ARTICLE

Women in Diplomacy in Türkiye: Prospects for a Gender Turn

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Abstract

Women in diplomacy serve the national interests of security and prosperity where the hard power essence of foreign policy objectives has prevailed, i.e., in post-conflict reconstruction, in transitions from conflict to stability and in the fields of soft power promotion including cultural transitions, and civil society and business partnerships. Borrowing from Feminist diplomacy theories, this paper will first offer an outlook on the role of women represented in international affairs and diplomacy, and the setting of the foreign policy agenda in Türkiye over the past two decades. In recent decades, the number of women diplomats serving in Türkiye's foreign missions around the world has increased remarkably. This paper will examine the patterns of this 'gender turn' in diplomacy, measuring the perceptions of women in diplomacy. It will also examine the prospects for more inclusive diplomacy with greater participation and active involvement of women in foreign services, the challenges to female leadership roles in international affairs and the prospects for the success of women's leadership for a change of state in international affairs. In-depth interviews were carried out with a sample of 16 female diplomats who serve at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or at other diplomatic missions at varying levels of hierarchy. By presenting

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and analyzing these interviews, this paper will explore the extent to which women in diplomacy have a transformative power in the male-dominated, power-centric foreign policy of a state, and thus if there is truly a gender turn occurring in Turkish diplomacy.

Keywords

Women in diplomacy, gender turn, new diplomacy, feminist foreign policy, Türkiye

Introduction

Over the past decades in foreign policy, the number of women diplomats and women career service workers serving in Turkish foreign missions across the world have increased remarkably. Türkiye has become a pioneering country in the global system in terms of the great size of its diplomatic missions, and its 79 female ambassadors out of a total of 282 as of July 2022. The majority of female Turkish diplomats serve in developing countries. The number of women serving in foreign affairs is an important indicator of a country's soft power, and their distribution across the Global South and North denotes a change in foreign policy attitudes and preferences of diplomatic orientations. Women's participation and inclusion in foreign policy are thus important indicators of a country's soft power.[1] For instance, twelve of Türkiye's female diplomats were serving in European countries as of July 2022 (Portugal, Switzerland, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Finland, Latvia, Estonia, Montenegro, Slovenia, France and Austria—the latter are Türkiye's two permanent representatives in Paris and Vienna). Besides this concentration of diplomatic representation with female diplomats, Türkiye's foreign policy has recently adopted a geographical focus also towards Africa. This African "overture" in Turkish foreign policy encompasses not only the country's soft power interests but also its military and defense partnership priorities. In short, Turkish foreign policy is going through a gender turn as a growing number of women diplomats are appointed to countries in diverse geographies and countries with both soft and hard power priorities. As an example, Türkiye's military export to Africa was 83 million USD in 2020, and increased to 288 million USD only in one year. Türkiye's 18th embassy

in Latin America[2] was recently opened in El Salvador, and a female ambassador was appointed to represent Türkiye there. A new military cooperation is underway between El Salvador and Türkiye, along with an emerging entrepreneurial and humanitarian dimension of this transformation of diplomatic processes.

Sweden was the first country to introduce feminist foreign policy principles in 2014, and the Swedish model still sets the standard as the most widely acknowledged normative model today. The main principles of Sweden's feminist foreign policy center around gender equality and the full implementation of human rights for all women and girls.[3] These guidelines set standards for a wider group of countries in the making of feminist foreign policy. Especially after 2014, there has been a growing interest from other countries to understand and adopt these principles. In addition to Sweden, Canada (2017), Mexico, Norway and France (2019) now describe their foreign policy as "feminist".[4] They were joined by Germany in 2021, after Annalena Baerbock took office.[5]

Despite the richness in research exploring European, Swedish and Canadian feminist foreign policy perspectives and approaches, the literature on the Turkish case remains in the process of maturing. Yet it provides a rich topic of study: The number of female Turkish diplomats has increased remarkably in the last decade. As of July 2022, there were 79 women ambassadors of a total of 282. Overall, 38% of the employees of the Foreign Ministry and 44% of the Director Generals were female in this period. Türkiye's first female ambassador, Filiz Dinçmen, was appointed in 1982—since then the number of female diplomats increased to 8 in 2000, 19 in 2005, 21 in 2010, 60 in 2019 and 79 in 2022.[6] Among the ambassadors on active duty outside Türkiye, 45 out of 158 ambassadors were female (28.48%).[7] Turkish diplomacy is far above the world average in the number of female ambassadors: with 28% of its total foreign ambassadors being women, the Turkish Foreign Ministry holds a leading position[8] compared to the global average of women ambassadors—15%.[9]

Türkiye's statistics represent a quantitative turn. However, it still remains to be seen if the quantitative transformative in the Turkish case is accompanied with progress in terms of a norm transformation that would produce a gender turn in diplomacy. This paper thus investigates the normative elements.

With few exceptions, besides being victims of the discriminating practices and language of traditional diplomacy, women have mainly been hidden figures behind the scenes of international relations. However, feminist foreign policy has recently received a great scholarly attention. It has become a much-debated field in International Relations (IR) studies, and many scholars have begun to examine the roles, styles and determinants of women's leadership. le, capabilities and leadership women diplomats brought about to the conduct of foreign affairs and diplomacy, where there are tIndeed, gender has become one of the major issues of diplomacy over the last forty years. Women's representation in the processes of diplomacy, and their roles as the subjects of diplomacy, have become widely discussed with reference to the number of female diplomats and their capabilities, and women's roles in the conduct of conflict resolution, bargaining and progress. Jennifer Cassidy, a former Irish diplomat, proposes that we address the gender of diplomacy, instead of gender and diplomacy.[10] She argues that our perception of diplomacy is shaped by the roles we link with gender. Moreover, it may be argued that a quantitative increase in the number of female diplomats reflects the foreign policy orientation of the country they represent. Does increased female representation automatically mean a more progressive foreign policy? This is a question that still needs to be discussed conceptually and empirically.

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Historically, in Western political cultures, the perceived nature of 'state'—strong, rational, competitive, aggressive and autonomous—has been associated with the 'male' image. Generally, success, power and victory, as concepts of international politics, have been defined with reference to masculinity; similarly, the language of foreign policy has been a male-dominated discourse. As Tickner critically discusses in her article, "Hans Morgenthau's Principles of Political Realism: A Feminist Reformulation", "international relation is a man's world, a world of power and conflict in which warfare is a privileged activity."[11] Building upon the obstacles vested in traditional socio-political practices and

understanding, the Swedish flagship in establishing a feminist foreign policy is definitely a remarkable achievement.

On the academic side, the notion of a feminist IR became a concern when the special issue of *Millennium* on "Women and International Relations" was published in 1988. What is today called "feminist foreign policy" was not easily achieved or even formulated. Taking a more balanced perspective, Sjoberg argues that gender does not mean or symbolize a biological class. It rather signifies a symbolic meaning with hierarchies and stereotypes based on the male and female characteristics.[12] Building upon notions of "gender" in or of diplomacy either as biological or stylistic determinants, the normative elements of a feminist foreign policy are indispensable dimensions of a "gender turn".

Feminist foreign policy is broadly related to certain principles and transformative elements. The former is about rights, especially principles of human rights and dignity. The latter is about the transformation in the traditional 'masculine' status quo of 'state', and its longer-term consequences for society. That is to say, transformative power should be understood in terms of the promotion of non-violence and demilitarization, and the sustainability of economic and ecological justice.

Women in Turkish diplomacy have been studied elsewhere from a historical perspective with a focus on gender structures in foreign affairs, and types of professions, positions and ranks.[13] Borrowing from Aggestam and Towns, we argue that there is a (re-)constitution of diplomacy that is intimately linked to gender and the practices of inclusion of women over time in diplomatic representation, which we conceptualize in this paper as a "gender turn".[14] The concept of gender turn will be discussed with reference to prevailing theoretical approaches to women in foreign policy and gender roles in diplomacy, taking into account arguments that women contribute more positively to peace and global security (UNSC Resolution No. 1325), women leaders are more hawkish than their male counterparts (the Thatcher model) and the Scandinavian model. It will also examine the prospects for a more "inclusive diplomacy" with greater participation and active involvement of women in foreign service, the challenges to female

leadership roles in international affairs and prospects for the success of women's leadership for a change of state in international affairs.

Türkiye as the case under investigation in this paper will be empirically analyzed through in-depth interviews with women diplomats to examine the evidence of a "gender turn". The existence of such a turn and its nature will be explored via interviews carried out with a sample of 16 female diplomats who serve at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or at intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) at an upper level of ranking. Through in-depth interview data, this paper will analyze whether women in diplomacy exert any transformative influence in male-dominated, power-centric traditional foreign policy.

This study will examine the concept of a "gender turn" looking at whether and how the masculine language of foreign policy has been transformed, and whether the increase in the number of women engaging in foreign policy leads or can lead to a transformation from a male-dominated, power-centric language into a more cooperative discourse. The idea of a feminist foreign policy transformation will be studied by looking into the style, capabilities and leadership qualities that women diplomats are bringing to the conduct of foreign affairs and diplomacy.

First, this paper will briefly cover the basic principles of feminist foreign policy in IR via a literature review, with a focus on concepts of transformative power and gender turn. In the second part, the methodological framework will be described. The third, empirical section will analyze the interviews to discuss the perceived gender turn that is occurring, based on the data obtained from 16 women diplomats who have been serving in Turkish diplomatic missions in different parts of the world.

Conceptual Synopsis

Over the past 40 years, gender and women has been a popular topic in International Relations. It has been underlined and discussed in societies that women have been absent from leadership and have not assumed or have been denied access to key political positions. Notably, women have traditionally played only a minor role in shaping and leading international relations. In the language of IR in general, rationality,

aggressiveness and autonomy have been linked to understandings of 'state' and tied to notions of masculinity, whereas concepts such as irrational, dependent and passive have been linked to femininity and, as such, excluded from the realm of 'power' where state business is conducted. The idea of a 'typical' diplomat is associated with a Western male diplomat—rational, strong, tall, polite—and usually white.

According to Garner, women in diplomacy became a topic of discussion primarily when women's mobilization in international movements for gender equality began.[15] More recently, a growing literature on feminist foreign policy and diplomacy has emerged. According to Aggestam and Towns, studies on feminist diplomacy have become a growing academic domain—yet there is still very little knowledge on gender breakdown in diplomacy.[16] The literature has predominantly been produced in Western academia, and focuses primarily on Europe and European practices.

In IR, Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP) does not necessarily mean an examination of the influence of biological sex in the making of foreign policy or diplomacy. On the contrary, it is a perspective that brings attention to understandings of the masculine and feminine characteristics at play in the conduct of foreign policy and diplomacy. The meaning of gender itself varies across cultures, countries and political systems. As Hooper notes, gender is neither a thing nor a property of an individual's character. It is rather a property of collectivities, institutions and historical processes.[17] Peterson describes feminism as being neither merely about women, nor the inclusion of women to male stream constructions; it is about transforming ways of being and knowing.[18] When the gender aspect of international politics is ignored, this leads to an elevation of masculinity in the subject, as assumptions about gender, which are often shaped by male-centric discourses and practices, go unexamined. By the same logic, merely bringing a gender aspect to the study of IR without examining the often sexist language in which the discussion itself is taking place would be inadequate at best.

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Feminism in foreign policy and FFP is approached in various ways by different IR schools of thought. Realists examine the role of gender in strategic thinking and power politics, which is predominantly a male-dominant domain. According to Tickner, values are associated with hegemonic masculinity and inscribed onto the international behavior of states.[19] The Realist school describes 'state' with a specific focus on its masculine nature. They use a masculine language, in which concepts such as power, interest, military, anarchy, strength and hegemony are coded as masculine. Feminist theory would ask the question: "Who is defining the national interest and are women involved in these decisions?" [20] And, "who defines power and the use of it?" and "what would be the indicators of power?"

Liberals examine the position of women in global politics by positing that gender equality is a value that could be reached by including women in all levels of international relations and politics. Liberal Feminists describe discrimination against women in its many forms and discuss the participation of women in global politics. Liberal feminist perspectives underline the importance of equal opportunities in education, women's access to the public sphere and economic equality. Since liberalism emphasizes the role of the individual in international relations and politics, the language of feminist liberalism differs from that of the masculine Realist perspective. Cooperation, consensus and collaboration, for instance, are central in the former. Feminist liberal perspectives criticize mainstream liberal theories because of the inequalities perpetuated through liberal policies and the lack of women in leading positions in international institutions.[21]

Critical Feminism concentrates on the manifestations of gendered identity and gendered power in international relations and politics. Feminist constructivism focuses on the ways that ideas about gender shape and are shaped by global politics, arguing that international relations and politics are social constructs. Power and gender are considered integral elements of construction, and the differences between male and female arise through socialization. From this perspective, the ideas that political actors hold about gender determine their decisions on global politics.

Feminist Post-structuralism underlines linguistic manifestations of meaning, particularly the dichotomies of strong vs. weak, rational vs. emotional and public vs. private, and points to the dominance of masculine language in global politics. Through analysis of the speeches and discussions of actors, this lens reveals how relations of power are constructed. Feminist Post-structuralism focuses on the possibility of searching beyond what is already known or assumed, particularly regarding ways of thinking about 'male' and 'female'. Both Constructivism and post-structuralism help side-step questions of gender.

Last but not least, Ecological Feminism looks for the connections between women and minorities and the non-human environment. This is an important perspective, since there has been a significant increase of literature in recent years on the relations between gender and the environment. Additionally, the environment itself has become a popular topic in international relations. Ecological Feminism explores topics of ecology and the environment from a perspective that highlights the role of gender in these issues.

Based on this brief account of how feminist approaches relate to foreign policy and international relations, this paper borrows from multiple theories and examines the gender turn in Turkish foreign policy and diplomacy taking multiple perspectives into account. It formulates two main arguments. The first is that the gender turn in diplomacy has a transformative impact in traditional, male-dominated, power-centric foreign policymaking. The second argument is that a gender turn in diplomacy is a combination of transformation in size, capacity, status hierarchy and the efficacy of women diplomats on conflict resolution, peace building, and mediational and entrepreneurial capacity in hard and soft power related missions with the receiving countries.

From Instrumental Gender Focus to Normative Gender Turn?

In 2017, there were only 17 female heads of state in the world.[22] International, inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have long pushed for greater participation of women in diplomacy. In 2000, the UN Security Council established the well-known resolution 1325/1820 on Women, Peace and Security, a milestone

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in feminist foreign policy. The resolution urged member states to include women in peace negotiations and post-conflict reconstructions.

Turkish politics and foreign policy have always been male-dominant fields, although Türkiye was one of the first pioneering countries in the world where women held their electoral rights prior to many advanced societies. The first female Prime Minister, Tansu Çiller, served between 1993 and 1996 as the leader of Türkiye's True Path Party. However, the ancestors of the Turks, as narrated by Dede Korkut, delegated primary importance to women in ruling.[23] The granting of political rights to women during the Ottoman era was a consequence of Westernization efforts in the mid-19th century in the form of limited administrative reforms and the establishment of women's rights such as heritage and education.[24] However, as Rumelili and Süleymanoğlu-Kürüm note, "in the Ottoman Empire, Islamic law enforced segregation of the sexes, and deprived Muslim women of key fundamental rights."[25] With the establishment of the Republic, women became—albeit slowly—more visible in politics and in rights-based movements in Türkiye. For instance, in June 1923 under the "Women People's Party", the Turkish women movement was politically institutionalized for the first time. As part of the democratization process that started in the 1930s, women gradually gained equal political rights.

Since that time, Türkiye has been among the leading countries in terms of female participation in foreign service and diplomacy. Following Brazil and the U.S., the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs was one of the first in the world to open the way for women to be diplomats; Adile Ayda was Türkiye's first female diplomat—she joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1932.[26] In 1934, Türkiye was followed by Denmark and in 1939 by Norway. Interestingly, as the pioneer of feminist foreign policy today, Sweden adapted itself rather late, in 1948, in welcoming female professionals into the field of diplomacy.[27] However, it was not until 1982 that women could be appointed as an ambassador in Türkiye. Filiz Dinçmen was the first female ambassador appointed in

1982. Despite this early progress, women's appearance in the ranks of higher status diplomatic positions has remained rather rare. Tansu Çiller, the first female Prime Minister of Türkiye (1993) and who later served as Minister of Foreign Affairs, is iconic of a breakthrough step toward a gender turn in Turkish foreign affairs. Over the last two decades, there has been a quantitative increase in the appointment of female diplomats (Table 1) with almost a six times growth between 2001 and 2022.

Table 1. Women in Diplomacy in Turkish Foreign Service (2001–2022)

	Total # of Ambassadors	# of Female Ambassadors	Proportion of Female / Male Ambassadors (%)
2001	194	12	6.5
2006	193	19	11
2011	193	23	13.5
2016	244	43	21.4
2021	275	73	26.5
2022	282	79	28

Source: Compiled by authors from the resources of Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Women's entrance into the field of diplomacy has not been free of obstacles. Diplomatic procedures in a great number of countries present challenges for women; examples include bans on married women diplomats from taking Foreign Service examinations or urging them to leave their careers after marriage. For its part, Türkiye has never banned female diplomats. The U.S. lifted the marriage ban in 1971, Sweden in the early 1970s and Great Britain in 1973. Türkiye's liberal approach to women in diplomacy is one of the reasons why Türkiye has more female diplomats compared with global figures.[28]

Turkish foreign policy has been undergoing transformation in the last two decades under the long, single-party rule of the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi)*,[29] and diplomatic trends and structures have also witnessed change. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) is determined to expand its diplomatic missions across the world and this determination involves a gender turn: the

number of women diplomats has increased in this period. Longitudinal figures show us that there has been a steady growth in Turkish diplomatic missions across the world. The Turkish MFA had 163 representations in 2002, including 93 Embassies, 58 General Consulates, 11 Permanent Representatives and one Trade Office. By 2022, these figures had reached 277 diplomatic representations, including 146 Embassies, 95 General Consulates, 13 permanent representations, one Trade Office, one Consular Agency and one Consular Bureau. In 2000, the Turkish MFA had eight female ambassadors serving outside of the country. In 2010, this number increased to 21, in 2019 to 60 and in 2022 to 79. To speak of comparative figures, according to MFA data and Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK) sources, in 2011 11.9 % of the total population of ambassadors were women; this increased to 26.5% in 2021 and 28% in 2022. While still the preponderant majority, the male ambassador population shrank from 88.1% in 2011 to 73.5% 2021.[30]

Turkish foreign missions have not only undergone a sea change in terms of the geographic expansion of missions—demographic and procedural transition has become a systemic characteristic of foreign affairs. For instance, the protocols of concourse to enter the Ministry have been altered. On the global scale, the "World is bigger than five" rhetoric of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has paved the way for foreign policy activism toward the less developed parts of the world. 102 ministers from African countries attended the 3rd Africa-Türkiye Cooperation Summit in Istanbul (December 16–18, 2021). Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu declared that the MFA would increase the number of embassies in Africa because of the new determinism.

One of the factors driving this increase is Türkiye's launch of new diplomatic missions, especially those in Africa and Latin America. In Africa, Türkiye had only 12 embassies in 2002; with the opening of Gine Bissau in 2022, this number has reached 44.[31] On the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, in Latin America, Türkiye had six embassies in 2002; as of 2022 it now has 18 embassies.[32]

In the Swedish MFA, women are still overrepresented in administrative units, despite an overall gender parity in the organization for almost two decades.[33] In the Turkish MFA, on the hand, women serve as

consular and expert officers more commonly than as career diplomats.[34] Clearly, women are more frequently being promoted to career diplomacy and filling the positions that were previously occupied by their male counterparts in Türkiye. Indeed, female representation in the Turkish MFA surpasses that of other institutions. At the Ministry and in overseas missions, one third of the total personnel is composed of female diplomats, including career diplomats. There has also been an increase in the number of female diplomats rising to the ambassador level. In the entrance exams of the Turkish Foreign Ministry in 1993–1994, there was equality between male and female candidate numbers. This also effected the increase in number.

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Data and Methods

From this conceptual and empirical point of view, this paper will analyze whether women in diplomacy have a transformative power in a male-dominated, power-centric foreign policy of a state, through in-depth interviews with 16 diplomats. Interviews were conducted face-to-face and online (when the diplomat was on overseas duty, out of the country unable to meet in person or due to health conditions), to go in detail into the Turkish case.

In-depth interviews were conducted to explore a perceived gender turn with data obtained from 16 women diplomats (N=16) serving in Turkish diplomatic missions in different parts of the world. Interviews were conducted between May 16 and June 9, 2022. Seven out of the 16 interviews were conducted online via Zoom, and nine interviews were conducted face-to-face. The total breakdown of interviewees in terms of current diplomatic posts are as follow: One Consulate Specialized Officer (Ankara); one Head of Department (Ankara); three Consul Generals (in EU member states); three counsellors (two in Ankara, one in the EU); eight ambassadors (three in Ankara, one in a Middle Eastern country, one in Southeast Asia, two in Latin America and one

in Africa). To protect the subjects interviewed, for ethical concerns, the interviewees were informed that their responses would be reported anonymously.

As conceptually discussed above, we aim at offering a composite definition of "gender turn" that includes the transformation of masculine language, which is more hard-power centric, into a more value- and norm-driven one, and an increase in the number of female diplomats in foreign missions. This conceptualization was presented to our interviewees at the beginning of each interview. Following upon the conceptual discussion provided in this paper, 13 interview questions were formulated and addressed to the interviewees. These questions were designed to tap the following aspects of a gender turn as perceived and narrated by female diplomats (1) self-narrative of diplomatic career,[35] (2) perception of a "gender turn", (a) perceived parameters of a gender turn if one is noted, (b) normative importance of a gender turn, (3) challenges of gender in foreign policy, (4) prospects for success of a gender turn in diplomacy, (5) gender turn vis-à-vis masculinity, (5a) instrumentality of a masculine tone and (5b) recognition and reception by male counterparts.

The interview data was coded by the authors according to the frequency of key concepts in response categories and a quantitative dataset "*Women in Diplomacy_ the case of Türkiye*" (WiD_TR) was created via SPSS program.[36] To maximize the objectivity of the narratives, a double-blind reading of the transcriptions was carried out by the authors.

Empirical Analysis and Discussion

Data were obtained through in-depth interviews with 16 female diplomats working at various hierarchical ranks in different diplomatic missions across the world. In terms of past positions and current service locations, there is a representative geographical variation in our data. Seven of our respondents are currently based in Türkiye, one is based in the Middle East, two in Latin America, one in Africa, one in Southeast Asia and four in Europe. Concerning the variations in terms of country or service, hierarchical ranks, duration of mission, our sample presents a great deal of variety.

Brackets are used in the interviewees' comments below to replace words that would jeopardize their anonymity.

In addition to the questions above, we asked our respondents if they had previously worked in an "F category" country. This classification has been employed since 2011 to categorize countries with a certain level of challenges related to the level of security and physical and political conditions. Previously the "F category" countries were listed under the "E" category. Only one respondent expressed that she had previously worked in an "F category" country and two respondents had served in a "D category" country, which before 2011 was the equivalent of today's "E" category according to the categorization of the Turkish MFA. Twelve respondents had no such experience to date. One of our respondents further stated that she has now been appointed to an "F category" country. Concerning the F category country, Interviewee #1 expressed that:

> I worked in [an F category country] when there was the Ebola epidemic, and the conditions were very hard. Yet as a female diplomat it was a turning point for me. I felt myself very happy that I personally took an active part in Türkiye's entrepreneurial and humanitarian foreign policy.

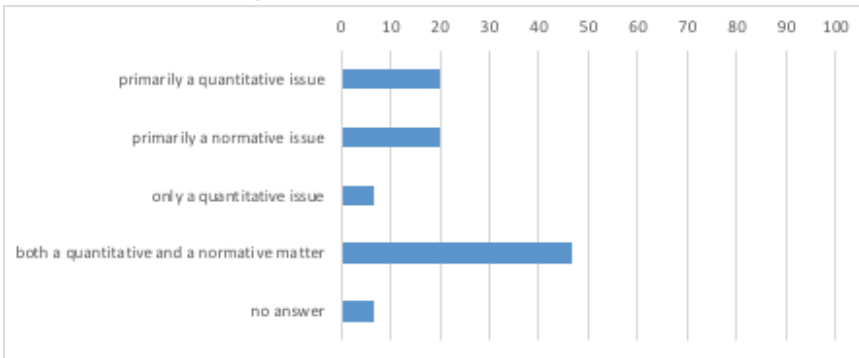
Perceptions of a "Gender Turn" Perceived Parameters & Normative Importance

Feminist foreign policy is discussed in the literature and among the practitioners from a materialist or a symbolic perspective, where the former is more a matter of numbers and the latter a matter of values and norms. The quantitative perspective concentrates more on how many positions are allocated to women diplomats in foreign policy. A gradual increase in the numbers of female diplomats, according to this view, is an objective and sufficient criterion for identifying a state's foreign policy as feminist. In the second approach, feminist foreign policy is considered a normative, value-laden responsibility of foreign policy agency. The third view is a hybrid view that considers feminist foreign policy a combination of quotas and values.

We asked our respondents about their opinion on these different approaches, i.e., how they perceive feminist foreign policy. The exact

question was: *"There are two mainstream approaches to describe feminist foreign policy. The first looks from a quantitative perspective as to the number of female diplomats, the second focuses on the transformation of foreign policy with the norms and value construction to which women diplomats contribute. Considering these two perspectives, what makes a foreign policy 'feminist' in your opinion?*" As the responses indicate, an overwhelming majority of respondents expressed that feminist foreign policy is a combination of both views (Table 2).

Table 2. Feminist Foreign Policy: A Quantitative or Normative Issue? (%)



Almost half of the female diplomats interviewed adopt a hybrid approach to feminist foreign policy. However, a "third way" aspect of the discussion highlights the need for women's participation in foreign policy-making:

> In my opinion, feminist foreign policy has neither to do with the numbers nor with femininity of a transformation as such. What makes foreign policy feminist is about the posts women diplomats hold, more about the quality and responsibilities. Yes, true that there are women ambassadors appointed under equal conditions and terms as the male counterparts to foreign missions. Yet what is missing is that female diplomats are not serving at higher ranks in Ankara at the headquarters… there is no woman deputy minister of Foreign Affairs, for instance. Women diplomats are rather the implementers of foreign policy, not the makers of it. And what makes foreign policy feminist depends on if and how women participate in the policy- and decision-making. (Interviewee #14)

> Feminist foreign policy depends on the appointment of women to decision-making positions in foreign policy. (Interviewee #15)

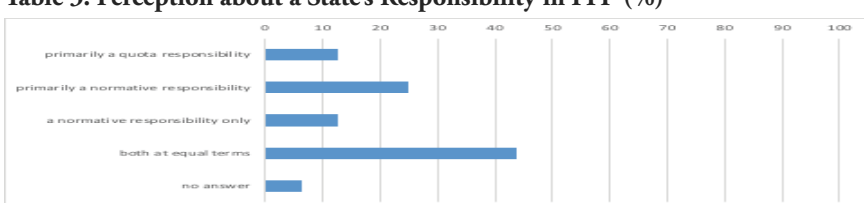
Concerning the feminist component of foreign policy being the state's responsibility or not, we asked our respondents whether they think the integration of feminist perspectives into policy-making and implementation, including that of foreign policy, is a normative responsibility of states, or whether a simple quota mechanism is sufficient for a feminist transformation. The majority expressed that such a transformation is both a normative responsibility and that quotas should support it *in praxis* (Table 3). However, there are competing views on implementing quotas. As stated by Interviewee #2: "Quotas are extremely important. In the absence of a quota requirement, male decision-makers could incline in reducing the numbers of women in certain positions. I strongly believe that quotas are essential instruments to keep women in the field.

Interviewee #3 held the opposite view:

> I personally do not believe quotas are successful, as a Turkish woman I can say this. We are the women of a nation which has granted rights to women, and we guarantee our rights under law. Quota mechanisms can work for contexts where women do not have certain rights or [are not] protected under rights…. Moreover, quotas depend on supervisor's discretion rather than liability, therefore, do not contribute to any substantive transformation in foreign policy.

The interview question (Q6) reads, *"Do you think the integration of a feminist perspective into policy-making and implementation, including that of foreign policy, is a normative responsibility of states? Or is a quota mechanism sufficient for feminist transformation?"* The authors coded the answers below into categories as in Table 3.

Table 3. Perception about a State's Responsibility in FFP (%)



The figures in Table 2 and Table 3 both tell us that among the female diplomats who participated in this research, a gender turn is about both realistic and symbolic components. As to the perceived gender turn in foreign policy in the Turkish context, our respondents were asked if they think there has been a gender turn in Turkish foreign policy, and to describe the conditions of a feminist transformation.

Seven respondents expressed that a gender turn is occurring in Turkish foreign policy; five said that some transformation has taken place, yet more is needed to accomplish a "gender turn". How about the missing components that need to be in place to complete a true "gender turn" in Turkish foreign policy? One of the most frequently expressed components is the need for "structural reforms" (i.e., "increase in numbers of women diplomats", "increase in salaries"). To give a representative example, Interviewee #2 stated:

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> We see a quantitative gender turn in reports, analyses, policies where a feminist perspective is more visible. However, we also need to see reforms in structural changes. Structural reforms such as an increase in numbers of women, equality in salaries; more equality in employment both for men and women should prevail normative transformation and changes in value structures and mentality.

Our respondents expressed that a gender turn at the national level is occurring in parallel with "global trends in improvement in rights." Interviewee #5 noted, "Improvements recorded at a global scale in human rights, equality, equal representation of women in social life have positive consequences on the transformation of our Ministry of Foreign Affairs in terms of a gender turn." Similarly, Interviewee #2 presented another rights-based perspective, stating that progress in gender equity relates to:

> equal representation of women and men… Instead of using the "feminist" term, I'd rather consider gender turn in Türkiye as a

> matter of equality between men and women in foreign policy… I believe what is central to this turn is opening more space to women in social life, as well as in foreign policy… and in the Turkish context this space has already been expanded.

As discussed previously, the need for "more female participation in managerial or decision-making positions" is highlighted as another indispensable requirement for a gender turn in Turkish feminist foreign policy, as noted by Interviewee #15:

> Yes, it is true that compared to past times there are more women diplomats, more women consulate officers, women officers at the Ministry. However, does this lead to a feminist transformation? I believe this only could happen if there are more women, preferably in Ankara, in managerial or superior decision-making positions.

Interviewee #10 also stressed the need for appointing women to upper ranks in the foreign affairs hierarchy: "I strongly contend that the ranks of women diplomats in hierarchy and their role and impacts on the foreign policy decision-making processes are important. For instance, having a woman Minister of Foreign Affairs, or a Deputy-Minister. This is what gender turn is about."

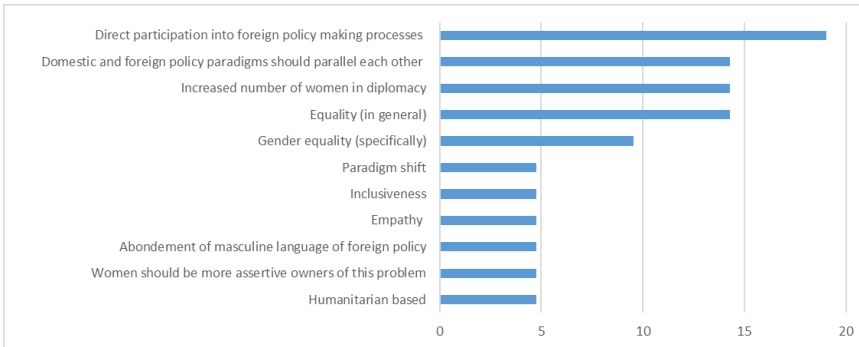
Interviewee #4 adds another dimension to this point:

> We should also pay attention to what countries women ambassadors are appointed to. For instance, to Washington, to London, there has not been any women diplomat appointed. Important missions, I'd say this in brackets, are not destinations for women in diplomacy as ambassadors. There are fine sweet destinations for women, again in brackets I'd like to say this, that are considered as more appropriate for women to serve.

Last but not least, we asked our respondents their perceptions about the main parameters of a gender turn in foreign policy. Table 4 presents the perceived parameters in multiple keywords. Based on the open-ended responses of interviewees, the most frequently expressed parameter of a gender turn in foreign policy is increased, direct participation in foreign policy decision-making processes (19%). The next three most essential components address the need for a concurrent feminist transformation in the domestic as well as the foreign policy realm (14%), the need

for more female appointments in diplomacy (14%) and a general environment for equality (14%). At a 10% point level, "gender equality" is an integral part of a gender turn.

Table 4. Perceived Major Parameters of Gender Turn in Foreign Policy (%)



Note: The values presented in the table add up to 100 percent. This question is analyzed as a multiple item variable. Items were coded by the authors on the basis of the open-ended responses of the interviewees.

Agreeing on the importance of more women in managerial positions, Interviewee #14 stressed that this is the only dimension in which a gender turn should be built, "to appoint women at hierarchically upper ranks to challenging missions:"

> Specifically, for instance, you appoint a woman diplomat to as the Head of Culture Department, to which I'd personally love to be appointed, no offense to my counterparts, but why not to the more complicated units, such as the Head of the Middle East Department, or to the NATO Division, or to the Syria Division? … It is not only about being a head of any unit, but the paradigm of gender turn requires women at top decision-making positions.

As the analysis so far indicates, a gender turn is perceived to be successful when women's participation in foreign-policy making is accomplished. And there are legitimate reasons for this, as expressed by the sample of women diplomats in this study. These findings are also in line with the conceptual debate that underlines the capabilities and capacities of women in diplomacy when it comes to decision-making. As far as hard politics issues are concerned, the findings of this analysis bring to mind another dimension of feminist foreign policy that the UNSC

Resolution 1325 reified in the international context: the contribution of women to conflict resolution/peace processes. Half of our respondents expressed that women are more successful than their male counterparts at conflict prevention processes or mechanisms, due to several factors. For example, they cited women "being more skilled in detailed processing of issues" (Interviewee #4, Interviewee #10), "utilizing their soft powers better" (Interviewee #4), "having more developed empathy skills" (Interviewee #6) and "leaning more toward cooperative thinking" (Interviewee #10). In contrast, four of our respondents stated that there is no gender variation; Interviewee #5 stated, "success does not depend on gender but personal qualification and experience." Three of our respondents highlighted the need for further data on this issue to better judge. As far as the impacts of female diplomacy in conflict resolution, Interviewee #14 stated, "female counterparts might be equipped with certain soft power skills to manage conflicts, but the impacts of their efforts are not known due to the lack of data availability." Lastly, just one respondent expressed her contention that male counterparts deal with these processes more successfully.

Challenges to Women in Foreign Policy

The second line of our in-depth interview data analysis delved into perceptions about the challenges women face in foreign policy. We focused the challenges on two issues first, asking our respondents if they personally had faced any gender-related challenges, and second, whether in the conduct of their responsibilities there were any positive or negative impacts of being a female diplomat.

In terms of personal challenges, half of our respondents said they had not faced any gender-related challenges during their diplomatic careers. The most cited gender-related challenges to women diplomats noted by the remaining half—either personally experienced or narrated by women colleagues—are related to greater expectations from women diplomats compared to their male counterparts, fraternity structures and networks among the male diplomats that pose obstacles for female diplomats, cultural biases

In terms of personal challenges, half of our respondents said they had not faced any gender-related challenges during their diplomatic careers.

in host or home country and of course marriage and pregnancy-related challenges. One of the respondents, Interviewee #15, ironically noted that being an unmarried female diplomat has been a source of negative discrimination against herself:

> As a woman diplomat, I have not faced great challenges, yet as a single female diplomat I would not be able to say so. For instance, if you are single there is no family, kids or a spouse waiting for you to come home; therefore as a single colleague I was asked to work extra hours, or when I asked for an annual leave the married counterparts were given priority.

Gendered foreign policy or diplomacy can produce positive consequences as well as challenges. We asked our respondents if they experienced any positive or negative impacts of feminist foreign policy when establishing diplomatic relations or exerting their diplomatic work at international fora. One of the very constructive implications of this investigation is that none of the respondents expressed any negative consequences, and the majority attested to positive aspects of their work as female diplomats in carrying out their responsibilities. Interviewee #8 stated, "being a woman diplomat that represents the Republic of Türkiye abroad always yields a more positive impression than a male Turkish counterpart." Friendship patterns in international negotiations or platforms were also mentioned as parts of positive aspects of a gender turn; Interviewee #2 noted, "Women can establish a more friendly and communicative tone; lengthy conversations help build a deeper integration with the host community and these could translate more easily into consequences for diplomatic practices." Similarly, Interviewee #3 pointed to the fact that:

> We, the women, can establish special friendships with First Ladies in host countries, which facilitate our communication in diplomatic conduct... I was the only female Consul General during my mission in [my host country]; at the VIP meetings where only men were allowed and invited, I met with security guards who did not want to let me in the meeting and offered to invite my husband to the same meeting. Only when I told them that I was the diplomat did they let me in involuntarily… In the same country however, I also met with positive discrimination mainly because I established a friendship with the wife of [the

> ruler] of that country, who also oversaw certain governmental responsibilities. I was for instance invited many times as a guest to her house. This was a privilege that my male counterparts were not able to enjoy in diplomatic missions.

Prospects for Success of a Gender Turn in Diplomacy

Our interview data help us perceive the framework of a gender turn in diplomacy across normative and realistic dimensions, as well as the challenges of being a female diplomat in the 'man's world' of foreign affairs, as the cliché suggests. Thanks to the many, evidence-based perceptions of female diplomats, the date reveal that certain clichés do not in fact prevail, as their personal experiences suggest.

Self-reported evidence and narratives are essential to helping us map out feminist foreign policy and the extent to which a gender turn is taking place in the Turkish case. And what about the comparison with the world's leading country—Sweden—when it comes to feminist foreign policy? Swedish foreign policy, as described above, is based on 3Rs: "rights", "representation", and "resources." We asked our respondents how, in their opinion, Turkish foreign policy fits into the Swedish framework. There were a few optimists who considered Turkish feminist foreign policy to be totally at the same level as Sweden's, and a few moderate optimists who expressed that Türkiye has achieved remarkable progress.

The common wisdom among our respondents, though, was that there has been "some progress" in Turkish feminist foreign policy-making, "yet more is still needed." For the majority of respondents, Türkiye still has a way to go to catch up with the Swedish progress. For them, when it comes to "representation", Türkiye's report is perceived as remarkably successful, albeit with some criticisms that still stand out. For instance, Interviewee #7 stated that "when I was told that 'there isn't any woman diplomat at the table, therefore you attend the meeting,' I always refused to attend under such circumstances." When it comes to resources, there are

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mixed views. Interviewee #7, speaking from a personal point of view, explained, "I do not think that I am given special rights just because I am a woman."

Interviewee #8 said,

> Concerning rights, as defined by law, there are no differences from other countries; on the contrary, we are even more developed. But when it comes to the implementation of rights, discrepancies are observed. Rights are defined, resources are allocated, representation is inclusive yet the implementation of what is feminist is problematic. And this is largely nested in the social structures under which women diplomats are treated.

Sharing a similar view, Interviewee #9 adds examples:

> Despite women's representation in diplomacy, a pregnant officer or a diplomat still can meet with biases… A traditional male superior does not look at the gender of the personnel, but marital status is more important. Single personnel—regardless of gender—are preferred. This is partially related to requests for professional leave. Married (with either kids or a spouse) is perceived to be more inclined to ask for more leaves.

As this part of the analysis suggests, there is a common and positive perception that in terms of representation—an increase in the appointment of more women diplomats—it is highly possible to speak of an exemplary "Turkish" feminist foreign policy; yet when it comes to the prospect of success in meeting Swedish standards, this largely depends on improvement in terms of the implementation of rights, rather than their codification.

A Feminist Gender Turn vis-à-vis Masculinity

The final part of the analysis of a gender turn as perceived by female diplomats focused on masculinity in foreign policy in terms of the instrumentality of masculine styles of diplomatic conduct and recognition of women in diplomacy by male counterparts. To this end, we asked our respondents for their assessment of the need for a certain level of 'masculinity' in diplomacy. The question read, "as a female diplomat, do you think a masculine language and method is

necessary to overcome certain challenges in your profession?" Almost one third of our respondents expressed the necessity of masculinity in the overcoming of certain difficulties in diplomacy. Interviewee #7 associated this necessity with the need for being "assertive" in order to survive and succeed in diplomatically challenging situations. Two other interviewees (#10 and #13) stated instead that the need for masculinity depends on issue-specific factors, such as context and counterparts, and structural dynamics such as societal externalities and systemic push factors. For instance, in host cultures where more conservative cultural characteristics prevail, "congeniality can cause trouble, such as the misinterpretation of the genial temper of a female diplomat; thus a balanced masculine approach and temper may serve to better the diplomatic processes" (Interviewee #12). In contrast, according to four of our respondents, a masculine language or method is not necessary to face challenging situations. The three remaining respondents argued that diplomatic language and methods are genderless.

Despite the plurality of opinions concerning the need for masculinity in language or diplomatic styles, our sample was clearly polarized about how their male counterparts perceive them. Half of the respondents stated that their male colleagues consider and address them as "female colleagues", whereas the other group expressed no exposure to differentiating or exclusionary attitudes. Respondents in the former group consider the sexist recognition they have received as a natural consequence of the dominant cultural codes in the society (Interviewee #6), specifically as how you describe yourself either as a "woman diplomat" or simply a "diplomat" (Interviewee #8). In a rather constructive perspective, Interviewee #10 said, "I think my male colleagues recognize me as a female diplomat since when they praise my success, they emphasize that I am a woman in diplomacy. However, I never have considered this as something to lament about or as having a pejorative intention."

Conclusion

What are the implications of a transformation of Turkish foreign policy focus for the gender turn in diplomacy and foreign policy? In addition to the gradual increase in the number of female diplomats, assumptions

about the functions and hierarchy status of women in diplomacy have been revised in the study through the empirical investigation of interview data. One line of debate on the idea of a gender turn is strongly linked with the instrumentality of quota mechanisms for a successful turn. As a part of traditional diplomacy, some positions are filled automatically considering gender differences. Women are, for instance, overrepresented in support functions whereas man remain overrepresented in leading positions, e.g., as ambassadors. However, to speak of a feminist foreign policy normative turn is an indispensable precondition. As expressed by the women diplomats interviewed in this study, the latter is a great challenge that needs to be accompanied by societal, cultural and structural transformations.

Another important implication of this study, which is rather doable within the foreign policy structure, is a more realistic hierarchical turn. Women are definitely visible in the lower ranks of diplomatic hierarchy; thus, a feminist foreign policy in terms of representation has apparently been achieved. Yet the weakest link—and potential area for regression—in terms of a gender turn is observed in the absence of appointments to top-tier decision-making positions.

Concerning the 3R model of the Swedish example, novel directions for Turkish foreign policy need to be reframed with an attempt to raise standards in terms of the "rights" and "resources" that women in diplomacy enjoy and utilize.

Last but definitely not least, by presenting the empirical findings of this study based on in-depth interviews with Turkish women diplomats, this paper aims to offer constructive policy prescriptions to foreign policy-makers; methodological prescriptions to researchers to combine qualitative data with quantitative techniques and thus offer a more composite methodological approach, empirical prescriptions to students of feminist foreign policy that what is presented through in-depth observations still needs to be complimented with quantitatively more representative samples with increased generalizability of conclusions. What is missing in this paper leaves room for future inspiration and research.

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