integrated gender equality perspective in the EU’s civilian and military crisis management efforts, including by “working to strengthen gender equality expertise within the EU’s institutions and initiatives”.

On Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law, Sweden plays an active role in negotiations on human rights in forums such as the UN’s General Assembly, the UN’s Human Rights Council and the UN’s Commission on the Status of Women. Sweden has supported GQUAL which is an international campaign that advocates establishing national and international guidelines to promote the proportion of women in leadership positions in international tribunals and judicial bodies. It has also contributed financially to the implementation of the Council of Europe’s action plans for various member states. In addition to this, the Swedish Sex Purchase Act is an important milestone, as it became the first country in the world to criminalize the purchasing of sex. Sweden focuses on the importance of

discouraging legal markets for human trafficking and advocates on obtaining knowledge an individual's own rights, including about sexual and reproductive health and rights.

In the field of disarmament and non-proliferation, gender mainstreaming and specific initiatives targeted at women and girls, like ensuring representation at diplomatic and technical levels and within academia and civil society organizations. It pushes a gender equality perspective in processes relating to international weapons inspections and the disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. An example is, in the UN Programme of Action on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, and in the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Further, it has promoted a gender equality perspective in processes on international weapons inspections and disarmament, like the UN Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) which is an important tool in the work to tackle illicit and irresponsible trading in conventional weapons. It has maintained strict control exercised over the export of military equipment from Sweden.

The International development cooperation of Sweden aims to create preconditions for better living conditions for people living in poverty and under oppression. The Policy Framework for Swedish Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance establishes that all Swedish cooperation shall be gender mainstreamed. Not to mention, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) is a part of the Swedish Government's Gender Mainstreaming in Government Agencies (JiM) development programme. Similarly, a lot of aid efforts are also carried out like supporting countries' legislation for women's and girls' rights, promoting women's economic empowerment, strengthening women's roles in peace processes and increasing women's political participation and access to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (MfFA, 2018)

Along with that, Sweden has led the role of drawing up gender equality strategies for the development banks, the World Bank, the African Development Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and the European Investment Bank (MfFA, 2018).

The feminist foreign policy has inculcated gender equality perspective in its work with humanitarian aid. For example, the Policy Framework for Swedish Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance enunciates that Sweden's humanitarian aid shall contribute towards strengthening women's and girls' right to protection in humanitarian crises, and shall strengthen their opportunity to play an active role in response to humanitarian crises. It has also been working for those affected by crises to have greater influence over humanitarian work and only intends to support humanitarian actors who base their work on a gender equality analysis and sex and age disaggregated data.

In the field of trade and promotion policy, the Swedish Export Credits Guarantee Board (EKN) contributes to the work on the Global Goals of the 2030 Agenda by working with responsible business in guarantees. EKN makes contributions to the infrastructure and public transport for women's opportunities. In order to increase knowledge in the field, Sweden's National Board of Trade has carried out a study of trade, social sustainability, and gender equality and has held a seminar on gender equality and trade under the Global Review of Aid for Trade. Moreover, Sweden supports the International Trade Centre which has been actively working with trade and gender equality and with women's enterprise, and has started the #SheTrades initiative aiming to connect a million women entrepreneurs to the market by 2020. The initiative has identified 7 global actions in which all sectors pledge to remedy obstacles hampering women-owned businesses. They are: Championing Quality Data, Enacting Fair

Policies, Securing Government Contracts, Striking Business Deals, Enabling Market Access, Unlocking Financial Services, and Granting Ownership Rights.

In addition, the Global Deal initiative which is a global focus on social dialogue and better labour market conditions was launched in 2016. It aims to improve the dialogue between labour market actors and national governments to improve terms of employment and productivity (MfFA, 2018).

Sweden has also employed a tool for implementing the feminist foreign policy through the Swedish Institute's (SI) toolbox which basically contains presentations such as Swedish Dads (a photo exhibition based on portraits of fathers who choose to stay home with their babies for at least six months depicting Sweden's gender equal provision of parental leave) and other information about a number of gender equality conscious themes.

Despite the best practice of feminism and a feminist foreign policy in Sweden, political representation and the extent to which individuals with migration background were appointed and elected in the general election of Sweden in 2014, in different levels of public decision-making bodies on national, regional, and local levels, was still considerably low (Elgenius & Wennerhag, 2018). People with "migration background" are severely underrepresented in the decision-making bodies of Sweden and even in elections hold lesser chances of winning with a migrant background.

Implications/ Effectiveness of Sweden's Feminist Foreign Policy

On whether Sweden's Feminist Foreign Policy has been effective or not, a research on *"Praise or critique? Sweden's feminist foreign policy in the eyes of its fellow EU members"* surveyed individuals on it. The respondents who were diplomatic representatives from other European member states, believed that Sweden's international image had definitely risen up

through the championing of gender issues. Keeping the conversation intact and alive is imperative and Sweden's contributions towards that has been considered exemplary. Sweden's FFP has had a major impact on policy documents produced ever since the foreign policy came into effect. However, how much of an effective role it has played on the ground is not clear. Sweden has been seen as a "norm entrepreneur", challenging predominant normative frames by enhancing existing gender equality norms (Sundstrom & Elgstrom, 2019). In some countries, the word "feminist" still evokes a negative reaction, and the respondents are unsure if other states will join Sweden's bandwagon so easily. Despite the coherence and legitimacy of this policy innovation by Sweden has been largely credited, respondents still felt an apprehensiveness due to some challenges. One of them being Sweden selling arms to Saudi Arabia, a country that is largely known to limit women's rights (Sundstrom & Elgstrom, 2019).

CHAPTER 6: COMPARATIVE STUDY OF NEPAL AND SWEDEN'S CORRELATION BETWEEN FEMINISM AND FOREIGN POLICY

Correlation between Feminism and Swedish Foreign Policy

Women in Foreign Service in Sweden

Proportion of women in management posts 2016:

Heads of missions abroad (ambassadors and consuls-general): 40%

Stockholm-based ambassadors: 62%

Heads of department at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs: 44%

Deputy heads of department: 52%

Heads of group: 63 %

Gender distribution in the Swedish Foreign Service in numbers:

Total employees:

1996:

Women: 56%

Men: 44%

2006:

Women: 60%

Men: 40%

2016:

Women: 60%

Men: 40%

Managers:

1996:

Women: 17%

Men: 83%

2006:

Women: 31%

Men: 69%

2016:

Women: 43%

Men: 57%

Desk Officers:

1996:

Women: 45%

Men: 55%

2006:

Women: 55%

Men: 45%

2016:

Women: 59%

Men: 41%

Support staff:

1996:

Women: 86%

Men: 14%

2006:

Women: 86%

Men: 14%

2016:

Women: 83%

Men: 17%

60% of Foreign Service employees in Sweden are women. Among managers in the Swedish Foreign Service last year, 43% were women and 57% were men. Ten years ago the proportion of women managers was 31%, and in 1996 it was just 17% (MfFA,2017).

Twenty years ago, just ten per cent of ambassadors were women. Ten years later, the proportion had risen to 32%, and today 40% of heads of mission abroad are women.

Twenty years ago, only ten percent of ambassadors were women. Ten years later, the proportion had risen to 32%, and today 40% of heads of mission abroad are women.

At the head of department level, as well, the proportion of women has increased: from 28% in 2006 to 44% today. The largest increase is found at the head of group level: in 2006, 33% were women, while today the figure is 63%. The proportion of women and men in deputy head posts remains approximately the same now as in 2006, at just over 50%.

The majority of managers are recruited through the Swedish Foreign Service internal rotation system. The recruitment base is thus the lower management levels, the majority of whom are now women. This guarantees continued good prospects of achieving a full gender balance in senior management posts.

At senior official level, three out of five posts are currently held by women. Similarly, it is encouraging to note that three ministers in the Swedish Foreign Service are women, along with three out of four state secretaries.

The number of women employed as desk officers has also increased: in 1996 women made up 45% of such posts, which had increased to 55% by 2006, and in 2016 the proportion of women had reached 59%.

However, there is a serious imbalance of women and men in administrative positions in the Swedish Foreign Service, and it is found at all levels. Large numbers of administrative staff have retired in recent years, with more staff due to retire. In the current recruitment of new foreign service administrators and third secretaries for missions abroad, the MFA is thus paying particular attention to the need to recruit more men.

Women in Politics

In Sweden, the participation of women in politics has been emboldening, since the 90s. The percentage of women in politics was 38.4% in the year 1990, 45.3% in 2003, and 46.1% in 2018.

The number of women in politics of Sweden from the years 1990-2018 has been shown in the table below:

Indicator Name	1990	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments (%) in SWEDEN	38.4	40.4	40.4	42.7	42.7	42.7	45	45.3	45.3	45.3	47.3	47	47	46.4	45	44.7	44.7	44.7	44.7	43.6	43.6	43.6	46.1

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union (ipu.org)

Correlation between Feminism and Nepali Foreign Policy

Status of Women in Nepal

The status of women has improved considerably after the completion of the Constitution Assembly (CA) election. More women are participating in the civil service, political positions, and other constitutional bodies, task forces, and organizations. The Maternal Mortality Rate has decreased considerably at the end of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) era (NPC, 2016). Spousal violence has decreased in the recent years with one in four women facing violence as compared to the 32% of women or one in three women who faced such a form of violence in 2011. Similarly, the proportion of seats held by women in national parliament of Nepal has also increased to 32.7%.

Women have also been on the forefront of the political landscape with the current President, and Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives being women. Therefore,

although many challenges remain, it can be observed that “women’s political, social, cultural and economic awareness level have been gradually developing” and women’s status has been getting better than it had been in the past.

Women’s Contributions in National Accounts

The unpaid labour of women is yet to be accounted for in the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) measures and included in the System of National Accounts (SNA). Women have been deprived of capital and their employment in the household sector has historically been unaccounted for. Most women have been situated outside the formal labor market.

Nepali Women in the Labour Force

According to the Nepal Labour Force Survey 2017/18, out of 84.6% of informal employment, the share of females was higher than among males (90.5% compared to 81.1%). Similarly, females make up 55.6% of the working age population, yet remain underrepresented by 38%. The unemployment share of females is 43.7% and males’ 56.3%. However, the smaller share of females in unemployment is not to reflect that females are better off than males, but rather that they are under-represented in the labour market.

Furthermore, females only have a share of 13.2% when it comes to managerial positions compared to the 86.8% of males in Nepal. Not to mention, the monthly median earnings for males were higher than those of females. Females earn 67% of what their male counterparts earn. In spite of being in similar occupations, median earnings of males were higher than those of females, for all occupations. Wage or pay equality was almost achieved in the technician and associate professionals and skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery occupations, with the ratio 0.95 and 0.94 respectively (NLFS, 2017/18).

Number of Women in Nepal's Foreign Service

When it comes to statistical representation, the number of women in the foreign service is a tell-tale in itself. An encouraging number of women have been able to secure places in the foreign service, owing to the reservation system introduced in the country.

Women in Foreign Service as of 2018

- Ambassadors (Through political appointment)- 3
- Ambassadors (Joint Secretaries) - 1
- Under- Secretaries- 4
- Under- Secretaries (बहुवा सिफारिश भएका)- 3
- Section Officers- 22
- *Nayab Subba* (नायब सुब्बा) - 25
- Total number of women officials- 55

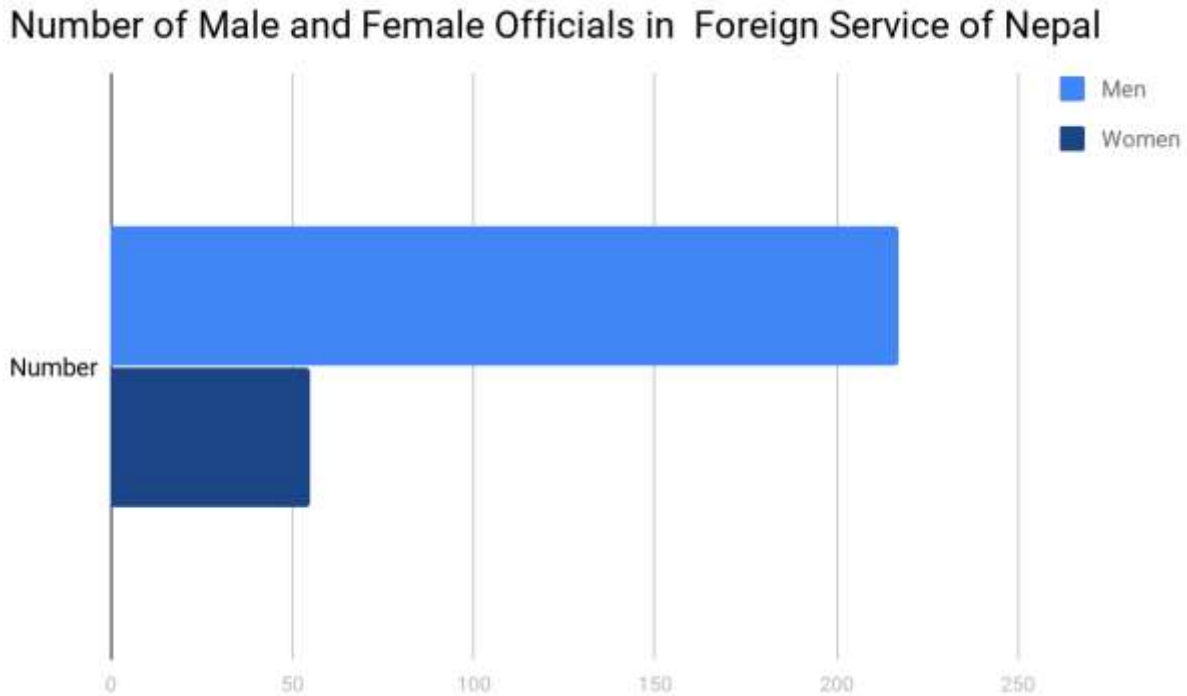


Figure 3: Showing the number of male and female employees in the foreign service as of year 2019

Out of approximately 271 officials, about 80% are male i.e. 217 are males, and 55 females in the service. It is observed that the proportion of women is higher in foreign service when compared to other services in Nepal. There are about 20% of women officials in the foreign service currently.

When it comes to rights and representation, it can be observed that in the recent years, women have been able to access equality driven policies like reservation and quota systems. That has helped ensure their participation in the foreign service. However, it still remains a dismal number and much remains for true equality to be seen. Not to mention, more capacity needs to be built in women for them to access and enjoy fuller rights in the professional arena.

Most of the administrative positions in foreign service and other departments have been historically dominated by Brahmin and Chhetri men. Thus, it can be seen that there is not only a gender issue here but also intersectional issues of class, caste and more.

In terms of what can be done, the two elements of a feminist egalitarian ideology—economic independence and the equal distribution of housework and childrearing—have proven to be successful in countries across the world and specifically a research on lesbian black families (Moore, 2008).

Women in Politics

The representation of women in politics was considerably low in the past. Women's participation in politics from the year 2007 is observed to have increased as the Comprehensive Peace Accord was signed on 21 November 2006 between the Government of Nepal and the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoists) ending the decade long civil war in the country that began in 1996. With the incoming of peace, and better law and order situation in the country, and provisions in the constitution, the number of women in political leadership started to grow.

The number of women in politics of Nepal from the years 1990-2018 has been shown in the table below:

Indicator Name	1990	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments (%) in NEPAL	6.1	3.4	3.4	5.9	5.9	5.9	5.9	5.9	5.9	5.9	5.9	17.3	33.2	33.2	33.2	33.2	33.2	33.2	29.5	29.5	29.6	29.6	32.7

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union (ipu.org)

The 2017/18 elections of Nepal across all three tiers of the government has resulted in women holding 40.79% of political positions in the country. At the local level, a total of 14, 349 women are now representing the local constituencies. Despite extremely encouraging numbers, the issue is that most of the seats have been filled as per the requirements of reservation/ quotas, and not independently of quotas (Election Commission of Nepal, 2017).

There have been positive policy frameworks and legislative provisions in Nepal, yet the overall scenario of gender equality in Nepal remains less than satisfactory. Some key statistics on women's status in Nepal show that women's ownership of property is 26%, households headed by women are 25.7%. Similarly, the representation of women in the civil service is 17%, the literacy rate is 57.4%, and the labour participation of women is 54%.

Also, the Gender Gap Index is 0.489, the female Human Development Index stands at 0.521. When it comes to gender-based violence among women, it is 26%. Similarly, 37% of girls in Nepal are still married before the age of 18. The percentage of Gender Responsive Budget was 22.3 in the fiscal year 2015/16 (MoF, 2017).

Since the change in political scenario of Nepal in 2006, Nepal has come a long way on inclusion of women in state institutions. Proportionally, Nepal has more number of women in the national legislature than other countries in Asia. However, it is due to the constitutional provision which forces the political parties to ensure a minimum of 33% representation of women in the legislature. Except for the women in legislature, the number of women in the Cabinet has remained consistently low and even inside the political parties themselves- whether it is the Nepal Communist Party (NCP), Nepali Congress (NC), the Socialist Party- Nepal, or the Rastriya Janata Party Nepal, the biggest political parties of Nepal. For example. The 441-member central committee of the ruling Nepal Communist Party only consists of 75 women which is 17%, and the 84-member central working committee of the Nepali Congress consists of 17 women, which is 20.24% (Bhattarai, 2019).

After the promulgation of the interim constitution in 2007, in the 10 cabinets that have been formed, none of those cabinets had close to 33% of representation of women. It is often cited that even in the legislature, representation has been ensured only due to the fact that the Election Commission can reject the lists forwarded to them unless adequate representation of women is there. However, in the appointment of constitutional bodies and ambassadorial positions, the EC cannot impose its decision, and thus, the parties are unwilling to provide due spaces to women (Bhattarai, 2019). It is only the legal and constitutional mechanisms that are driving parties to bring in inclusion but they are still openly giving continuity to the patriarchal status quo, and do not believe women to be fit to take up roles of leaders and win elections. In spite of women being represented in key decision-making bodies, they have been mostly relegated to the posts of deputies in local bodies and state ministers in provincial governments (Bhattarai, 2019).

In the nine-member secretariat, there are no women in the NCP. In the 45-member standing committee, there are only three women, which is 6.67%. Similarly, in the 441-member

central committee, there are only 75 women as mentioned earlier. In the party's provincial committees, where the total number of committee members is 1,338, there are only 271 women (20.25%) (Bhattarai, 2019).

The situation is quite similar even for the main opposition party- Nepali Congress. In its eight-member 'office bearer', there is only one woman present. In the 84-member central working committee, there are only 17 women as aforementioned.

Even the Terai-based parties which have vehemently raised the issue of inclusion, have not been successful in ensuring presence of enough women in their party structures. The 268-member committee of the Socialist Party of Nepal has only 28 women which is 10.44%. Similarly, the Rastriya Janata Party Nepal has an 815-member central committee out of which only 129 are women (Bhattarai, 2019).

Historical Evolution of Women's Representation in Political Parties of Nepal

(i) Nepali Congress: The first central working committee elected in 1947 did not comprise of even a single woman. The second CWC elected in 1950 did not have any women either. None of the CWCs elected before 1960 had any women representatives. The 31-member CWC elected in 1960 was represented by one woman. In the Panchayat regime, there is no official record of CWC formation and women's representation due to banning of party's activities. After the restoration of democracy in 1990, there was some progress made in women's representation in the party. The 18-member CWC elected by the eighth general convention in 1992 had three women representatives. In 2001, the convention elected one woman in the 18-member CWC. And, in 2008, there were seven women representatives, increasing to 17 in 2010. Currently, there are 17 women representatives in the 85-member CWC (Bhattarai, 2019).

(ii) Communist Parties: There are no records of any woman in the central committee of the NCP from the 1950s to the 1990s. After the restoration of democracy, the CPN-ML was the mainstream community force, later renamed as CPN-UML. In the first 17-member central committee of the CPN-ML in 1989, there were no women. The fifth general convention of the CPN- UML held in 1992 elected one woman representative in its 34-member central committee. The sixth general convention in 1998 did not elect any woman as a CC member. The seventh general convention in 2003 elected four women in its 39-member CC, and eighth general convention in 2014 elected 22 women in its 93-member CWC, which although insufficient, was a good progress.

Former Maoists: The central committee formed in 1994 had no women representatives. In 2000, there were four women elected in the 51-member central committee. In 2004, there were nine women representatives. In 2006, two women representatives were elected in the 34-member central committee. In 2008, the Maoists elected only 13 women in the 125-member CC. In 2013, the party formed a 128-member CC with 23 women representatives.

In the House of Representatives, out of the 165 lawmakers elected under the First-past-the-post (FPTP) electoral system, only six of them are women. The political parties ensured the constitutional requirement by mostly selecting women in the Proportional Representation (PR) category. Out of the 275 House of Representatives members, 90 of them are women which is 32.7% (Bhattarai, 2019). Also, out of the 12 parliamentary committees present under the House of Representatives, women lawmakers are leading four of those committees.

Provincial Assemblies

When it comes to provincial assemblies, in the 93-member Provincial Assembly of province 1, there are 31 women. In province 2, of the 107-member Provincial Assembly there are

35 women, in province 3, out of the 110-member PA there are 36 women. Similarly, in Gandaki province there are 20 women out of 60 members. In province 5, there are 29 women out of the 87 members. There are 13 women in the 40-member PA in Karnali province, and 17 women in the 53-member PA in *Sudur Pashchim* province. However, in these provincial assemblies, all deputy speakers are women, reflecting clearly that women are only being given secondary roles and positions.

Women in Cabinet

Study of the cabinets formed after 2007 shows that women's representation has not been satisfactory. Following the promulgation of the Interim Constitution in 2007, 10 cabinets have been formed but none has had 33% of representation of women. The federal cabinet led by the Nepal Communist Party has 22 ministers and three state ministers. Out of the 22 ministers, only three are women- Minister for Women, Children and Senior Citizens, Minister for Water Supply, and Minister for Land Management, Cooperatives, and Poverty. And, out of the three state ministers, one is a woman- State Minister for Agriculture and Livestock. This clearly indicates a clear violation of the constitutional provision that requires 33% of women's representation in all state organs.

Even in provincial governments, provinces 1 and 3 do not have any women representation. In province 2, there are two state ministers, in Gandaki province, there is 1, in provinces 5 and Karnali province, there is 1 woman state minister each, and in province 7 there are 2 women state ministers.

Local Governments

The local polls elected a total of 35,041 representatives out of which 14,000 are women. It is the first time in the history of Nepal, where there is 40% of women's representation in local governments. The number of women has increased at the local levels due to the legal provision imposed by the EC to ensure 40% of all nominee seats to be reserved for women candidates, meaning between the mayor and the deputy mayor, and between the chair and deputy chair of rural municipalities political parties had to field at least one woman candidate (Bhattarai, 2019). However, the parties mostly picked men for the post of a mayor and women as deputy mayors. This is the reason why there are mostly women in the posts of deputy chiefs at the local level, once again showing a false sense of empowerment whereby, women are still not given primary leadership roles to play in the government.

Statistics show that there has been improvement, but women's representation in key decision-making bodies remains low. They have generally been relegated to the positions of deputies in local bodies and state ministers in provincial governments (Bhattarai, 2019). Meaningful women's participation is still a far reach. There is a serious need to go beyond tokenism and promote actual woman empowerment.

Political appointments for even public enterprises in Nepal such as Nepal Television, Radio Nepal, Gorkhapatra Corporation are all male.

Nepal guarantees gender equality through constitutional provisions, national policies, and is also a signatory to many international treaties, conventions, and declarations like Convention on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). These are a testament for Nepal to be legally committed to women's empowerment and gender equality. Similarly, the Agriculture,

Education, Forest, Health, Federal Affairs and General Administration, Urban Development, Water Supply and Sanitation sectors have adopted the Gender Equity and Social Inclusion policies and guidelines as of 2017.

In spite of the positive developments in plans, policies and legislations, there are setbacks that are hindering Nepal's journey to achieving gender equality. Policies and plans that lack a knowledge base, unavailability of adequate data and research and lack of easy access to it, limited institutional capacity and an effective coordination mechanism are some of the major problems from an institutional perspective.

Foreign Policy of Nepal

The major objective of the foreign policy of Nepal is to “enhance the dignity of the nation by safeguarding sovereignty, territorial integrity, independence, and promoting economic wellbeing and prosperity of Nepal. It is also aimed at contributing to global peace, harmony and security” (MoFA).

It is guided by the following basic principles:

1. Mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty;
2. Non-interference in each other's internal affairs;
3. Respect for mutual equality;
4. Non-aggression and the peaceful settlement of disputes;
5. Cooperation for mutual benefit;
6. Abiding faith in the Charter of the United Nations;
7. Value of world peace.

Economic Diplomacy

One of the priority sectors of Nepal's foreign policy has been bolstering its economic diplomacy. Nepal has focused on advancing the agenda of economic diplomacy since 1990 after the restoration of democracy in Nepal. The need for economic growth and development in the country was felt leading to integration of Nepali economy into regional and global economies. The Government of Nepal has been focusing on the agenda of economic diplomacy since then in order to mainstream socio-economic development into the foreign policy objectives of the country. Development cooperation, foreign direct investment, promotion of tourism, promotion of export trade, and promotion of foreign employment are some of the priority areas that have been identified in economic diplomacy (MoFA, 2014). Whilst economic diplomacy is unquestionably a major priority in Nepal's foreign policy, the gender blindness can be felt in mainstream foreign policy dealings.

Foreign Policy Priorities

Similarly, the incumbent Prime Minister Right Honorable Mr. K.P. Sharma Oli charted out the renewed foreign policy priorities of Nepal in the wake of a stable government on 27th of March 2018. This is a more thorough elaboration of the foreign policy objectives of Nepal that it historically embodies i.e. the principles of *Panchasheel*. The foreign policy focus and priorities as spelled out at a luncheon hosted for the diplomatic community were namely: on relations with the neighbourhood, safety of migrant workers, multilateral engagements, global peace, security, development, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Human Rights, transitional justice, regional economic cooperation, and the pursuit of economic agenda (MoFA, 2019).

Major Differences

Taking 2006 as the starting point of reference, it can be observed that Sweden had long been on par with achieving gender equality with 47.3% of women representation. Nepal had a meagre 5.9% representation of women, which increased to 17.3% in 2007 after the Comprehensive Peace Accord came into being. The representation increased to 33% after 2008 till 2013, gradually going down and increasing to 32.7% in 2018. The data of Sweden shows that it has remained consistent always remaining over 45% throughout the years and 46.1% in 2018. Despite affirmative action for women, Nepal still needs to really empower women. Just as Sweden actually elected a female Foreign Minister, positions of hard politics actually need to be taken up by women in Nepal as well. This is perhaps the starkest difference between the two countries that Sweden seems to have internalized the issue of gender equality and women empowerment more deeply than Nepal at this point.

Some policies relating to paternal leave may also be helping women achieve higher equality as men need to take up equal responsibilities of child rearing and more time for family. In Sweden, men get up to 480 days of paid parental leave (Government of Sweden) whereas men only get 15 days of paternity leave in Nepal (Civil Service Regulations). In Nepal however, the role of a breadwinner, especially a sole one, is still only a man's job. It has to be taken into account that Sweden is a highly open society from the West whereas, Nepal is a more traditional and "conservative" country still governed by familial, societal and religious factors. In that manner too, the two are vastly different.

Key Similarities and Challenges

A common factor between women universally and in this case, Nepal and Sweden can be the glass ceiling phenomenon in diplomacy where women have difficulty being promoted beyond junior and mid-levels (Linse, 2004, p.253). As data shows, there is a clustering of women at the junior levels still, especially in Nepal. Women, even the ones in the profession, lack the opportunities or experiences necessary in order to get promoted. In order to curb the problem, the US Department of State had initiated a “mentor programme” as a vehicle that helped participants learn both cultural assumptions and expectations (Linse, 2004). The junior staff and officers were able to learn the culture of the organization as well as about the expectations required for advancement. Such programmes can and should be implemented in order to improve and better manage the employees in public offices and even women politicians. Especially with the changing times and advancement of technology, it is important to capacitate women in order to compete in their professions.

Problems of male chauvinism, higher expectations for women than for men are well known when it comes to working women, especially in foreign policy and politics which have largely been male dominated jobs in the past.

Another challenge for women has been balancing family and work, especially in the case of foreign postings. Employment of diplomatic spouses in the private sector is complicated by the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Privileges and Immunities (Linse, 2004, p. 259). Thus, the traditional roles of men as “breadwinners” of the family and women as the “dependents” is now changing but requires enough thought to be put into policies that lets both work easily. Also women’s access to existing resources should also be guaranteed (Linse, 2004, p.262).

Both Nepal and Sweden are socialism-oriented countries with an emphasis on welfare of its citizens. To what extent they have been able to materialize this is another matter of discussion entirely.

Also, violence against women especially rape cases have been on the rise in both countries despite movement in the direction of empowerment of women. This has often been attributed to the rise in public awareness and lesser social stigma. The Nepal Police data suggests that 1623 rape cases were registered across the country in the first eight months of the Fiscal Year 2018/19. Also, approximately per day six and per month 185 rape cases were registered in the Nepal Police. A total of 1,480 rape cases were recorded across the country in the fiscal year 2017/18 and 1,137 were registered in the fiscal year 2016/17 (Acharya, 2019). Likewise, the number of rapes reported to authorities in Sweden increased by 10 percent in 2017, according to figures from the country's National Council on Crime Prevention. Thus, we can see that the violence against women especially rape has been on an upsurge in both countries despite initiatives for gender equality and women empowerment. Now this may actually be a result of more public awareness and women feeling empowered enough to report the cases however, it goes on to show that the perpetrators still need to be dealt with and a more in-depth solution to this problem needs to be present.

Both Nepal and Sweden have shown positive actions towards representation and policies.

These are some of the key similarities between the two countries.

CHAPTER 7: SUMMARY/ CONCLUSION

Gendered power relations have been prevalent around the world and in Nepal since decades. With dominance over formal education, societal norms, national administration and politics, men have taken the forefront in almost all arenas, leaving women behind.

The role of women has primarily turned private and household-tending in contrast to men possessing greater authority over the public sphere and decision-making processes, ultimately becoming the societal norm.

Looking at the foreign policy objectives of Nepal, they are in fact multidimensional and all encompassing. However, policies do not work until they have recognized the human element in them, and Nepal's foreign policy seems to be lagging behind exactly there. The misconception that gender issues are exclusive to economic, environmental and security issues is obsolete, and the Handbook on Sweden's Feminist Foreign Policy is a testament to that.

Foreign policy is an extension of domestic policy and hence, a more inherent development of women that stems out in its local development projects and policies of Nepal is crucial for a FFP to pan out.

Nepal's focus on its geopolitical proximities, and an even deeper ambition for fostering investment in the country through its economic diplomacy is on the priority when it comes to determining its foreign policy. However, gender equality is not an exclusive agenda, and therefore, women's presence and perspectives are crucial to be established as a norm in all state apparatuses or even in the way of life.

A single voice of feminist foreign policy may not be possible owing to the intersectionalities present in the field itself, as well as the diversity of views within feminism itself. However, progress in achieving equality in the field of international relations as well as

making it more inclusive to address the world's problems and challenges is possible if proper attention to women, in terms of their representation and input in decision making processes is given.

Looking at Sweden's long history of working on gender equality, its socialism oriented government which has been highly effective in ensuring welfare of its citizens, and even the feminist foreign policy it brought into effect in the year 2014, it can be observed that it is equally necessary to look at the factors necessary for an effective implementation of a feminist foreign policy.

Nepal has indeed mainstreamed gender into its plans, policies, and projects. However, it should be understood that a feminist foreign policy goes well beyond gender mainstreaming: "it contains a normative reorientation of foreign policy that is guided by an ethically informed framework based on broad cosmopolitan norms of global justice and peace" (Aggestam & Bergman-Rosamond, 2016, p.323). The numbers have increased when it comes to representation, however, the decision making capacities, and self-agency in foreign policy making still seems like a far cry. First, women are mostly in the secondary positions at local levels- like sub mayors or vice chairs. Second, even the ones in authority seats fail to exercise their power due to lack of capacity, confidence, and exposure to the broader world. Opportunities for knowledge transfer, the outside world for women is still at a sub-optimal level in Nepal.

The meanings and practices related to gender in a society reflect unequal power relations within that society. Considering gender just as a subject of foreign policy is not sufficient as gender is also a set of relationships which affect how foreign policy is made and implemented. History is usually talked about with men in the acting grounds, and gender is usually referred to as actions of women. Current practices in foreign policy are still primarily defined by men and

within a masculine framework, and provide the norm for explaining foreign policy (Stienstra, 1994).

It should also be noted that practices and ideas based in gender relations are not static but respond to change in world and society. They must be considered in the historical context within which they appear and therefore cannot be made universal. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, when women were not encouraged to get involved in international diplomacy because it might have conflicted with their roles as wives, mothers and caretakers has changed to a large extent now (Stienstra, 1994). Women's increasing involvement in the paid labour force as well as peoples' understanding of who is responsible for the care of children is required for women to be in the forefront of decision making. However, the freedom and self-agency that women in Sweden practice is still not the same for Nepali women- especially rural, uneducated women. Also, the cultural and traditional roles and responsibilities observed by Nepali women is also not the same. Therefore, it is not smart to think that the status of Nepal and Sweden will be the same at a given time. It is not impossible, but there are hurdles of socio-cultural, economic and political dimensions. More women are getting involved in the public sector and the foreign service in Nepal but even then most of the participants are urban, moderately and highly educated who still have not been able to make an impact in the way foreign policymaking works.

Differences between men and women and the perspectives they bring into policymaking must be considered an asset. Also, mere focus on adding the number of women in these state apparatuses without considering their value addition, and the way for them to contribute meaningfully should be realized. Merely ““adding women” to existing frameworks exposes taken-for-granted assumptions embedded in those frameworks’ (Peterson, 1992). Moreover, when women's inclusion and exclusion is examined, recognizing that it is a result of unequal

power relations within society which systematically values what is masculine and undervalues that which is feminine, the gendered basis of foreign policy can be identified (Stienstra, 1994).

As mentioned earlier, the reason women have not been involved in traditional foreign policy and decision making structures can be explained from a gender lens where “socialization of girls in education and in families away from ‘public’ areas and towards supportive ‘private’ roles, the more ‘peace-able’ or conciliatory approaches of women as a result of their roles as mothers within the society prevent them from participating in areas often defined by conflict and war, and the resistance of the structures of ‘politics’, including political parties, to women’s participation.

Along with the reservation policies, it seems important that women be encouraged and motivated by the state to obtain university educations in international relations and attain the professional qualifications necessary for careers in fields that are related to international peace and cooperation through “institutional, educational and organizational means”. Gendered assumptions have to be done away with.

It is also assumed by foreign policy analysts that foreign policy is made only by elites within governments. It is then a question to be asked of why women have remained outside this elite circle. (Stienstra, 1994, p. 115).

Socialization, structural barriers, and women’s role as child bearers and rearers are some of the major reasons why women are not involved in the foreign policy decision making process. It is also important to note that the institutions of foreign policy are not only the bureaucracy, cabinet, and parliament but also include the educational processes for those who enter decision making roles and for policy analysts, international organizations, summits, high level meetings in which policies are expressed, and more.

A feminist foreign policy should therefore delve deeper than only adding women to the existing frameworks of Nepal's foreign policy and rather consider the impacts that policies have on people especially women's lives, ideas that support those practices, and the institutions which perpetuate them in order to understand how power relations and gender relations are shaped and how in turn, they shape Nepal's foreign policy.

Adding to the existing body of knowledge from a position of neutrality or objectivity is simply not enough. In order to incorporate gender, it should be asked whether the state is the major actor in foreign policy (Stienstra, 1994, p. 127). Women's experiences are implicitly or explicitly negated, men's knowledge and work is privileged, and unequal power relations between men and women is perpetuated. Therefore, the silence around women's absence from real policy making and decision making should be questioned and changed. Gender is still very much of a marginal and invisible issue and it is important to take it seriously.

A feminist foreign policy, looking at the best practices of Sweden, is evidently a major stride in terms of ensuring equality in voices and way of working where there is a balance in the way decisions are made, and operated. Analyzing the data in this research it is also clear that Nepal has made positive steps towards that direction through its constitution by guaranteeing of rights, reservation of seats in state apparatuses. However, the gender gap is still prevalent in foreign policy attitudes and especially Nepal where women in decision making positions, higher ranks are still too few. A kind of "nonchalant" attitude should be ideally present and men and women should be left alone from stereotypical gender biases.

A major factor that is missing in Nepal's foreign policy and can be learnt from the Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy is that it is a detailed framework which presents a "what-who-when-why-how" answers to how the foreign policy of the country is going to be worked out and

brought into implementation. An action-oriented foreign policy that caters to both men and women advantageously should therefore be prioritized in case of Nepal.

The statistics presented in the research clearly signify that although there have been positive steps in relation to legislation and provisions for representation, a true representation and empowerment of women in the political arena, and the foreign service is still a far cry. Women are still not “trusted” enough to handle leadership positions. Age old traditions and roles women have played in the households is one reason for that.

Moreover, the research has also explored on how political institutions are gendered. Gender should be understood as a “continuous, variable, and tenacious process” (Kenney, 1992, p.463). Women still have to “act” a certain way to establish themselves as reliable, and capable individuals and have to go to lengths to “prove” themselves when men do not have that ordeal to go through. Women’s experiences in male-dominated institutions have been captured in various researches, it is high time that women be given the much deserved and required space to function freely and to the best of their capacities in this day and age, especially in policy making roles that affect them.

When it comes to feminism and a feminist foreign policy, the comparison study between Sweden and Nepal was done because Sweden has been one of the pioneers in the realm. However, having said that, it is not unnoticed that there are numerous setbacks even in the Swedish system and that situation for women is still far from utopia due to reasons such as gender violence, refugee crisis and more. Yet, when it comes to adopting a fully feminist agenda in terms of foreign policy, Sweden is one of the most exemplary nations for it, and thus chosen for this research.

Even when it comes to other developed nations like the United States of America, women's representation is still dismal with only about 35% representation in foreign service. Thus, it should be understood that achieving gender balance is a work in progress and with proper and gender friendly institutional, policy level, and legal frameworks, a more inclusive state apparatus can be put in place.

The geopolitics of Nepal is sensitive and fragile, and should thus be handled carefully. Bringing a wider perspective and ways of operation when it comes to foreign policy should therefore be taken into account. Bringing in more women and their styles of handling complex political and foreign policy related decisions to become a societal norm is long due. Creating a healthy balance between nations through a feminist foreign policy and creating an international community of women and men alike that promote equality in the working sphere and policymaking. This can be a “niche diplomacy” for Nepal and work for its advantage as well.

In a nutshell, the increasing number of women in foreign policymaking and political institutions is indeed a remarkable feat but that alone cannot be taken as the end result. The gendering of institutions is a real thing, and women still do not have equal opportunities, treatment and avenues for achieving their full potential.

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