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What is Feminist Foreign Policy?

Analysis of Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy

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Abstract

This thesis explores what feminist foreign policy is and if this is evident in Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy. I conceptualize the essential purpose and elements of a feminist foreign policy through feminist theories and civil society research. I, then, examine Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy through critical discourse analysis to see if it embodies the essential characteristics of a feminist foreign policy. I argue that a feminist foreign policy is profoundly transformative in its conceptualization of security, power and implementation, and that Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy is ineffective in embodying this transformative potential for development and security. This thesis, thereby, situates Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy in the feminist framework, with the hope of contributing to better feminist policymaking and implementation.

Introduction

Making a bold affirmation of feminist ideals on an international stage, Canada launched Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy (CFIAP) in 2017 - marking an important milestone towards feminist development and feminist foreign policy. In this thesis, I explore the meaning of feminist foreign policy and how it is articulated in CFIAP. My central questions revolve around what is a feminist approach to development and security? What is a feminist foreign policy? How is Canada doing in terms of feminist foreign policy? This thesis therefore examines feminist analysis on the meaning of security and if these meanings have adequately been translated into policy. I assert that a feminist foreign policy is profoundly transformative in its conceptualization of security, in its analysis of power and its implementation approach. I will argue that Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy - as it is currently articulated - is ineffective in actualizing the transformative feminist vision of development and security because it fails to conceptualize security as transformational change to structural violence; it fails to engage in transformative analysis of gender power relations; and it is inadequate in essential feminist implementation approaches. This will be argued by examining the meaning of feminist foreign policy through feminist theories; outlining civil society perspectives on what a feminist approach to implementation entails; and by employing a critical discourse analysis to analyze CFIAP through this feminist lens.

Looking Back: Canada and Gender Equality in Foreign Policy

An examination of a contemporary policy such as CFIAP must be considered in relation to broader and historical commitments. Canada has a history of being considered a world leader in promoting women's rights and a pioneer of gender equality policy in the international arena (Tiessen & Carrier 96-97). The Canadian Constitution explicitly enshrines gender equality in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. All of Canada's federal departments have committed to gender equality and gender analysis through the 1995 *Federal Plan for Gender Equality*. Canada has ratified all the major international human rights treaties including the *UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW) – a landmark human rights treaty that binds states to eliminate all acts of discrimination against women, including unintentional discriminatory impacts on women - and the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.

Furthermore, Canada's international initiative for gender equality dates back four decades to 1976, when the then Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) formally committed to a 'women in development' (WID) approach in realization of the fact that "development projects that had not addressed gender relations were likely to fail" (Tiessen, *Gender Equality and the "Two CIDAs" 191*). As the increasing international recognition of women's contribution to world peace and the attention paid to women in development with the 1975 First World Conference on Women in Mexico City and the United Nations Decade for Women that followed (1976-1985), CIDA came to centrally feature issues of gender inequality and gender division of labour in its development programs in the 1970s (191). CIDA's WID approach in the 1970s recognized the different roles men and women played and mainly focused on promoting women's participation in development projects via "a comprehensive framework

for involving women in all stages of the project cycle” (192). In 1981, Canada ratified CEDAW and in 1983, a WID Directorate was established by CIDA to support its *1984 Policy on Women in Development*, to which a five-year WID Plan of Action was put in place in 1986 (192).

Gender equality work led by CIDA in the 1980s was regarded in the world as the cutting-edge practice of the times (Tiessen & Carrier 96).

In the 1990s, Canada once again paved the way in innovating gender equality policy and promoting gender equality globally. With growing international clout for donors to commit to gender equality, as was the case at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, of which Canada was a participant, CIDA’s 1984 WID policy was revised in 1995 to emphasize a gender equity approach (CIDA’s Policy on Gender Equality 1). This resulted in the *1995 Policy on Women in Development and Gender Equality*, which went on to become a model to be used and replicated widely by other countries in their own policy development work (CIDA’s Policy on Gender Equality 1).

In addition, Canada at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing came to be known as an active and successful player, where “several of the major precedent setting advances in the PFA [Platform for Action] resulted from Canadian initiatives,” such as the definition of rape as a war crime, and Canadian delegates played significant roles in incorporating sophisticated gender perspectives to the discussions (Riddell-Dixon 3). As a result of ratifying the Beijing Platform for Action, Canada committed to using the Gender Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) framework to advance gender equality policies and programs across all the federal departments (Status of Women Canada). GBA+ is a gender analysis tool that all Canadian federal officials are expected to utilize in their work in order to develop effective programs, policies and legislation, as conducting cross-sectional gender analysis (including race,

class, ethnicity, disability etc.) produces more responsive and appropriate outcomes (Status of Women Canada). GBA+ is thus another demonstration of Canada's commitment to building capacity for gender equality policies at the federal level, including in its foreign policy.

However, one of the most momentous displays of Canada's commitment to gender equality in foreign policy came in 1999, when CIDA launched *Policy on Gender Equality*, championing gender equality as a cross-cutting theme in *all* of Canada's development assistance, setting the expectation for *all* CIDA investments "to advance gender equality to some degree" (Bytown and CAC 4). This affirmed that women's perspectives, interests and needs must be addressed as equal to men and that this was an integral part of Canada's development agenda. In other words, CIDA officially committed to making gender equality an essential part of Canada's foreign policy. Subsequently, an action plan on gender equality was created in 2010 to bolster the *Policy on Gender Equality*: "The action plan provided opportunities for more and improved gender training for government officials, improved implementation and reporting strategies, and development education to share results of gender equality programming with Canadians" (Tiessen, *Gender Essentialism* 87).

Another substantial commitment Canada has made to promote gender equality internationally is Canada's promotion of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. Canada chaired the Working Group of the United Nations Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security. Tiessen notes how Lloyd Axworthy, former minister of foreign affairs, drew attention to this issue so much that "Canada is one of the five states that most frequently mentions UNSC Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security at the United Nations General Assembly" (*Gender Essentialism* 88). The then Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade has even claimed that "the protection and

advancement of women's human rights remains a central foreign policy priority for Canada" substantiating the importance of women's rights in Canada's foreign policy objectives (Tiessen, *Gender Essentialism* 89). Such discourses precipitated the development of *Canada's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security* (CNAP), which was released in 2010. CNAP emphasizes the need to increase the participation of women and girls in all peace and security efforts, to protect their human rights (including from sexual violence), and to ensure their equal access to humanitarian and development assistance (Canada's Action Plan...for WPS, international.gc.ca). Implementation of CNAP is not only carried out by the policies and programs at Global Affairs Canada, it is also done in a whole-of-government approach, along with the Department of National Defence and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (Canada's Action Plan...for WPS, international.gc.ca). When the first CNAP expired as of March 31, 2016, the Government announced its commitment to a renewal and the second CNAP was launched on November 1, 2017.

As can be seen, Canada has a history of being a rhetorical pioneer for gender equality in the world, dating back decades to 1970s: "Gender equality as a policy objective was heralded around the world by Canadian diplomats and became synonymous, over time, with Canada's promotion of internationalism, equality and social justice" (Tiessen & Carrier 97). Canada has displayed leadership in gender equality on an international stage and has made numerous commitments to promote gender equality in foreign policy, through its Constitution, federal policies, institutional practices, international treaties, gatherings and diplomatic discourse.

In 2009, however, Canada's leadership on gender equality regressed when the Harper conservative government effectively edited gender equality "out of official Canadian foreign policy" and discursively replaced it with "equality between women and men" (Tiessen & Carrier

95). Tiessen and Carrier argue the implications for this change in foreign policy resulted in the diminished meaning of gender equality, where the symptoms of women's oppression were highlighted instead of approaching gender equality as a systemic issue, resulting in negative effects for Canada's development programs (108). The Harper government's conservative agenda instrumentally used essentialized depictions of women in the Third World to further state objectives and was antagonistic to the feminist paradigm, thereby damaging Canada's reputation as a leader in gender equality (Tiessen & Carrier 108-109).

Judging from the Harper history of gender equality in foreign policy, the debut of CFIAP in 2017 is a fierce re-commitment to Canada's tradition in gender equality and a repudiation of conservative's attack on feminist ideals. Which begs the question: How committed and effective is CFIAP for progressing Canada's expertise and leadership in gender justice? What are the implications of CFIAP's rhetorical commitment and what can we learn from the language of CFIAP in relation to its potential for feminist development and transformative change? A discussion of the scholarship on feminist foreign policy is examined next to ground this inquiry.

What is Feminist Foreign Policy?

Feminist foreign policy is policy that is embedded in a feminist approach to development and security. It entails a new way of conceptualizing and implementing foreign policy - a foreign policy that is rooted in feminist analysis and principles, away from the traditional and ineffective realist and liberal security approaches. In this section, I examine the meaning of feminist foreign policy and what it entails by drawing on feminist literature on the meaning of security and gender power relations. I argue that feminist foreign policy is transformative in its conceptualization of security and in its analysis of power. This will be argued by outlining what is meant by transformative change; how feminist foreign policy redefines traditional foreign policy through feminist conceptualization of security; and how feminist foreign policy politicizes power relations as gendered structural violence. This section provides the theoretical grounding for what constitutes a feminist foreign policy.

Transformative Change

The term ‘transformative’ in this thesis refers to transformational change that achieves “substantive freedoms” (Sen 33), which addresses the status quo of structural and systemic inequalities that harm or reduce people’s rights and well-being. Development and security are not about mere economic growth, eradication of poverty, achieving peace or formal recognition of rights. Rather, they are about the quality of freedoms and well-being of the people. Even if a country achieves peace, develops economically and eradicates poverty, there can be tremendous injustices and inequalities that hinder the quality of people’s lives and freedoms, such as violations of formal rights, patriarchy, cultural discrimination, lack of job opportunities, racism, unequal wealth distribution, political disfranchisement, oppressive cultural, economic or political

institutions, poor health and education systems, etc. Being able to meet “the minimum levels of income, food, clothing, healthcare, shelter and other essentials” therefore, rising out of absolute poverty (Todaro and Smith 2) is merely meeting the bare minimum requirements for survival. Substantive freedom demands more than this kind of basic survival.

Substantive freedom is not only freedom from external restrictions or restraints such as poverty or conflict, it is also the freedom to be in control of one’s own life. It is the freedom *to* self-determination, not bound by the oppressive structures of society. Substantive freedom is about being able to exercise true free choice, the actualization of one’s potential to do and be as one wishes, free from harm. Substantive freedom thereby necessitates bringing about a systemic change to the unfavorable and unsatisfactory status quo and creating an enabling environment to uplift people’s human rights, freedoms and well-being. Inequalities that harm or reduce people’s rights and well-being may be social, political, cultural or economic in nature. They are expressed in unequal distribution of power and resources; they may be entrenched into national institutions, laws, systems or into social and cultural attitudes. Substantive freedom is concerned with the quality of people’s lives as it requires people to have the freedom to act, to decide and to have the opportunities and abilities to bring about change to their lives (Sen 17-19). Transformative change is applying systemic changes to the unfavorable structures in place so that people have substantive social, political, cultural, economic freedoms to self-determine their own lives. This type of freedom necessitates redistribution of socio-political power by treating the root causes of the illness, not merely its symptoms. Put simply, transformative change is change that achieves real freedoms that people enjoy by addressing the causes of the unfreedoms (Sen 37).

Conceptualizing Security: Feminist Foreign Policy Redefines Traditional Foreign Policy

Traditional meaning of security in the international realm has been dominated by the realist and liberal thoughts, which employ top-down approaches of conceptualizing the state as the main actor in security. Realism argues that “the key actors in world politics are sovereign states...that act rationally to advance their security, power and wealth in an anarchic international system” whereby such anarchy induces “insecurity and a continuous competition for power” (Sjoberg 18). Generally, realism sees threats to security arising from an anarchic international system, so security is derived from states constantly vying for dominance and power over each other. On the other hand, the liberal discourse of security also focuses on the top-down approach of the state playing the central role of manufacturing security; this is mainly achieved through governance, by utilizing diplomacy, institution building, as well as market based economic and democratic liberalization (Paris 56; Buchan 407-408). Evidently, realism and liberalism both place the state at the center of acting in matters of security, imparting the state with the purpose of responding to threats of conflict. This pairing of security with state and conflict thus genders the international realm as a masculine sphere, which provides for a very limited vision of what security entails.

Following from the above traditional conceptualizations of security, different strands of feminist thoughts have contributed to what security should mean in the context of gender inequalities. Although different in their analysis and strategies, what they all have in common is concern for state's impact on women's security - namely women's social, economic and political well-being. Contrary to conventional security theories, feminists' definition of security is rooted in the personal and the individual, not the state: “...feminist theorizing starts from women's experiences of everyday life” (Wibben 2) and generally, feminists “define security broadly in

multidimensional and multilevel terms – as the diminution of all forms of violence, including physical, structural and ecological” (Tickner, *You Just Don’t Understand* 624). Therefore, security means not only security from war but also security from other forms of violence such as “domestic violence, rape, poverty, gender subordination and ecological destruction” (Sjoberg, *Gender and International Security* 4). From here, feminists expose and challenge the deep-rooted masculinist gender bias in mainstream realist and liberal thinking, which reveal that “the world is characterized by gender hierarchies that are detrimental to women” (Tickner, *You Just Don’t Understand* 619). Feminist principles thereby *transform* traditional notions of security by using gender power relations as a central category of analysis, by asserting that women’s insecurities are caused by structural inequalities which are “built into the historical legacy of the modern state and the international system of which it is a part” (Tickner, *You Just Don’t Understand* 625). This traditional structure of international security is itself gendered as domestic/international and domination/subordination, which are false binaries as they are fundamentally indivisible. For example, in many of the wars today, it is actually the state threatening its own population either through direct violence or through structural violence (Tickner, *A Feminist Voyage* 23). For feminists, true security thus necessitates elimination of gender relations of domination and subordination built into the structural system (Tickner, *Gender in International Relations* 23). In this way, feminist foreign policy affirms that gender deeply matters in international security and foreign policy. Gender matters because it is conceptually necessary for achieving solutions for international security, in order to discern causes of insecurities and to prevent insecurities (Sjoberg, *Gender and International Security* 5). Feminist foreign policy’s concept of security thus departs from the narrow conceptualization of security offered by the traditional realist and liberal thoughts, and builds foreign policy around a

more transformative and comprehensive feminist conceptualization of security, which targets the root causes of women's insecurity, namely the state's gendered structural violence.

Analysis of Power: Feminist Foreign Policy Politicizes Power Relations

Despite rich alternative feminist visions to traditional notions of security, it is unfortunately the liberal feminist conceptualization of security that has been, and still currently is, serving as the dominant paradigm when it comes to promoting women's rights in the international arena. This manifests in important milestone policies such as the Women, Peace and Security Agenda and its United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. Liberal feminist perspective on security aims to insert women into the male-dominant security discourse. It asserts that both femininity and masculinity play a role in international politics and brings attention to the invisibility of women in international security (Sjoberg, *Gender and International Security* 3; People et al 37-38). Their idea of transformative change is to start including women into the existing international security structures because states will be less violent internationally when women are integrated into states' institutions and through women-inclusive policies (Caprioli & Boyer 516). Liberal feminism thus employs the Women in Development's (WID) 'add women and stir' approach where women are to be merely included as actors in the existing international political processes. This approach is problematic and ineffective as it accepts the security agenda set forth by the dominant discourse and essentializes women as a whole. Moreover, it presents power as something to be acquired through instrumentalizing women in the international arena, rather than viewing power as "a structural relation that is in itself gendered" (Cornwall et al 1).

Feminist vision of security that is to serve as the foundation for a feminist foreign policy is more sophisticated in its analysis of power and therefore more expansive and transformative. It acknowledges that there is no essential experience of women's insecurity because women's experiences cannot be universalized across time, space, race, class and culture. Instead of making women more visible in the existing structure or raising awareness on women's views and experiences, feminist foreign policy rather works to transform people's dominant gendered assumptions of masculinity and femininity. As post-structuralist feminists argue, there is no concrete reality of 'women' and their authentic lived experiences of gender. Masculinity and femininity is discursively produced: "the idea of 'the authentic' experience is itself a particular discursive construction rather than something that can be uncovered 'in reality'" (Shepherd 24). So instead of conceptualizing security from 'lived experiences,' it is important to examine what security means in intersectional systems of hierarchy, such as racism, sexism, classism, colonialism, religion, sexuality, caste, ethnicity, age etc. and how gendered identities "(re)produce these structural insecurities" (Peterson 32). This requires active reflection on how gender, class, race and other relations of power are reproduced and acknowledge that the state "institutionalizes and reproduces (through sanctions, cultural forms, education, policy, regulation, law) the *legitimation* of social hierarchy" as well as what is legitimate or illegitimate violence (Peterson 39). In other words, feminist foreign policy recognizes that the state is a producer of gendered power relations and insecurity. Feminist foreign policy thus *politicizes* structural violence and how that structural violence is socially constituted and how it implicates international security (Peterson 50). Consequently, security means imploding the state's current notions of gender (such as the gendered public/private distinction legitimized through the construction of femininity and masculinity) and reconstructing the state's dominant discourse on

citizenship, identity and power – in essence, our gendered ways of being and knowing (Shepherd 23). For example, in order for women to actively overcome their insecurities and marginalization through their participation in powerful public roles, it is necessary to dismantle the notion of “how the proper public person acts and reasons [as] one that concurs with the masculinity assumptions previously reserved for men” (Shepherd 23).

Following from this, a crucial layer to this power analysis is masculinities. Since root causes of women’s insecurities are situated in unequal gender power relations, feminist foreign policy asserts that gender is not just about women but also about men, masculinities and the interconnected nature of men’s and women’s lives. Feminist foreign policy thus employs analysis of gender power relations and understands the concept of gender, not simply as ‘women,’ but as fluid concepts of masculinities and femininities. In other words, feminist foreign policy’s gender analysis goes beyond merely fixing masculinities and femininities to sexed bodies of men and women (Butler 10); instead, it recognizes that “gender is a way in which social practice is ordered” (Connell 71) where masculinities and femininities are not concrete, uniform categories but rather fluid social structures of gender practice. For example, hegemonic masculinity signifies the hierarchies among various masculinities where subordinate masculinities as well as femininities are ranked and marginalized in the social order, permitting “men’s collective dominance over women” which includes violence that perpetuates gender dominance (Connell & Messerschmidt 840). In this way, men’s performance of masculinities on an individual level as well as the entrenchment of masculinities institutionally in the state system maintains the state’s structural violence: “...the role of gender in international relations perpetuates gendered hierarchies that value the masculine over the feminine to the detriment of women’s and certain men’s real security” (Romaniuk & Wasyleiw 24). Having this nuanced

view of men and masculinities and how it relates to femininities and gender power relations is critical in grounding a feminist foreign policy.

Consequently, feminist foreign policy does not view masculinities and femininities as binary and fixed. Rather, it views gender as fluid and malleable: “construction of the male as protector and the woman as dependent can be either reversed or abolished outright” (Romaniuk & Wasylciw 26). Such concepts of gender hierarchy and gender fluidity is useful in providing insight into how male identities are constructed in relation to women and how notions of gender are, in fact, in constant change and flux. Consequently, these concepts open up the possibility of re-imagining what security is through counter-visions of institutionalized gender practices. In these ways, feminist foreign policy is transformative in its analysis of power. It departs from equating gender as women and looks to gender as fluid conceptions of masculinity and femininity, where its dominant gendered assumptions can be transformed. It politicizes structural violence and considers how insecurities are constituted from intersectional hierarchies such as gender, race, class, sexuality and culture - markers of structural social practice, which are not fixed but transformable.

Methodology

I situate my analysis of Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy (CFIAP) in the above theories and concepts that identify feminist foreign policy to be profoundly transformative in its conceptualization of security and in its analysis of power. A feminist foreign policy aims to change the status quo of structural and systemic inequalities that negatively affect women's security; that is their social, economic and political well-being. Feminist foreign policy accepts that there is no essential experience of women's insecurity so it does not concern itself with essentialist notions of gender but it seeks, instead, to transform the dominant assumptions of femininity and masculinity. Furthermore, it conceptualizes security from lived experiences of women within the intersectional systems of hierarchy. For feminist foreign policy, gender does not mean women. It equates gender as gender power relations; which means it engages in power analysis of men, masculinities and the interconnected nature of men and women's lived experiences of security.

Grounded in the above theoretical framework, there are two parts to my findings: review of civil society perspectives on feminist foreign policy implementation and discourse analysis of CFIAP. First, I examine civil society perspectives on actualizing and implementing feminist foreign policy. Given that it is civil society who directly works in implementation and has actual on-the-ground knowledge of gender power dynamics, I wanted to know what a feminist approach to development and security is according to civil society. For this, I reviewed the International Assistance Review (IAR) submissions by civil society that had specific inputs on the feminist approach, as well as a Canadian Association for the Study of International Development (CASID) report. This CASID report contains interviews with 20 Canadian development practitioners, academics and women's rights activists from the Women, Peace and

Security Network Canada (WPSN-C). As a research assistant for a CASID research project, I was actively involved in the collection of data through these interviews and am very familiar with the findings of this study. While this research was not conducted for the purpose of this thesis, the responses are highly instructive for considering the predominantly civil society views on feminist foreign policy among members of the WPSN-C. The interview asks specific questions regarding their thoughts on the essential characteristics of a feminist foreign policy as well as the opportunities and challenges for its implementation. Surveying the civil society IAR submissions and the interviews conducted for the CASID study described above, my findings draw out several themes and key discourses on the most effective implementation approach to feminist foreign policy.

Additionally, I analyzed the CFIAP document and related official government statements to consider the discourse used and to examine how this policy document produces a particular version of a feminist foreign policy. I have particular interest in examining how Canada discursively constructs the truth of what feminist foreign policy means from its vantage point of the state, and in disrupting the ideology of that truth and revealing its ineffectiveness from the feminist vantage point of scholars, practitioners and civil society members. As Foucault articulates, ‘truth’ is discursively produced by power, as “each society has its regime of truth, its ‘general politics’ of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true... ‘Truth’ is centred on the form of scientific discourse and the institutions which produce it” (Foucault 131). Since Canada has boldly declared its international assistance policy to be ‘feminist,’ I want to find out if its discursive production of a feminist foreign policy aligns with the transformative feminist vision of academia and civil society. I define discourse in this paper as “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (Foucault, *The*

Archaeology of Knowledge 49). In other words, discourse is a practice that representationally and constitutively articulates a way of seeing the world (Litosseliti and Sunderland13).

I employ a critical discourse analysis (CDA) to determine the extent to which CFIAP's nature, content and wording evidence a feminist foreign policy and to identify its strengths and weaknesses. CDA posits "language as a means of social construction" (Machin and Mayr 4) and is interested in drawing the link between language, power and ideology and "to draw out and describe the practices and conventions in and behind texts that reveal political and ideological investment" (Machin and Mayr 4). Specifically, CDA considers power relations to be discursive. This means that power is transmitted, practiced and negotiated through discourse. It assumes discourse has "major ideological effects: that is, they can help produce and reproduce unequal power relations between (for instances) social classes, women and men, and ethnic groups, through the ways in which they represent things and position people" (Fairclough et al. 80). Although discourse and texts can appear as mere common sense and seemingly natural representation of topic at hand, a deeper analysis can unmask the kinds of political ideology buried in the discourse and reveal discourse as social practice (Fairclough et al. 80; Machin and Mayr 4-5). CDA examination of CFIAP is useful as its discourse and language are used to paint specific conceptualizations of gender, power and positionality in an official international assistance policy of Canada, thereby framing how Canada understands and institutionalizes feminist foreign policy through the ideas, priorities and discourses in CFIAP. I'm interested in how the discourse in CFIAP represent what a feminist foreign policy is, the particular views, practices, ideas, and values that Canada deems as a representational and constitutive of a feminist foreign policy, and how that compares to the vision of a feminist foreign policy I have outlined in the previous section. CDA allows me to take CFIAP's feminist framing critically by

examining the way CFIAP has chosen to represent a feminist foreign policy, and by problematizing such conceptualization in relation to the larger academic and civil society's identification of transformational change as an essential element of a feminist foreign policy.

I began the research for this thesis by reviewing various documents like Canada's National Action Plan on Women, Peace & Security, government reports and grey literature such as International Assistance Review submissions, blogs, academic and civil society writings on feminist foreign policy, CASID report and interviews, as well as relevant speeches by government officials to get a sense of the already existing knowledge and discourse surrounding feminist foreign policy. From this, I theorized on the essential elements of a feminist foreign policy. I read upon CDA from several books and considered its various methods from Machin and Mayr's *How to Do Critical Discourse Analysis* guidebook on conducting CDA. Then I read through CFIAP and applied CDA's representational strategies and lexical analysis by paying careful attention to the way Canada has chosen to represent its feminist vision and practice via the recurrent words and ideas in CFIAP. I looked for the repeated words, themes, suggestions, representations of feminism within CFIAP that correspond to and deviate from my definition of a feminist foreign policy.

There are limitations and other considerations to this research that need to be noted. First, feminisms are not a monolithic body. I acknowledge that there are diverse views within the topic of feminism and foreign policy (both in theory and in civil society) of what a feminist foreign policy is and what its ultimate aims and processes should be. The definition of a feminist foreign policy in this thesis is the product of my own assertion after having read through the feminist literature produced by academics and practitioners and having gathered the common themes within them. My concept of feminist foreign policy is not necessarily a universally shared view

but a subjective definition that tries to weave the main common threads of diverse feminist views. Second, the civil society literature I chose to focus on are also not representative of all the different views of Canadian civil society. I narrowed my focus specifically to civil society submissions on the topic of feminist foreign policy to the IAR and civil society interviews included in the CASID report that specifically asks interview questions regarding feminist foreign policy. The interviewees are all from the WPSN-C network and therefore reflect a narrow selection of civil society viewpoints. However, these participants were chosen because WPSN-C has worked closely with the Canadian government over the past several years on the Women, Peace and Security Agenda and members of the network are representative of civil society and have practical experience in deeply engaging with feminist foreign policy concepts. Third, CDA as a research method has a number of criticisms, which include questions about its reliability and impartiality. Despite this, I believe CDA is the appropriate method to be applied here, as I needed to analyze the discourse in CFIAP in a critical manner. Although CDA may rely on a subjective interpretation of the text, it further reinforces my own positionality as a feminist scholar. Fourth, I would like to note that my criticism of CFIAP in this thesis is not a rejection of Canada's feminist foreign policy. I am proud that Canada has chosen to explicitly pursue a feminist agenda in foreign policy and I am certain it is moving towards a more positive direction. The purpose of my critique and analysis is to contribute to more in-depth dialogue and examination of how CFIAP fits into the broader feminist framework, and thereby to hopefully facilitate better feminist policymaking and implementation.

Civil Society: Feminist Foreign Policy Has Transformative Implementation Approaches

Feminist foreign policy's implementation approach follows its transformative vision of security and analysis of power. The core focus of this implementation approach is to bring about transformative change of gender power dynamics as informed by the gender and security analysis of a given context. This requires a departure from the approach of just 'gender mainstreaming' (Parpart 383-384), which follows the liberal model of inserting and counting the numbers of women involved in a project or merely inserting the notion of gender equality in service delivery as an add-on. Instead, feminist foreign policy embeds its vision of structural change into a comprehensive practice with the aim of its interventions being genuinely transformative, not simply palliative. In this section, I review civil society perspectives on the essential elements to feminist foreign policy implementation. It is important to voice civil society's views on feminist foreign policy because first, they are the direct implementers of policy; second, they have tangible real life experience of how gender power dynamics play out on the ground, which puts them in the unique position of knowing how best to approach development and security from a feminist perspective.

Surveying the civil society submissions from the International Assistance Review and civil society interviews from a Canadian Association for the Study of International Development (CASID) report, my findings below outline the specific implementation approaches that a feminist foreign policy needs to adhere to: Feminist foreign policy implements a feminist vision; it has dedicated resources; it is an interconnected approach; it addresses root causes at the structural level to transform systems of power; it has robust standards of accountability; it commits to long-term change; it is a policy of solidarity; it supports grassroots women's movements; and it puts women's security at the center of analysis.

Feminist Vision

According to civil society, a feminist approach is not a ‘gender sensitive’ or ‘gender equality’ approach but a whole new vision of how a government engages its foreign policy. This means that instead of making sure the programs are gender sensitive or have gender equality objectives or have quotas for women, it is actually “restructuring and rethinking our foreign policy” (CASID interview 92) to pursue a policy that is “unlike any other policy we have ever seen” (CASID interview 52). It is breaking away with traditional models of foreign policy to adopt a brand new vision – a feminist vision – that “will dictate who, how, where you engage” (CASID interview 92) and asks “how does this initiative address power and structural barriers to gender equality?” at the beginning of all foreign policy decision making (Action Canada et al 1): “A feminist approach is fundamentally new; it is not simply about improving upon what has been done. It’s about being bold in our ambition to move the needle forward. It’s about rethinking how we work and who we work with” (Action Canada et al 2). At the core of a feminist foreign policy lies the feminist vision of transformational change through challenging unequal structural gender power relations, championing accountability for structural violence, and this core vision dictates all aspects of policy implementation - including the reason for pursuing foreign relations work, how we go about this work, who we choose to engage with and where we put in our efforts. This vision puts women’s security at the center of analysis because it recognizes that development cannot happen without security that ensures the safety of all people, and that women are disproportionately impacted by the lack of security. A feminist approach is, thus, about adopting this whole new vision and *raison d’être* for foreign policy, with all aspects of the policy intended for carrying out its feminist vision to transform the root causes of conflict and development challenges.

Root Causes

Civil society emphatically stressed that a feminist approach is about targeting the root causes to bring about transformational change: “feminist approach must seek to address the root causes of structural and systemic inequalities and transform systems of power, many of which are grounded in social constructions of gender and patriarchal attempts to control women’s bodies and choices” (Action Canada et al 2). A feminist approach to development and security is seated in actual, tangible, transformative justice. It is not seated in palliative care that only targets the symptoms of inequality. It, thus, starts its analysis from the very root causes of problems – which, for gender inequality, is the structural and systemic organization of power. It does this because targeting the root causes is the only way for bringing resolution to the problems: “A feminist approach has to begin with understanding the root causes of gender inequality, in order to do that we have to think about cultural practices and cultural norms that are perpetuated by both men and women within different normative frameworks. I think a feminist approach to development work as one that begins with understanding of the root causes of gender inequality” (CASID interview 15). This means that a feminist approach is a long-term approach to foreign policy. It is focused on complex structural changes, which requires long-term vision and dedication: “Because you’re tackling huge issues and transformational change and change in the balance of power, change in terms of who has power and who doesn’t, those are long term things, so that could also have an impact on how you program, if you really want to tackle gender inequality, you can’t do one year program” (CASID interview 90). Feminist approach understands that structural problems require structural solutions, and it makes this explicit, intentional and central to all implementation processes.

Dedicated Resources

Civil society emphasized that a feminist approach makes sure the policy is backed with sufficient and dedicated resources for effective implementation. These resources refer to everything that is needed to adequately and effectively implement a feminist foreign policy, which include funding, leadership, people and expertise. A policy backed up by funding is essential in pursuing a feminist approach to development, especially in supporting women's collective action overseas. Liz Bernstein from Nobel Women's Initiative notes "[funding] which is of course what's important, the funding...it could shift overseas development assistance to really follow feminist development policy and support grassroots organizations that are local in their own countries and know what they need" (CASID interview 44). A feminist approach to funding means the mechanisms do not come with the excessive administrative and reporting burdens so that organizations are able to focus on delivering results for agendas they deem as priorities. It means that the mechanisms provide long-term, flexible, core funding; actively recognize and support advocacy work and champion the grassroots feminist organizations and movements (Action Canada et al 5).

Another essential resource is leadership. If a feminist foreign policy is to be practiced, leadership at the highest levels, in government and in its departmental bodies, must ensure that a feminist approach is "fully understood, owned and integrated" (Action Canada et al 4) and that there are feminist views at the table. The institutional source of a feminist foreign policy ensures that there is capacity within its institutions to implement such a policy, through building feminist knowledge, feminist leadership, and feminist culture. This requires bureaucrats to "buy-in" to the visions of a feminist foreign policy and for them to have the expertise and the capacity to work in a feminist approach.

Interconnections & Intersectional Analysis

Feminist approach recognizes that patriarchy affects everyone's lives in different ways and that their struggles are interconnected. This means that when approaching problems in development and security, feminist approach identifies how the struggles women face in their femininity is inherently connected to the struggles men face in their masculinity – they are in relation to one another and are inseparable. Not only does the feminist approach explore both men and women's perspectives, it also examines the interconnected relationships between them and other aspects of oppression such as class, race, LGBTQ people, cultural norms, capitalism, the environment, private sectors, conflict and violent extremism:

[Feminist approach] begins by recognizing that we live in a very unequal world in which our very epistemologies/ways of knowing the world is rooted in forms of inequality, gender, history of imperialism, race etc. [It recognizes] importance of diversity and multiple views of conducting analysis of issues/positions in terms of gender or other categories of difference, inequality that's embedded on our way of being. (CASID interview 86)

In recognition of such interconnectedness, feminist approach thus promotes diversity of membership and multi-stakeholders at the table, be it in development or in implementation of policy: "Feminist approach is also designed to reflect the multiple viewpoints of diverse groups such that when a policy is created, it is not created by a white male elite group of people but it's hopefully created with many perspectives and approaches in mind" (CASID interview 15).

Robust Accountability

Since a feminist approach targets root causes, it takes accountability seriously. Accountability means aiming for transformative change and being held accountable for results that did not lead to that change: “Must keep a razor focus that at end of day your project will have made deep change in social norms and relations...that focus on making gender change must be there and somebody has to hold you accountable for why that didn’t happen” as well as having “robust standards of accountability in place for people of all job descriptions holding them responsible to their gender job “(CASID interview 37). This means no matter what job title one has, everyone is held accountable for contributing to transformative change in gender inequality.

Breaking away from old models of measuring results, a feminist approach recognizes “the complexities associated with measuring qualitative change and establish[es] systems that value qualitative results, methodologies and process” (Action Canada et al 9). This means a feminist approach re-envision the system of monitoring and evaluation to include feminist indicators, gender equality markers, gender audits, acceptance of qualitative data and it is concerned with recognizing the actual nuances of transformative change. For example, ‘meaningful participation’ does not mean just counting the numbers of women who participated:

It means you don’t just put one women in a room with 10 men and say we had women involved, it means not just were there women present but were there capable women present who had a feminist approach? Did they have the skills and the ability to participate? Were the rules not already stacked against them in terms of making their opinions known? They can say 40% of the participants in this meeting were women so we did what we had to do. No, we have to look at did the conditions support them, were

they able to articulate their positions and were they heard? It's a much more complex and nuanced view of participation than saying half of the people answering our survey were women or very simplistic counting perspective I don't think takes you far enough.

(CASID interview 7)

Accountability also includes the good practice of involving the beneficiaries in their own inquiry about their own problems, asking them about their own agendas and how they want to develop (CASID interview 39); which naturally encompasses empowering "local actors to be meaningfully engaged in monitoring and evaluation" (Action Canada et al 9). For local actors to be partners in accountability and for them to produce results, there needs to be flexibility in the monitoring and evaluation process, one that is more collaborative "to significantly reduce the requirements that officials place on civil society organizations to fill in forms...if what you are demanding is putting valuable time and energy into forms, you are starving organizations to actually make a difference, you have diverted and subverted the mission of delivery on peacebuilding and gender equality to feed appetites for bureaucrats" (CASID interview 65).

Solidarity

A feminist approach to development and security practices solidarity, instead of hegemony, with women's collective action. Solidarity is the practice of sharing power *with* people who are working for transformative change, as opposed to the old paradigm of owning power over people who are supposedly in need of rescuing. This implementation approach is about forming partnerships and supporting the women and women's movements on the ground who are working to bring about meaningful change. Solidarity is not viewing women in other parts of the world as victims or beneficiaries. Solidarity is understanding their struggles and

recognizing that they are “experts and knowledge holders in their own right” and that they have the ability to transform unjust conditions (Action Canada et al 2). Solidarity starts the work of development by first finding out how the women in a given context want to bring about change, then supporting their agendas and agency. Solidarity thus requires that women themselves define what the project should do and they are the ones self-determining their development:

Authentically finding out what women really want to do. What do they really want to do? How do they want to develop? What’s really their aspiration? What’s their understanding of their own rights? What are they saying we can help them do? Do we design our programming and work off on the basis of that? These are not stupid people, these are not people who need to be told how development works. These are people who have their own agenda for how to develop their own lives, for their own regions and their own nations, so does our work reflect that? (CASID interview 37-38)

Solidarity thus means doing away with the old paradigm of ‘supply’ driven service delivery approach and applying a ‘demand’ driven approach “that positions individuals’ needs and realities at the center of all initiatives” (Action Canada et al 3). This practice of solidarity is illustrated by a civil society practitioner:

It means that women are seen as partners not as beneficiaries, not victims of violence, not poor people who benefit from wells or road, they are partners and leaders and they develop programs they like to improve their community, they are involved as leaders in the movement, led by feminist women who are the ones deciding what kinds of programming they want to see and want to do themselves, just like in Canada we wouldn’t feel comfortable with me or some white women making a program for some first nations woman, they would decide what they want. Similarly around the world, in

Congo, our project is supporting Congolese women's movement to decide what they want, support them with long-term sustainable funding to support their ideas of their projects for building peace in their communities (CASID interview 43).

Solidarity is about supporting what people at the grassroots want and need for meaningful change to their lives and well-being.

Grassroots Women's Movements

The approach of solidarity, specifically, with grassroots women's movements is an essential aspect of a feminist approach. Feminist approach makes explicit efforts to support and nurture feminist movements and organizations through core, flexible, long-term funding as well as through diplomatic and technical support. It does this because it understands that "these organizations and movements are fundamental in catalyzing change towards gender equality" (Action Canada et al 5). When asked why movement building is so important and why it is a feminist approach, a civil society practitioner answered:

Movement building is the motor of change. There's interesting research on countries that have made progress on domestic violence and it doesn't correlate with GDP or number of women in politics, it correlates with a strong women's movement. We know that the women's movement is what will hold governments accountable, this is who will advocate for change, this is the incubator of leaders that then go on and take on other roles, these are the people who have the reflection, who get together and do social media campaigns (#it'snotok), these are all different pieces of a movement, it's not just success for one women – Oh we had Margaret Thatcher so wasn't that a big success for women? No, it's not just about success of one or two women but that collective social change that's going

to happen, so I really believe women's movement is the driver of that. (CASID interview 7)

Another practitioner also reflected how feminist movements and women's organizations themselves know what is really happening on the front lines and know how to work to find the solutions:

...shifting all of us together in terms of addressing patriarchy, it entails a whole movement, and it also is about people who are impacted by the problems we're trying to address leading the solutions, designing and implementing the solutions, if it's about disabled women, it's disabled women running it, if it's about survivors of sexual violence it's the survivors themselves deciding what they want and how they want to do it, similarly for women who are designing programs around impacts of climate change for example in Ecuador or Brazil, women are on the front lines, they know what's happening, they know how their communities are being impacted by climate change so they need to be the ones designing the solutions what kind of program to help us adopt to climate change, whether it's health, violence, poverty, they need to be the ones designing solutions. (CASID interview 44)

A feminist approach fosters strong feminist civil society in development and security work and champions the agenda of feminist movements and organizations.

Findings and Analysis: Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy

Here I explore how the Federal Government of Canada officially presents its Feminist International Assistance Policy. Building on my previous analysis of feminist foreign policy being profoundly transformative in its conceptualization of security, in its analysis of power and its implementation approach, I critically examine how CFIAP constitutes those essential elements in comparison. There are three main findings of my critical discourse analysis: (1) CFIAP lacks the feminist vision of conceptualizing security as a transformative structural and systemic change to gendered violence; (2) CFIAP does not politicize gender power relations; (3) CFIAP is not transformative in its implementation approach. This section, therefore, illustrates how CFIAP fails to actualize transformative feminist approaches to development and security.

CFIAP lacks the feminist vision of conceptualizing security as transformative structural and systemic change to gendered violence

“Women and Girls”

CFIAP overwhelmingly emphasizes the words “women and girls,” centering itself on the old liberal women-in-development approach. Over and over again throughout CFIAP the words “women and girls” were repeated: “we must ensure that women and girls are empowered...” (1); “I will lend my voice to supporting the poorest and most vulnerable, particularly women and girls...” (2); “women and girls can change the world” (3); “barriers to success for women and girls” (3); “gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls” (6); “unique needs of women and girls” (9) etc. For a policy with ‘feminist’ in the title, actual words ‘feminist’ or ‘feminism’ were used sparingly nor were there satisfactory discussions of the transformative

vision of feminism. There is an odd nod to this vision when it states “A feminist approach is much more than focusing exclusively on women and girls; rather, it is the most effective way to target the root causes of poverty that can affect everyone: inequality and exclusion” (2).

However, the discussion of root causes stops there without further explanation nor does it explain what is meant by “inequality and exclusion.” Instead, the Executive Summary goes on to list CFIAP’s priority areas and inserts “women” or “women and girls” under each heading.

Although CFIAP acknowledges that a feminist approach is not about focusing on women and girls and hints that targeting root causes of poverty is the most effective way for development, it falls short of applying such ideas in concrete ways in the policy. This is evident when CFIAP states “...Canada’s first feminist international assistance policy, which targets gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls” (1). This statement equates feminist policy as policy about gender equality and women and girls. CFIAP therefore implies that its meaning of feminism actually is about centering its work on women and girls, not conceptualizing root causes of poverty as insecurity and aiming to change the systemic inequalities that affect women’s social, economic and political security. It is a rather one-dimensional, essentialist view of gender where “women and girls” across the non-Western world become a fixed universal entity – as if there is a one fixed ‘reality’ of women and girls - devoid of the complexity of larger forces at play that circumstance their lives, such as capitalism, racism or the gender power relations between dominant assumptions of femininity and masculinity. The discourse of “women and girls” de-contextualizes gender relations. CFIAP thereby de-politicizes the political project of feminism, diverting attention away from the structural causes of oppression and fails to successfully move out of the outdated liberal feminist model of merely including ‘women and girls’ into the existing structure.

“Gender Equality” and “Gender Responsive”

As previously emphasized by civil society, “Gender Equality” and “Gender Responsive” does not necessarily mean feminist. Feminisms aspire for structural and systemic transformation; it targets the root causes of women’s insecurity, which is the state’s gendered structural violence. On the other hand, “gender” is a development buzzword that is “diluted, denatured, depoliticized” from its original feminist intent in the discursive development landscape (Cornwall et al. *Feminisms in Development* 5-6). However, CFIAP’s discourse uses “feminism” and “gender equality” interchangeably, which dilutes the transformational political project of feminism, rendering it as a vague and elusive goal within CFIAP. When laying out Canada’s feminist vision in CFIAP, it states that it wants to build a world in which “gender equality is achieved and women and girls are fully empowered” (CFIAP 4), conflating feminism as gender equality and empowerment. It goes on to portray the role of gender equality as “challenging the discrimination faced by women and girls around the world” and promoting fundamental human rights and people being given the same opportunities to succeed (CFIAP 4). Such portrayals of gender equality is made without extrapolating that this requires the deeper work of challenging built-in structural violence which gives rise to gender discrimination, violation of human rights and unequal opportunities. Calling for human rights of women is not treating the actual illness. Framing human rights discourse as the solution to patriarchy and discrimination displaces focus on why human rights violations are occurring in the first place, all the while giving the façade of standing up for women and girls and helping them:

Human rights remedies, even when successful, treat the symptoms rather than the illness, and this allows the illness not only to fester but to seem like health itself. This is most likely where signing up for a norm - say, against discrimination – comes to substitute for

ending the practice. But even where victims are recompensed or violations avoided, the distributions of power and wealth which produced the violation may well come to seem more legitimate as they seek other avenues of expression. (Kennedy 24-25)

CFIAP adds that it will prioritize efforts “that have the greatest potential to close gender gaps, eliminate barriers to gender equality...” (CFIAP 5) further entrenching the co-option of feminism as “gender equality” as it gives the impression that Canada’s feminist vision is simply the promotion of this vague concept called gender equality that CFIAP fails to clearly define.

The phrase “gender equality” appears 74 times in CFIAP, while the word “feminism” appears just *once*, and the word “feminist” appears 34 times primarily as repeated references to CFIAP’s title, not as actual discussions of feminist principles. Framing feminist practice as “gender equality” or being “gender-responsive” throughout CFIAP – “To better support gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in developing countries, Canada will...” (6); “...Canada will...support the development of gender-responsive curricula in schools...” (6); “...to advocate for the importance of more gender-responsive nutrition policies” (8); “Gender-responsive humanitarian action” (8); “...work in support of greater gender equality” (14); “More strategic interventions are required to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls...” (15) etc. – shift the focus out of legitimizing CFIAP as a transformational feminist policy and lands it in the territory of drained political dynamism. In fact, it serves to normalize co-optation of feminism by development discourse where “feminist concerns with the political project of equality are being normalized in the development business as an ahistorical, apolitical, de-contextualised and technical project that leaves the prevailing and unequal power relations intact” (Mukhopadhyay 100). CFIAP attempts to address transformational change when describing Canada’s feminist approach by stating “Through a feminist approach to international

assistance, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls are objectives in their own right for transforming social norms and power relations” (CFIAP 5), but this equates the feminist approach as gender equality and fails to further explain what it means by transforming power relations. Despite stating that Canada is committed to providing international assistance that is “transformative and activist” that challenge unequal power relations, systemic discrimination and harmful norms and practices (CFIAP 5), it remains vague and elusive about what that exactly means and its overarching backbone of feminist vision is so grounded in the WID version of “gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls” (CFIAP 4) that the brief nod to activist policy sounds insincere. This is evident throughout the policy “action areas” as the establishment of formal equality is emphasized over that of substantive equality, favouring palliative service delivery work that reinforce existing power structures instead of promoting long-term social, economic, political, cultural changes that challenge the roots of gendered structural violence. Majority of CFIAP’s “action areas” are full of promoting women and girls’ “access to” various service deliveries, such as the access to justice, to psycho-social support, to programs, to health services, to supplements, to education, to employment, to trainings, to climate financing etc. Women and girls having “access” to these services is important but that does not tackle the actual reasons why they currently lack access to such services in the first place. CFIAP fails to explore the very feminist project of solving systemic discrimination with systemic solutions or explicitly framing gender in terms of gendered relations of power, not simply as “women and girls.” Its aim is not solving the systemic inequalities that negatively affect women’s social, economic and political security. It rather overwhelmingly offers the band-aid solution of service delivery framed in the neutral term of gender equality and gender-responsive services.

CFIAP does not politicize gender power relations

“Vulnerability” and “Empowering”

In addition to equating feminism as the inclusion of “women and girls,” CFIAP justifies its feminist stance by accentuating the “vulnerability” of women and girls, implying they cannot be “powerful agents of change” if they are not “empowered.” Minister Bibeau states “Above all, we must ensure that women and girls are empowered to reach their full potential so that they can contribute to the development of their families and communities.” Minister Bibeau adds “I will lend my voice to supporting the poorest and most vulnerable, particularly women and girls...” (CFIAP 1). The Minister of Foreign Affairs states “We know that empowering women, overseas and here at home, makes families and countries more prosperous” (CFIAP 1). CFIAP goes onto make a number of similar statements “...women and girls can be powerful agents of change and improve their own lives and those of their families, communities and countries” (2); “helping to reduce extreme poverty and vulnerability around the world enhances our own safety and prosperity” (2); “Women and girls – whose voices and interests are too often ignored – are particularly at risk” (3); “The good news is that when women and girls are given equal opportunities to succeed, they can be powerful agents of change – driving stronger economic growth, encouraging greater peace and cooperation, and improving the quality of life for their families and their communities” (3); “As powerful agents of change, women and girls have the ability to transform their households, their societies and their economies” (3); “By empowering women and girls as a means to achieve gender equality, we send the clear message that equality is for everyone” (3); “The potential of women and girls to help build a better world cannot be ignored – but neither can the harsh realities facing vulnerable populations” (3); “We believe that empowering women and girls is the best use of international assistance and the best way to

achieve positive economic and social outcomes” (4); “...when women and girls are given equal opportunities to succeed, they can transform their local economies and generate growth that benefits their entire communities and countries” (4) and so on. On the surface, taking such intentions for a feminist approach to international assistance seems well meaning and compelling but on a deeper level, there are fundamental problems with these justifications.

First, the empowerment discourse of the CFIAP paints the picture that when women and girls are empowered, it will solve the problems within their homes, their communities, their countries and economies. This is problematic as this discourse inadvertently asserts the responsibility of development on individual women and girls while overlooking the actual systemic causes of their poverty, such as “structural adjustment, debt, tax evasion, labour exploitation, financial crisis and corruption in the global governance system” (Hickel 1356) so “as a result, women and girls are made to bear the responsibility for bootstrapping themselves out of poverty that is caused by external institutions – and often the very ones that purport to save them” (Hickel 1355). The project of ‘empowering’ women and girls to make them “powerful agents of change” (CFIAP 3) is ill conceived when the reasons for their poverty and lack of power are due to the structural system that works against them. The simplistic claims of “women and girls can change the world” (CFIAP 3) does not aim to tackle deeper issues of structural inequality but rather, it invokes the neo-liberal agenda of championing individual responsibility to overcome insurmountable odds in a hostile system.

Second, Canada justifies its feminist international assistance policy by emphasizing the benefit it will bring to the economy, to peace, to families and communities of women and girls. Such justifications undermine the intrinsic value of embracing the feminist agenda, of championing gender justice, and embracing how worthwhile Canada deems its cutting-edge

practice of social justice and humanitarianism. The discourse of justifications according to the various good outcomes empowering women and girls will bring about sends the message that pursuing a feminist policy and focusing on the oppressions of women and girls is not intrinsically a worthwhile goal in itself, but that it is a means to an end:

...women have a long history of being strategically evoked in a variety of discourses that link women's emancipation to the well being of their colony, their nation, their culture, their religion and the like...The fashionableness of development rhetoric that justifies educating or providing employment to women on the grounds that it benefits their families, their communities and their nation suggests that showing the benefits to *women alone* is insufficient and needs buttressing by all these additional goods that will be secured by their emancipation. (Narayan 282)

The discourse in CFIAP could have easily called on the inherent need to recognize gender oppression as Canada's focus in international assistance because women and girls are "human subjects whose basic social entitlements and human rights are being compromised as a foreseeable and foreseen consequence of global economic and political arrangements" (Narayan 283). The discourse in CFIAP portray women and girls as agents, as having potential, as vulnerable, as a way to reduce poverty, but apart from brief nods to human rights and human dignity of all people, there is little language describing the intrinsic worth of recognizing their lives as important and that they matter in and of themselves. Instead, CFIAP chose to emphasize the old trope of 'empowering' women and girls as justification for bringing about economic and social goods that will benefit the larger community around them.

Third, when the word "empowerment" is peppered throughout CFIAP without a clarification of what that exactly means, it leaves a rather vague notion about what

“empowerment of women and girls” (CFIAP 6) actually is. Consequently, it characterizes CFIAP to be using “empowerment” and “empowering” as development buzzwords, rather than as concrete meaningful feminist expressions. When such terms are used abundantly in policy but not specifically defined, it is vulnerable to dilution or appropriation from its transformative political origins to mere development jargon: “...depoliticisation of empowerment as it has been converted from an approach that sought to fundamentally alter power relations to a status that constitutes development’s latest ‘magic bullet’” (Cornwall, “Buzzwords” 474). Instead of explicitly politicizing CFIAP’s feminist agenda, the vague use of the term “empowerment” serves to de-politicize the policy agenda; CFIAP is not being unequivocal in its message, rather, it is mediating “in the interests of political consensus while at the same time allowing for the existence of several internal agendas” (Wilson 10). The use of “empowerment” in CFIAP shows no nuanced understanding of the complexity of power relations or systemic oppression. It is not used to challenge the status quo but it serves to fit the mainstream development jargon and ambiguity. Buzzwords like “empowering” serve the policy agenda of “ambiguity to secure the endorsement of diverse potential actors and audiences...providing concepts that can float free of concrete referents, to be filled with meaning by their users...shelter[ing] multiple agendas, providing room for manoeuvre and space for contestation” (Cornwall, “Buzzwords” 474).

Fourth, when CFIAP repeatedly refers to “empowering” women and girls emphasizing their vulnerability, it constructs unequal relations of power between Canada and the vulnerable Other. Canadians who are “compassionate and generous” (CFIAP 2) go out to help the most vulnerable of the world, the most at-risk: the women and girls. Such connotations strike a picture of development as charity, where Canada is going to save and *give* power to the vulnerable othered women and girls of the world, rather than viewing development as a partnership, a

sharing of power, a stance of solidarity with women and girls elsewhere who are working to make positive changes in their societies. CFIAP has statements like “This means giving women more opportunities to succeed...” (10), “Empowering women to be full participants...” (10), “Women and girls are particularly at risk...” (11), “It is especially important...that women and girls be given an active role...” (12) etc., which evoke a colonial note of saving the ‘other’ and subtly insinuates stereotypes of poor women as passive helpless victims in need of charity from the benevolent Western donor. The discourse of “empowerment” and “vulnerability” in CFIAP reduces non-Western women into victims in need of saving and implies a hierarchical power relationship between Canada and the Other, instead of explicitly asserting a partnership in the spirit of solidarity against gender oppression.

CFIAP is not transformative in its implementation approach

Without a solid foundation of feminist vision that challenges unequal structural gender power relations to transform structural violence, CFIAP lacks the fundamental feminist approaches needed for transformative implementation. First, there is remarkably little detail about supplying the needed resources for its successful implementation. Given the drastic shift in focus of Canada’s international assistance to a feminist approach, it follows that new resources in funding, leadership, people and expertise are needed to carry out this policy (a point reinforced by civil society organizations in their assessment of what a feminist foreign policy should entail). CFIAP mentions that “Canada will dedicate \$150 million over five years to support local women’s organizations and movements that advance women’s rights in developing countries” (6) and that there will be “an investment of \$650 million over three years” (7) for sexual and reproductive health and rights for women and girls. However, there is no mention of new

dedicated funding allotted to carry out the implementation activities proclaimed in CFIAP, only that “by 2021-22 no less than 95 percent of Canada’s bilateral international development assistance initiatives will target or integrate gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls” (5). The lack of new funding contributions gives the impression that either CFIAP is feminist in rhetoric only or that Canada does not fully realize the resources required to actualize the goals stated in CFIAP. In order for CFIAP to actualize, the staff at Global Affairs Canada (GAC) must understand, own and integrate the feminist agenda in their daily work. In other words, Canada must have taken into account the need to build staff capacity to implement CFIAP through enabling feminist knowledge, leadership and culture at GAC; this requires resources for hiring knowledgeable feminist staff and carrying out feminist trainings. If Canada takes its feminism seriously, CFIAP also must have taken into account the kind of funding needed to properly support local women’s organizations and movements abroad. As repeatedly asserted by civil society practitioners who work with women’s organizations in the field: long-term, flexible, core-funding is needed to build movements and sustain change. None of these are explicitly specified in CFIAP.

Second, when CFIAP does try to address the needed shift to more accountable assistance, the language is shrouded in broad, vague discourse such as “We will streamline and accelerate our funding and reporting procedures to reduce the administrative burden on our funding recipients” (17) or “We will develop joint programming mechanisms that enable innovative funding partnerships” (17) or “Global Affairs Canada will also ensure active and meaningful participation and decision-making by women and girls in all international assistance initiatives, including in project implementation, monitoring and evaluation” (18), which lack any concrete details on how exactly that will be achieved. Nor does CFIAP acknowledge that accountability

also means being held accountable for transformative change to inequality and having a robust accountability system in place to enforce such accountability, which civil society called for. It states Canada is committed to providing international assistance that is evidence-based and accountable: “Our assistance will be informed by gender-based analysis and will rely on clear accountabilities for planning, achieving, tracking and reporting on gender equality results,” (5) yet, there are no further explanations for how that will be achieved. The use of language in CFIAP emphasizes the technical side of accountability in vague terms and there is no mention of how CFIAP will be held accountable to its new ‘feminist’ standards.

Third, the discourse in CFIAP for intersectional analysis is weak. It very briefly mentions that “inequalities exist along intersectional lines” (CFIAP 4) and it signals human rights and inclusivity when it states “All people must enjoy the same fundamental human rights, regardless of sex, race, ethnicity, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, language, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, ability or any other aspect of identity” (5). But intersectionality is presented only as basis of non-discrimination in human rights and there are no discussions of the interconnected nature of oppressions inherent in inequality and patriarchy. There is weak recognition of how the struggles women face in their femininity are inseparable from the struggles men face in their masculinity, how patriarchy affects men in negative ways, how gender justice requires examining the relationships between women and men in interconnected ways and how that also intersects with other forms of oppression such as class, race, cultural norms, sexual orientation, religion, capitalism, and conflict etc. Despite stating that Canada is committed to providing international assistance that is “transformative and activist” where “unequal power relations, systemic discrimination and harmful norms and practices will be challenged as a broad range of stakeholders – including men and boys – are engaged” (CFIAP 5)

CFIAP remains vague about explaining what this exactly means and it does not recognize the need to do an intersectional analysis. For example, the brief recognition given to how men and boys need to be engaged asserts that they must challenge “the traditions and customs that support and maintain gender inequalities” (CFIAP 5). But it does not go further to assert that the power dynamics between women and men, boys and girls must be examined and transformed, along with the intersecting oppressions that contribute to such dynamics.

Fourth, it is laudable that Canada recognizes the important role of grassroots women’s organizations and movements in advancing equality and backs up that belief with funding. However, CFIAP on the whole often portray women and girls as the vulnerable ‘other’ who Canada will help “empower” and displays little acknowledgement of explicit solidarity. It tries to recognize women’s agency by referring to the potential for women and girls to be “powerful agents of change” (CFIAP 2, 3, 9, 14, 15, 20) by repeating that stock phrase seven times throughout CFIAP without expressing the commitment to first finding out what they wish to change in their lives and their agendas for self-determination. Despite civil society’s calls for a development model based on solidarity, CFIAP fails to make explicit that the change these “powerful agents” want to create has to be determined from the agents themselves and Canada will be there as a supportive partner. Even when CFIAP comes close to showing solidarity in “Supporting local women’s organizations that advance women’s rights” section, its intentions are, again, shrouded in vague, non-detailed language – “To better amplify women’s voices around the world, Canada will collaborate with partners to pilot, design and champion new and innovative ways of working with local women’s organizations that advance women’s rights” (5) – which leaves room for different interpretations of what exactly it means by “collaborate” and what kind of partnership is meant by “partners” and what “innovative ways” refers to. If the

“innovative ways” means supporting demand-driven aid where the decisions about programming are made by the local movements and women themselves, Canada is shy of explicitly stating so. Overall, CFIAP does not acknowledge demand-driven aid based on the practice of solidarity.

Lastly, as mentioned above, CFIAP’s recognition of the vital role women’s movements and grassroots efforts play for gender justice is a significant step towards a feminist approach. This is the one feminist approach that Canada has made explicit and substantial commitment to by stating “Canada will dedicate \$150 million over five years to support local women’s organizations and movements that advance women’s rights in developing countries” (CFIAP 6).” Not only has Canada declared commitment and budget to overseas movements and organizations, it also committed explicitly to Canadian civil society: “We are also providing \$100 million over five years in dedicated funding for small and medium-sized Canadian civil society organizations so they can develop and implement innovative programming in partnership with local organizations to support the six action areas, notably Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls” (CFIAP 19). Yet, the small-scale aid allocated and spread out over five years does not indicate that nurturing feminist movements and organizations is a leading priority, especially when compared to the “\$3.5 billion over five years in programs that strengthen health and data systems, improve nutrition and combat infectious diseases” (CFIAP 7) or “\$650 million over three years” (CFIAP 7) for sexual and reproductive health and rights for women and girls. And it is regrettable that the other essential feminist implementation approaches – transformative feminist vision, dedicated resources, robust accountability, intersectional analysis, practice of solidarity – are insubstantially illustrated in CFIAP to comprehensively approach feminist movement building as a transformative practice.

Conclusion

This thesis explored the meaning of feminist foreign policy and the extent to which it is discursively manifested in CFIAP. Examining feminist theories and civil society literature, I identified feminist foreign policy as profoundly transformative in its conceptualization of security, in its analysis of power and in its implementation approach. I explained this by first, asserting that feminist foreign policy redefines traditional foreign policy through its conceptualization of security, replacing old realist and liberal notions of security centered around the state and conflict, to feminist notion of security centered around the individual, which repudiates all forms of gendered violence that negatively affect personal well-being. Feminist foreign policy is transformational because it transforms traditional notions of security by using gender power relations as a central category of analysis: it asserts that women's insecurities are caused by structural inequalities and therefore, true security can only be achieved through rectifying gendered structural violence. This means the purpose of a feminist foreign policy is to transform the structural and systemic inequalities that harm women's social, economic, cultural and political well-being.

Second, feminist foreign policy is transformative in its analysis of power because it politicizes power relations of gender domination within the structures of society and seeks to bring about structural change to eliminate gender hierarchies of domination and subordination. Feminist foreign policy redefines what it means to work for gender equality – from one that views working on “women's issues” as integrating vulnerable, oppressed women into development work as an economic imperative, to one that views working on gender justice as transforming unequal power structures of masculinity and femininity as a security imperative. It understands gender as an order of power hierarchy, which is systematically built into the

structures and institutions of society, politically, economically, socially, and culturally.

Therefore, it recognizes that reorganizing structural power invested in masculinities is essential to shifting the social order. This requires gender analysis of how men and women's lives intersect with one another, and exist in relation to one another, within other intersectional hierarchies such as race, class, and sexuality. Put simply, feminist foreign policy politicizes structural violence as a security and development imperative.

Third, feminist foreign policy has specific approaches for implementing the above feminist vision of security and restructuring of power. Feminist implementation operates from a feminist vision of shift in power by addressing the cause of gendered insecurities at the structural level; it has resources dedicated for this purpose such as long-term, flexible, core funding, and leadership, expertise, capacity etc.; it conducts contextual analysis aware of the interconnected relationships between women and men, as well as the intersectionality of power hierarchy; it has a robust accountability system in place to hold everyone accountable for transformative change; it practices the partnership of solidarity and support the self-determination of people on ground; and its main focus in implementation work is nurturing women's collective action at the grassroots level, supporting local women's organizations, activists, and movements. These approaches redefine what it means to work on development implementation, shifting the focus away from palliative service delivery work to supporting activist movements that are the engines of transformational change for gender justice.

From theorizing on feminist foreign policy, my research then explored the nature and the extent to which the above essential characteristics of feminist foreign policy were evident in CFIAP through a critical discourse analysis. I found that CFIAP lacks the feminist vision of conceptualizing security as a transformative change to gendered insecurities; that CFIAP does

not adequately politicize gender power relations; and that CFIAP lacks the essential elements for effective implementation. These findings help to illustrate how policy discourse, despite having the word ‘feminist’ in its title, still fall short of feminist principles for transformative change. Judging from this, Canada’s Feminist International Assistance Policy is not an adequate guide for feminist development. The lobbying efforts by civil society through the International Assistance Review may have introduced new feminist discourse into CFIAP, such as the explicit statement of transformative and activist stance to international assistance that engages men and boys, that supports local women’s organizations and women’s movements, that recognizes that inequalities exist along intersectional lines. However, turning such feminist principles into policy can be a process in which the “original political edge of feminism” is lost (Kabeer 436). This is evident in CFIAP’s discourse where feminist concepts are rhetorically mentioned in words but there is a lack of attempt at specifying what those words mean and how they will frame Canada’s work in international assistance – this displays either lack of true understanding on what those words mean or that it was a choice to remain vague and fuzzy on Canada’s interpretation of those words. Global Affairs Canada is a slow-to-change bureaucratic and political entity and the actualization of feminist ideals is not adequately articulated in CFIAP. It is one thing to rhetorically state feminist principles in a policy; it is a different matter to exemplify true understanding of those feminist principles to embody Canada’s development agenda as the politicized, transformational feminist vision. Ultimately, the discourse in CFIAP limits the scope of gender justice and the potential for feminist development and greater human freedoms while asserting the image of Canada in the world as a feminist state.

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