

Research Article

# Exploring Ethical Principles Within Feminist Foreign Policy

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## Abstract

The paper intends to argue how ethics can find its functional position within the implementation of Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP) without challenging the reality of the social, economic, and political conditions of the country by describing the main features of feminist foreign policy and focusing on the ethical principles of the policy. The study aims to understand how feminist foreign policy adopts ethical views and achieves the successful realization of these principles in a global context. Considering the challenging nature of the international arena and the different national interests of the actors, feminist foreign policy faces various difficulties in achieving its goals. To understand the problems and investigate the evolution of FFP, ethical principles in the current political system are looked through to determine which values are compromised to maintain the state interests and why national concerns are above ethical principles. In the second chapter, the examination of FFP and the benefits of following the moralities are studied for deep analyses of feminist ethics. Although there is no agreed definition of the concept, the trend suggests an alternative approach to promoting gender equality and empowerment of women based on ethical and moral guidelines.

## Keywords

Feminist Foreign Policy, Ethics, Feminist Ethics, Gender in Politics, Morality

## 1. Introduction

Ethics is the branch of philosophy that deals with questions of morality, distinguishing between right and wrong, and guiding human behavior in matters of conduct, values, and principles [15]. It encompasses the study of what is morally right and just, as well as the examination of the principles and rules that govern human behavior in various contexts. Ethics is concerned with understanding and evaluating the moral choices and actions of individuals, groups, and societies, and it provides a framework for making ethical judgments and decisions. It is a fundamental field of inquiry that explores concepts such as fairness, justice, honesty, and virtue, among others, to guide human behavior in ways that align with moral principles and values [15].

Feminist ethics elaborates on the gender concepts within the ethical and moral beliefs that historically surrounded the privilege of men and the oppression and subordination of women and girls [30]. In this context, the notion of oppression indicates the ignoring of the viewpoints of the marginalized individuals and different approaches, preventing observation of the events from the perspectives of the oppressed as well as through a gendered lens. One of the significances of feminist ethics is considering intersectionality to avoid assumptions of all men obtaining privileges regardless of race, ethnicity, class, etc. [30]. This helps the theory to focus on oppressive practices that marginalize others instead of causing discrimination and unnecessary prejudice between men and women, espe-

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cially those who are also harmed by the privileged. Hence, feminist ethics can be considered political since it aims to criticize the unequal distribution of power, privilege, or limited access to social goods. Feminist ethics is not a new phenomenon even though it is not considered a branch of ethics but rather “a way of doing ethics”. It was introduced to the academic stage with a debate on feminism and sexism in the 1970s which was later developed into curricular programs [30]. Although the concept was not presented as “feminist ethics”, discussions on the role of gender in moral life were carried out by philosophers who concentrated on the male leader and their perspective on women’s moral capacities rather than criticizing male privilege and disruption of women’s subordination.

While the historical path is important to comprehend the chronological development of the ethical thoughts within feminism, the themes in feminist ethics are rather important as well. Starting with gender binarism which considers male and female as the only genders, argues the oppressive social constructions which not only oppress women but also men and cause the assumptions of men and women holding different moralities or separate realities. Hence, a new foreign policy approach has been adopted by considering the different demands and needs of genders which aims to place gender equality at the heart of a state's external actions and reorient their foreign policy towards this goal [42]. Feminist foreign policy seeks to challenge and transform gender norms and hierarchies that perpetuate inequality. It recognizes the importance of women's rights and empowerment in achieving sustainable development and peace. The Feminist Foreign Policy concept was initiated by the government of Sweden in 2014 to conduct a systematic gender equality perspective in external affairs [35]. Sweden has been at the forefront of promoting gender equality and women's rights in international politics. The country's engagement with feminist foreign policy can be seen in its early adoption of a national action plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) in 2006 [46]. This plan focused on women's rights, security, peacebuilding, and post-conflict development. The Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda, which emphasizes the role of women in conflict prevention and resolution, has been a significant precursor to FFP in Sweden [48]. The focus on security, peacebuilding, and post-conflict development in both the WPS agenda and FFP align with Sweden's commitment to gender equality [41]. Sweden's feminist foreign policy is anchored in a wide range of existing international commitments, including the UN Declaration on Human Rights, the Beijing Conference, and the European Union's external action plans on gender equality [40]. By incorporating ethical considerations, feminist foreign policy seeks to challenge and transform existing power structures and hierarchies, promoting a more equitable and just global order.

The paper describes the main features of feminist foreign policy by focusing on the ethical principles of the policy. The

study aims to understand how feminist foreign policy adopts ethical views and achieves the successful realization of these principles in a global context. Hence the study questions the relationship between FFP and ethics and how compatible they could be. Considering the challenging nature of the international arena and the different national interests of the actors, feminist foreign policy faces various difficulties in achieving its goals. Therefore, the paper explores how ethics can find its functional position within the implementation of FFP. To understand the problems and investigate the evolution of FFP, ethical principles in the current political system are looked through to determine which values are compromised to maintain the state interests and why national concerns are above ethical principles. In the second chapter, the examination of FFP and the benefits of following the moralities are studied for deep analyses of feminist ethics.

## 2. Literature Review

Feminist ethics challenges traditional ethical theories and frameworks, which have often been developed from male-centered perspectives and seeks to address the unique ethical concerns and experiences of women and marginalized gender groups. In the 17th century, some philosophers argued the inability of women to education as an immoral act since women are as rational as men which brought out the argument whether morality is possible for different genders [30]. Mary Astell, an English writer and philosopher challenged the societal and religious beliefs on women’s capability for improving their minds and later was defended by Damaris Cudworth Masham to criticize the double standard of morality and virtue which only applies to women’s chastity instead of their behavior [30]. The debate continued without any change for over a century and Mary Wollstonecraft criticized the existence of sexual virtues by holding both men and women answer for the same ethical principles [50]. The nineteenth century also was a period of questioning morality where “women’s equal humanity on the grounds of reason and justice” argued in the context of equal citizenship and the right to vote [26]. The term “feminism” was also introduced to philosophy with ethical features of the universal humanism concept and developed by John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill defending women’s equal rights and equal access to political and social opportunities [30]. The main argument behind their philosophy was the benefits of women’s improvement to society and the whole of humankind, considering liberation of women from subjugation opens opportunities to scholarly and political spheres. They argued that sexual inequality is the main obstacle to the development of moral virtue while activists like Catherine Beecher emphasized the different but equal vision of men and women, and female virtue being better than male virtue. All these debates led to a new era of moral values within feminist thought by including domestic virtues to shape their ethical recommendations, meaning the role of women within the family life was dis-

cussed and emancipation aimed to end the sexual exploitation of women and disruption of the socially constructed role of a woman in the family, as a daughter, wife or a mother [29]. Surprisingly, the characteristics of intersectionality could be witnessed during this era due to the involvement of black women in the movement to achieve not only women's moral and sociopolitical equality but also equal protection of the laws, economic liberation, political representation, as well as self-defense and the exertion of the right to bear arms, as necessary to the very survival and liberation of Black Americans [18]. One of the essential arguments brought by Anna Julia Cooper was the unethical approach within the feminist claims where white women were fighting "for white women's voting rights rather than Black men's" [18]. The immoral behavior of the movement prevented itself from developing in the right direction if equality is the goal to succeed. These claims are significant due to their progressive arguments even before care ethics was becoming part of the feminist ethics which encouraged feminine sympathy while raising children, hence, they would not be ignorant of their sensibility and strengths. This argument offered to develop well-balanced ethics including both feminine and masculine values to prevent the dominance of either. Historically, intersectionality was introduced as a key factor for the Western feminist movement in the third wave, the roots of the concept originate from the end of the 20th century with demands on representations of Black Americans' voices because of lynching due to sexual relationships between different races [30]. The 20th century was significant with supporters of encouraging women to freely express their "true" femininity while refusing the concept of superiority of female morality over men. Ethical issues could be resolved with rational thinking and philosophical thought through self-improvement and self-understanding. Although during the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, there were developments in women's rights regarding education, marriage, divorce, and workplace, feminist ethics was not fully structured yet. The apocryphal contribution to feminist ethics was given by the first self-identified feminist, Simone de Beauvoir in the 1970s, by examining the "embodied experiences and social situations of women" within the context of existentialist morality and philosophy [4]. Her arguments discovered the discrimination towards women as subjects of philosophical thought by men due to their consideration of themselves as "human" and women as "Other" within the perceptions of womankind. The ethical theory is incomplete since women have been defined by men and in men's understanding and interpretations. These approaches shaped feminist ethics in the mid-20th century by denying the old concepts of women lacking morally worthy rational capacities.

The field of international relations has changed throughout the years in terms of theory, ethics, and research directions. In the 1980s, feminism was introduced to the international relations mainstream by offering a new perspective on the issues and challenges of the world [38]. The early feminist IR re-

search focused on topics of decision-making in feminist peace camps and the political economy which is criticized by some who included these approaches to IR theory to comprehend the complex matters while others such as Richard Ashley and R.B.J. Walker disapproved of the notion due to its contrast characteristics to IR [38]. The introduction of the feminist approach challenged the understanding of global politics and scholars like Cynthia Enloe looked past the traditional view on IR and realized the importance of people, places, and everyday activities in the implementation of external affairs. Enloe's work shed light on women's often-overlooked roles and experiences in this field by questioning the dominant narratives and power structures that perpetuate violence and militarization [11]. Thickner (1997) emphasized the significance of gender in analyzing international relations to dismantle gender hierarchies that maintain women's subordination and oppression [44]. The feminist scholars expanded the concept of security by arguing that it is no longer just characterized by military threats and state-centric perspectives, but also gender-based violence, economic inequalities, and environmental degradation [44]. However, gender is not an isolated aspect of international relations, it intersects with other factors, such as race, ethnicity, class, and sexuality. According to Steans, understanding how gender interacts with these other dimensions is essential for a comprehensive analysis of international politics, and via feminist theories, gender-based power imbalances in global affairs are highlighted [37]. With the introduction of globalization, the concept of gender has transformed due to the transnationalization of production, the feminization of labor, and the growth of services such as domestic and sexualized work [51]. Globalization, also, increased the role of women in leadership roles and participation in social movements by creating powerful and connected networks. However, these developments revealed the inequalities of women and men pushing the investigation of a more nuanced understanding of gender dynamics in a global context. Hence, Youngs (2004) argues that ethics plays a significant role in globalization, influencing various aspects of economic, social, and political interactions, and Feminist International Relations highlight the need for ethical considerations in understanding and analyzing international relations [51]. It emphasizes the importance of recognizing the diverse and engaged roles and agency of women in negotiating local and global dynamics and connections [51].

Another phenomenon that is overlooked by the conventional approaches of IR such as realism and rational choice theory is the ethical dimensions of state behavior. However, feminist perspectives highlighted the importance of considering gendered power relations and the impact of social structures on individuals' lives. Thickner (2002) explains that deep-rooted structures of patriarchy cannot be overcome only with legal remedies, since the plurality, multiplicity, and difference among women are diverse, and women's standpoints should be questioned [43]. Hence, feminist ethics can be the best notion to understand women's subordination and

its effects on international relations. Hutchings (2000) elaborates on feminist ethics to understand the concept of security and to criticize the traditional moral maturity models [21]. Feminist international ethics considers the nature and conditions of ethical judgment within the international arena, emphasizing the importance of relationality, responsibilities, and the constructed character of ethical substance. However, feminist international ethics does not offer ethics solely for women, but how ethics should be approached in the contemporary international context by avoiding the idealization of the notion and focusing on bringing politics back into the moral judgment and prescription [21]. Feminist strategies also differ from the traditional approach in terms of seeking peace by including the use of empathetic cooperation, the concept of "witness" as a mechanism for narrativizing peace, and the preference for non-hierarchical organizations. Sjoberg (2013) explains that feminist perspectives analyze the concept of peace as well as what is considered a threat to peace, and ignoring the feminist insights could have harsh consequences in peacebuilding [36]. To achieve peace, social justice, economic violence, and gender subordination which are integral parts of the pursuit of peace, should include ethical considerations as feminist visions suggest [36].

The feminist approach to international affairs considers intersectionality as an inseparable part of the policies. Crenshaw (1991) elaborates that intersectionality presents an ethical complexity in addressing the experiences of women of color [12]. The failure of feminist and antiracist discourses to fully acknowledge the intersections of race and gender can lead to the replication and reinforcement of subordination. This creates a dilemma for women of color, as adopting either analysis denies a fundamental dimension of their subordination or hinders the development of a more empowering political discourse. The ethical challenge lies in finding a way to address the unique experiences of women of color without neglecting the broader goals of feminism and antiracism [12]. Furthermore, intersectionality brings an inclusive perspective to ethics, challenging traditional frameworks and advocating for a more equitable and just society. According to Robinson (2019), individuals can experience multiple forms of oppression and privilege simultaneously, and these intersecting identities shape their experiences and perspectives [35]. This understanding is crucial in ethical considerations, as it highlights the importance of recognizing and addressing the unique challenges faced by individuals with intersecting identities. This is very significant in terms of newly initiated feminist foreign policy which aims to implement policies that contribute to gender equality and the full enjoyment of human rights for women and girls. Feminist foreign policy seeks to prioritize ethical considerations and promote justice and equality on a global scale. It challenges traditional notions of ethics based on fixed principles and instead emphasizes the importance of understanding relationships and power dynamics in specific contexts [35].

### 3. Ethical Principles in the Current Political System

Ethical views within the implemented policies are quite diverse since different countries have different ethical approaches to foreign policy. Some prioritize national interests, security, and economic concerns over ethical principles. In many political systems, realist and geopolitical considerations often play a dominant role. These approaches focus on power dynamics, national security, and strategic interests. Realism is a prominent school of thought in international relations theory that tends to have a pragmatic and often cynical view of the role of ethical principles in international politics [25]. Realism primarily focuses on the pursuit of national interests, power, and security as the driving forces behind state behavior. The theory argues that states are primarily motivated by their national interest, which often includes objectives related to security, survival, and the maximization of power and influence on the international stage [3]. The pursuit of these interests takes precedence over ethical considerations. Realism is often described as an amoral or immoral approach to international relations because it does not prescribe specific ethical principles or moral guidelines for states [25]. Realist theorists contend that moral principles are subjective and can vary widely among different actors in the international system. Moreover, the theory is skeptical of idealistic or utopian notions of international relations that prioritize ethical principles such as justice, human rights, or global cooperation and these values should be interpreted within the "reason of state" [14]. Realists argue that such ideals are often unrealistic and can be exploited by other states for strategic advantage. One of the key characteristics of realism is the balance of power which is considered a key mechanism in international relations [5]. States seek to maintain or increase their power relative to other states, often through strategies that may not align with conventional ethical principles. Realism is state-centric, meaning that it focuses primarily on the interests and behavior of sovereign states [14]. Non-state actors, international organizations, or ethical concerns that do not directly impact state interests are often considered secondary. Realist theorists advocate for a rational and pragmatic approach to foreign policy. States are encouraged to pursue policies that are based on a sober assessment of the international system's realities, rather than ethical or moral ideals [16]. Realism sees international politics as a competitive and often conflictual arena where states engage in power politics. In this context, ethical principles may be perceived as weaknesses that can be exploited by adversaries. It's important to note that while realism downplays the role of ethical principles in shaping state behavior, it does not inherently endorse unethical or immoral actions [33]. Realist theorists argue that understanding the self-interested motives of states is crucial for predicting and explaining international behavior. Ethical considerations, however, may still play a role in foreign policy decisions, but they are often seen as secondary to strategic and national

interest considerations within the realist framework [33].

In the context of geopolitics, ethics plays a complex and multifaceted role in shaping the behavior of states, international organizations, and other actors in the international system. While the pursuit of national interests often dominates geopolitical decision-making, ethical considerations can influence policy, diplomacy, and international relations in several ways [13]. Ethics provides a set of moral principles and values that can guide the conduct of states and leaders in the international arena. These principles may include notions of justice, human rights, fairness, and the inherent dignity of individuals. Ethical norms can serve as a foundation for assessing the morality of geopolitical actions and policies. Furthermore, ethical considerations often come into play in discussions of humanitarian intervention [9]. When states or international organizations contemplate military or humanitarian interventions in response to atrocities or human rights abuses, they grapple with ethical questions about the responsibility to protect vulnerable populations. At the same time, ethical principles can inform conflict resolution efforts by promoting dialogue, negotiation, and peaceful solutions to disputes. Diplomacy and conflict mediation often rely on ethical principles of fairness, justice, and the avoidance of unnecessary harm [8]. Another ethical concern in geopolitics is the promotion and protection of human rights [23]. International human rights norms and treaties establish a framework for ethical expectations regarding the treatment of individuals, and violations can lead to diplomatic and political consequences. Ethical considerations encourage global cooperation on pressing issues such as climate change, public health, and poverty alleviation [34]. Recognizing shared ethical responsibilities can drive collaborative efforts among states and international organizations. Hence, some states explicitly incorporate ethical principles into their foreign policies. They may prioritize values such as democracy promotion, human rights advocacy, and ethical trade practices in their international relations. These characteristics also enhance the country's soft power and international reputation. States that are perceived as acting ethically and responsibly are often more influential and trusted in global affairs. However, when that is not the case, civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and grassroots movements are more eager to play an essential role in advocating for ethical principles in geopolitics [47]. This is important since they can influence policy decisions, raise awareness of ethical concerns, and hold governments accountable. On the other hand, ethical considerations are integral to discussions about global governance and the role of international institutions. Questions of justice, equity, and the common good are central to debates about how to address global challenges through multilateral cooperation. These difficulties transfer their features to the ethical platforms due to technological progress. As technology advances, ethical questions related to cyber warfare, artificial intelligence, and biotechnology have become increasingly important in geo-

politics [39]. States and the international community grapple with issues of privacy, security, and the responsible use of technology. While ethical principles can guide behavior, the pursuit of national interests, power, and security remains a central driver of geopolitical decision-making. Ethical dilemmas often arise when states must balance their interests with their ethical commitments and responsibilities on the global stage.

Another approach that considers ethical guidelines within political decision-making is pragmatism. Governments may make compromises on ethical principles in pursuit of practical and strategic objectives. Pragmatism is a philosophical approach that emphasizes practical consequences and outcomes as the primary criteria for evaluating the validity and worth of beliefs, principles, and actions [19]. In the context of ethical principles, pragmatism offers a distinctive perspective. First of all, pragmatism is inherently consequentialist, focusing on the consequences of actions as the basis for ethical judgment. According to pragmatism, ethical principles should be evaluated based on their real-world impact and the practical benefits they bring [32]. Secondly, pragmatism emphasizes that ethical principles are context-dependent. What is considered ethically right or wrong can vary depending on the specific situation, goals, and circumstances. Pragmatists argue that ethical principles should be flexible and adaptable to different contexts [32]. Additionally, pragmatism often views ethical principles as tools or instruments to achieve desirable outcomes. Ethical principles are valuable to the extent that they help solve problems, address challenges, and improve the overall well-being of individuals and society. Therefore, the approach encourages empirical observation and experimentation to assess the effectiveness of ethical principles. Ethical claims are subject to scrutiny and revision based on evidence and experience. On the other hand, the pragmatist concept is generally skeptical of rigid ethical absolutism, which asserts fixed and unchanging moral principles [10]. Instead, pragmatists are more likely to embrace a relativistic or situational ethics that allows for moral flexibility and adaptation. Pragmatism acknowledges that ethical dilemmas can arise when conflicting principles or values come into play. The supporters of this approach advocate for a balance between competing principles, with a focus on achieving the best overall outcome. Furthermore, pragmatism often views ethics as a problem-solving approach [31]. Ethical principles are tools for addressing ethical dilemmas and making practical decisions that lead to favorable outcomes. Hence, ethical principles should be open to revision and adaptation in response to changing circumstances and new information. Pragmatists are open to experimenting with different ethical approaches and policies to determine their effectiveness. This experimental attitude is rooted in the idea that ethical principles should be tested and refined through practical experience. In summary, pragmatism places a strong emphasis on the practical consequences and utility of ethical principles. It encourages flexibility, adaptability, and empirical evaluation of ethical beliefs

and actions. Pragmatists prioritize problem-solving and achieving positive outcomes over rigid adherence to abstract moral principles [31].

While discussing political systems and international relations, bilateral relationships are crucial to be analyzed in the context of moral values. For instance, a country may have stronger ethical commitments with certain allies while adopting a different approach with others. Ethical principles play a significant role in shaping and guiding bilateral relationships between two nations [28]. While the pursuit of national interests is a primary driver of foreign policy, ethical considerations can influence the conduct of diplomacy, cooperation, and conflict resolution in several ways. Ethical behavior by both parties fosters trust and goodwill in bilateral relations. Diplomatic interactions characterized by honesty, transparency, and respect for international norms contribute to a positive and constructive relationship. Moreover, ethical principles related to human rights and democracy often feature prominently in bilateral relationships. Nations may engage in dialogue and cooperation to promote democratic governance, protect human rights, and address violations. The position of ethics in bilateral relationships is more visible during conflict resolution. Ethical principles guide negotiations and conflict resolution efforts, and mediation and peace processes often rely on principles of justice, fairness, and nonviolence to find mutually acceptable solutions to disputes. Bilateral relationships can involve humanitarian aid and assistance in times of crisis, such as natural disasters or humanitarian emergencies [27]. Providing aid to alleviate suffering and address urgent needs is seen as an ethical obligation. Ethical considerations may also influence trade and economic relations between nations. Ethical trade practices, fair labor standards, and environmental sustainability can be important factors in bilateral economic agreements [22]. In modern affairs, both states and international organizations are attempting to increase awareness of environmental policies. Bilateral relations can be shaped by ethical principles related to environmental protection and sustainability. Nations may collaborate on environmental agreements and initiatives to address global challenges such as climate change. Along with the environmental issues, public health became one of the key areas in bilateral affairs, especially after the recent pandemic, and ethical principles are relevant to cooperation on public health issues in terms of combating diseases, ensuring access to healthcare, and promoting ethical research practices. Within the bilateral relations, ethical considerations are pertinent to discussions on arms control, disarmament, and non-proliferation of weapons which are prioritized to reduce the risk of conflict and promote global security. This issue also considers human security, or in other words, refugee and migration policies. Ethical doctrines are the main arguments for bilateral agreements on the treatment of refugees and migrants which reflect humanitarian values and respect for human dignity [49]. These arrangements can evolve into multilateral relations and be regulated with international law

where ethical adherence to international law and treaties is a fundamental aspect of bilateral relations. Since there are no specific enforcement mechanisms, states are expected to uphold their legal obligations and commitments, which are rooted in ethical principles.

As mentioned before, ethics can be used as a soft power tool, especially in cultural and educational exchanges. Bilateral relationships may involve cultural exchanges and educational partnerships by promoting cultural understanding and academic collaboration which can be seen as ethically enriching and mutually beneficial. It's important to note that while ethical principles can positively influence bilateral relations, they may also give rise to disagreements or tensions when different nations have divergent ethical perspectives or priorities. Ethical dilemmas can arise when states must balance their interests with their ethical commitments and responsibilities in the context of bilateral relationships. Diplomatic negotiations and compromises often seek to address these challenges while upholding ethical principles.

Contemporary political affairs struggle with the dilemma between ethics and national sovereignty as well [7]. Respect for national sovereignty is a fundamental principle of international relations, which can sometimes limit the extent to which ethical principles are applied. Ethical principles play a complex and sometimes contentious role in the context of national sovereignty, which refers to a nation's independence and authority to govern itself without external interference. The relationship between ethics and national sovereignty can vary depending on the specific ethical principles involved and how they are applied in practice. One ethical principle that directly relates to national sovereignty is the principle of respecting the sovereignty of other nations [7]. Ethical norms of non-interference and respect for a nation's right to self-determination require that states refrain from intervening in the internal affairs of sovereign nations without justifiable cause. Secondly, the concept of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) represents an ethical principle that acknowledges the international community's responsibility to prevent and respond to mass atrocities within a sovereign state, even when it involves limited interference [6]. This principle balances sovereignty with the ethical duty to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity. Ethical principles related to human rights can intersect with national sovereignty. While states have the right to govern their internal affairs, they are also ethically obligated to respect and protect the human rights of their citizens [20]. When states fail to uphold human rights, there can be ethical debates about the responsibility of the international community to intervene. In these cases, the role of ethical diplomacy is significant, which involves conducting foreign policy and international relations in a manner consistent with ethical principles. States may engage in diplomatic efforts that promote peace, cooperation, and ethical norms, even as they respect the sovereignty of other nations. On the other hand, ethical dilemmas can arise when there is tension between the

principles of sovereignty and other ethical imperatives, such as the duty to protect human rights or prevent mass atrocities. Decisions about intervention or non-interference often involve complex ethical trade-offs. These ethical debates about sovereignty can occur within international organizations like the United Nations. Member states may grapple with ethical considerations when making decisions about peacekeeping missions, sanctions, or other forms of intervention. In short, the role of ethical principles in national sovereignty is multifaceted. While sovereignty is a foundational principle of international relations, ethical norms can intersect with and sometimes challenge this principle. Balancing the principles of sovereignty and ethical responsibility can be a complex and contentious aspect of international relations and diplomacy. The specific ethical principles at play and the context in which they are applied influence how these tensions are resolved in practice.

#### 4. Ethical Principles in Feminist Foreign Policy

FFP places a strong emphasis on gender equality and women's rights as core ethical principles in foreign policy [42]. The policy is rooted in the ethical belief that all individuals, regardless of gender, have equal intrinsic value and rights. It rejects patriarchal norms and practices that have historically relegated women and gender-diverse individuals to subordinate roles. Furthermore, gender equality is regarded as a fundamental human right. Feminist foreign policy upholds international human rights principles, including those related to gender equality, as ethical imperatives. This includes the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and other international agreements [42]. Secondly, FFP promotes justice and fairness by addressing historic and systemic gender-based inequalities [2]. Ethically, it seeks to rectify past and present injustices by dismantling discriminatory structures and ensuring equitable opportunities and outcomes for all genders. Ethical principles within feminist foreign policy emphasize the empowerment and agency of women and gender-diverse individuals. It recognizes the right of individuals to make decisions about their own lives, including in matters of education, employment, healthcare, and reproductive rights [42]. Another significant characteristic is the inclusion of intersectionality as an essential component of ethical foreign policy. Feminist foreign policy recognizes that gender equality is intricately linked with other dimensions of identity, such as race, class, sexuality, and disability [1]. Ethical principles require addressing the intersecting forms of discrimination and disadvantage that affect individuals differently. The ethical stance is also prioritized in promoting peace and security. It acknowledges that gender-based violence and discrimination are impediments to peace and that women's inclusion in peace processes is both a matter of justice and a practical means of

achieving lasting peace [35].

Ethical principles within feminist foreign policy advocate for the full and meaningful participation of women and gender-diverse individuals in political, economic, and social decision-making processes [2]. This not only upholds democratic values but also ensures diverse perspectives are considered. The policy emphasizes accountability for gender-based violence and discrimination. It views accountability as an ethical obligation and a means of ending impunity for perpetrators of such acts. What makes FFP significant is that ethical principles within feminist foreign policy extend to the global stage, recognizing the interconnectedness of gender equality with broader issues of social justice, human rights, and sustainable development [17]. In essence, gender equality is the core of the ethical principles of feminist foreign policy because it represents a commitment to a more just, equitable, and inclusive world. It seeks to transform international relations by challenging traditional power structures and norms that perpetuate gender-based discrimination and by advancing the ethical imperative of equal rights and opportunities for all genders.

Additionally, FFP promotes global solidarity and inclusivity in its efforts to advance gender equality. It recognizes the interconnectedness of various forms of discrimination and disadvantage, including those related to gender, race, class, sexuality, and disability. Adopting an intersectional perspective promotes inclusivity by addressing the unique challenges faced by individuals at the intersections of these identities [53]. This approach also helps feminist foreign policymakers to recognize the value of indigenous and local knowledge, which is essential for sustainable development and environmental protection. By respecting and incorporating these perspectives, it promotes inclusivity and solidarity with indigenous communities. As part of solidarity and inclusivity, the involvement of civil society organizations and grassroots movements that advocate for social justice and human rights cannot be ignored, where the support empowers marginalized groups and enhances inclusivity by amplifying their voices on the global stage [45]. This leads to providing foreign aid that prioritizes the needs and priorities of marginalized communities, including those disproportionately affected by poverty, conflict, and climate change [24]. This approach promotes global solidarity by addressing structural inequalities, one of which is economic inequality. Hence, by supporting women's economic empowerment, feminist foreign policy contributes to global economic inclusivity [53]. When women have equal access to economic opportunities and resources, it benefits not only individuals but also communities and societies. These actions are usually taken through international cooperation and multilateralism to address global challenges. This approach fosters global solidarity by encouraging nations to work together to find collective solutions to pressing issues such as climate change, pandemics, and poverty.

Within the framework of ethical principles, Feminist foreign policy often seeks to increase the representation of

women and marginalized groups in international institutions, negotiations, and decision-making processes [2]. This enhances inclusivity by ensuring that diverse voices are heard and considered. While there may be overlaps in ethical principles, FFP's distinctive focus on gender equality and the recognition of gender as a fundamental aspect of foreign policy set it apart from traditional approaches. FFP seeks to challenge and transform traditional power structures and norms that perpetuate gender-based discrimination and inequality, which may not always be a central focus of the current political system. It's important to note that the degree to which FFP is implemented can vary among countries and governments, and the alignment of ethical principles with FFP depends on the specific policies and commitments of each nation [52]. Integrating ethics into the implementation of FFP without challenging the social, economic, and political conditions of a country requires a nuanced approach. FFP aims to promote gender equality and human rights while acknowledging the complexities of international relations [41]. Even though it is quite challenging to develop strategies for finding a functional position for ethics within FFP without causing undue disruption, there are some approaches considered successful in implementing gendered perspectives to foreign affairs. FFP can be implemented strategically by considering the country's existing diplomatic relationships and interests. While promoting ethical principles, diplomats can also work pragmatically to advance gender equality within the constraints of diplomatic realities. They could also seek collaboration with like-minded countries and international organizations that share similar ethical goals. Forming alliances can amplify the impact of FFP initiatives without necessarily challenging existing political conditions. The policy can be implemented incrementally, gradually introducing ethical considerations into foreign policy decisions without causing abrupt disruptions, meaning the change should come in stages instead of abruptly. As part of the FFP approach, it is necessary to raise awareness about the importance of FFP and the ethical principles it represents. One of the options is to engage in public diplomacy efforts to promote understanding and support for gender equality. The policy additionally requires involving a diverse range of stakeholders, including civil society organizations, women's groups, and experts in gender issues, in the development and implementation of FFP initiatives. Their input can help align ethical goals with practical realities. Therefore, there is a need for further research and data to utilize information to demonstrate the benefits of FFP, including its positive impact on economic development, peace, and stability. Highlighting the advantages can build support for ethical foreign policy. One of the advantages of feminist foreign policy is having flexible approaches by recognizing that one-size-fits-all methods may not work in every context [41]. FFP can be adapted to align with the specific social, economic, and political conditions of different countries while maintaining its ethical principles. To verify the possibility of implementation of FFP in a certain country, implementing

small-scale pilot programs is preferable to test the feasibility and impact of FFP initiatives in specific contexts before expanding them nationally or internationally. During this process, in addition to civil societies and NGOs, the private sector in FFP efforts can play an important role in economic development by adopting ethical business practices that align with FFP principles. Within these engagements, promoting economic empowerment of women through initiatives that align with economic development goals, emphasizes how this benefits society as a whole [41]. Furthermore, FFP encourages leveraging international norms and agreements related to gender equality and human rights to support FFP initiatives. Aligning with global standards can help legitimize ethical efforts. Incorporating ethics into FFP while respecting the realities of social, economic, and political conditions requires a balanced and strategic approach. It's essential to find common ground and build consensus to advance the ethical principles of FFP while acknowledging the need for diplomacy and pragmatism in international relations.

## 5. Conclusions

It's important to clarify that "ethics within current foreign affairs" and "feminist foreign policy" are not necessarily in opposition to each other. Instead, they represent different approaches to addressing ethical concerns within the realm of international relations. Arguing whether one approach is better than the other depends on numerous aspects, such as the specific ethical principles and goals of a nation's foreign policy, and priorities of the state as well as the national interests of the country.

Ethical principles in the current political system include a broad range of ethical considerations that can be integrated into a nation's foreign policy. These ethical regards can include human rights, environmental ethics, just war theory, humanitarian principles, and others. Hence, exploring these ethical principles and analyzing their integration into foreign policy can vary from one nation to another. One of the advantages of the ethical approach in current policies is the flexibility of the actions. It allows nations to adapt their foreign policy to a wide range of ethical concerns, including those beyond gender equality. Secondly, it can address a variety of ethical issues, and encompass a broad spectrum of ethical concerns, including environmental protection, poverty alleviation, and human rights. On the other hand, this policy may lack a specific focus which is a disadvantage. Without a specific framework, ethical considerations within foreign affairs are missing a clear and coherent focus on addressing gender-based discrimination and inequalities. Moreover, it may not fully address gender-specific issues, such as not adequately addressing gender-specific challenges and the experiences of women and marginalized gender groups.

Feminist foreign policy is a specific approach that places gender equality and the empowerment of women and gen-

der-diverse individuals at the forefront of foreign policy decision-making. The main ground of the feminist principles and aims is to address the specific challenges faced by women and gender-diverse individuals in international relations. It provides an opportunity to establish a framework for addressing gender-based discrimination and inequalities, which are often overlooked in traditional foreign policies. Another positive attribute of this policy with the framework of ethical values is that it empowers marginalized groups and seeks to empower women and marginalized gender groups, promoting their full participation and representation in foreign policy matters. Additionally, it recognizes that gender equality is linked with other ethical concerns, such as human rights and peace. There are some disadvantages of this policy as well. Firstly, it may not fully address other ethical concerns: While feminist foreign policy addresses gender-specific issues comprehensively, it may require integration with broader ethical considerations to address a wide range of global challenges. Secondly, implementing feminist foreign policy can face resistance from those who do not prioritize gender equality or view it as a lower priority.

The effectiveness and relevance of these approaches depend on a nation's values, priorities, and the specific challenges the country encounters in the international arena. Some countries choose to adopt both approaches, integrating feminist principles into their broader ethical foreign affairs framework with partial adoption of FFP, while others are fully adopting but facing difficulties in the implementation process due to the more hierarchical and patriarchal dominant nature of international affairs. Ultimately, deciding which approach is "better" is subjective and depends on the specific goals and values of a nation's foreign policy.

## Abbreviations

FFP	Feminist Foreign Policy
UNSCR 1325	United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325
WPS	The Women, Peace, and Security
IR	International Relations
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

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## Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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