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RETHINKING HUMAN SECURITY THROUGH FEMINIST LENSES

İNSANİ GÜVENLİĞİ FEMİNİST BAKIŞ AÇILARIYLA TEKRAR DÜŞÜNMEK

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ABSTRACT

At the beginning of the 2000s, the increased salience of the concept of human security was a welcome development both in academic and policy circles. Problematizing the state's central role as the principal object of security allowed human beings' security needs and concerns to be put in front and center, at least in theory, if not necessarily in practice. The increasing traction the concept got also allowed several non-traditional security threats, such as environment, health and migration, to be approached through security lenses and put on security agendas. Despite the burgeoning literature and the notable frequency at which the concept of human security got incorporated into policy discussions, it has lost, at least partially, its analytical traction and policy saliency. The lack of a clear definition as well as vague and tactical use of the concept by policymakers have raised concerns about the human security concept turning into an empty signifier. While the human security concept was welcome by some feminist approaches, it is also criticized by others. This article aims to discuss the human security concept through different feminist

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perspectives and understand its adaptability in the field based on a comparative interpretive analysis of feminist foreign policy initiatives by Sweden, Canada, Mexico, France, Germany, Spain, Chile and Luxembourg. To realize this aim, we analyze the conceptualization and implementation of feminist foreign policies and how they put the human security approach into practice. We seek to problematize how feminist foreign policies tackle the ambiguities and limitations within the human security framework, and to what degree these policies confront or maintain current power dynamics and state-centered security models. We argue that feminist foreign policies do highlight the problems related to gender equality and contribute to their solutions, but do not challenge patriarchy and the power relations behind it. As such, while they contribute to better implementation of human security as a guiding principle for foreign policy, conventional foreign policy concerns limit the change they can create on the ground.

Keywords: Human Security, Security, Feminism, Feminist Foreign Policy, Gender Equality.

ÖZ

2000'li yılların başında insani güvenlik kavramının giderek daha fazla ön plana çıkması hem akademik hem de politika çevrelerinde memnuniyetle karşılanan bir gelişme olmuştur. Güvenliğin temel nesnesi olarak devletin merkezi rolünü sorunsallaştırmak, pratikte olmasa da en azından teoride insanların güvenlik ihtiyaçlarının ve endişelerinin ön plana ve merkeze alınmasına olanak sağlamıştır. Kavrama gösterilen artan ilgi aynı zamanda çevre, sağlık ve göç gibi geleneksel olmayan birçok meseleye güvenlik merceği aracılığıyla yaklaşılmasına ve güvenlik gündemlerinin oluşturulmasına da olanak tanımıştır. İnsani güvenlik kavramı üzerine gelişmekte olan literatüre ve politika tartışmalarına rağmen, kavram analitik çekiciliğini ve politik açıdan belirginliğini en azından kısmen kaybetmiştir. Kavramın net bir tanımının olmayışı ve politika yapıcılar tarafından muğlak ve taktiksel bir biçimde kullanılması, insani güvenlik kavramının içi boş bir göstergeye dönüşmesi endişesini doğurmuştur. İnsani güvenlik kavramı bazı feminist yaklaşımlar tarafından olumlu karşılanırken

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bazıları tarafından da eleştirilmektedir. Bu makale, insani güvenlik kavramını farklı feminist perspektifler aracılığıyla tartışmayı ve İsveç, Kanada, Meksika, Fransa, Almanya, İspanya, Şili ve Lüksemburg'un feminist dış politika girişimlerinin karşılaştırmalı yorumlayıcı analizi temelinde bu kavramın alana uyarlanabilirliğini anlamayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu amacı gerçekleştirmek için feminist dış politikaların kavramsallaştırılması, uygulanması ve insani güvenlik yaklaşımının nasıl hayata geçirildiğini analiz etmekteyiz. Feminist dış politika yaklaşımlarının insani güvenlik çerçevesindeki belirsizlikleri ve sınırlamaları nasıl ele aldığını ve bu politikaların mevcut güç dinamiklerini ve devlet merkezli güvenlik modellerini ne derece sorguladığını veya koruduğunu sorgulamayı amaçlıyoruz. Feminist dış politikaların toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliğiyle ilgili sorunları öne çıkardığını ve çözümlerine katkıda bulunduğunu ancak ataerkilliğe ve onun arkasındaki güç ilişkilerine meydan okumadığını savunmaktayız. Bu sebeple, insani güvenliğin dış politikaya yol gösterici bir ilke olarak daha iyi uygulanmasına katkıda bulunurken, geleneksel dış politika kaygıları sahada yaratabilecekleri değişimi sınırladığını tartışıyoruz.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İnsani Güvenlik, Güvenlik, Feminizm, Feminist Dış Politika, Toplumsal Cinsiyet Eşitliği.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of human security emerged from frustration with the national security paradigm. This paradigm was inadequate in addressing individuals' security concerns. Additionally, there was increasing visibility and relevance of diversifying non-traditional security concerns. These concerns could not be captured by a security approach focused primarily on military threats posed by state actors. While the philosophical roots went back earlier in the century, the 1994 Human Development Report by the United Nations Programme (UNDP) marked a turning point that framed human security as a foreign policy approach. Human security is championed by the United Nations (UN) as "a people-centred, context-specific, comprehensive and prevention-oriented approach that advances both top-down protection and bottom-up empowerment solutions" that would guide the international society to tackle the challenges of the 21st century (United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTFHS, 2016: 11).

Reflecting its purpose of capturing traditional and non-traditional threats to human beings' physical and material well-being, human security encapsulates a wide range of areas. These include "economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security, and political security" (UNDP, 1994). In doing so, the concept comes with an inherent potential problem of functioning as an "empty signifier." This results from the fact that it "introduces too many variables that are not necessarily linked together" (Tadjbakhsh, 2005: 2). The inherent ambiguity also creates the risk for policies guided by human security principles to fail to address the vulnerabilities of different groups within the societies. The policies additionally risk human security policies to be realized, either by design or as an unintended consequence, at the expense of different, mostly disadvantaged, groups within the society. Such issues have implications for not just domestic politics but also for foreign policies as they shape decisions ranging from humanitarian intervention to development assistance.

Feminist approaches, at the outset, see merit in foreign policies guided by the human security approach to the shared concerns about state security-oriented foreign policies and their implications on disadvantaged groups. Some feminists, however, underline the concerns addressed above and criticize the limitations of the human security perspective in identifying and accounting for the gendered implications of such policies. Feminist foreign policies, adopted by several countries over the last decade, present an opportunity for further and more nuanced incorporation of human security perspectives into foreign policies. By comparatively analyzing feminist foreign policy perspectives introduced by Sweden, Canada, Mexico, France, Germany, Spain, Chile and Luxembourg through an interpretive analysis of primary resources we look at the extent to which such initiatives advanced the human security agenda. We aim to shed light on how effectively feminist foreign policies address the ambiguities and potential shortcomings of the human security framework, and to what extent these policies challenge or reinforce existing power dynamics and state-centric security approaches. We argue that feminist foreign policies do highlight gender equality and contribute to efforts to put the human security vision into practice. However, such policy initiatives do not challenge the patriarchy and power relations behind it. Instead, they are mostly seen as complementary to state security perspectives.

In the sections below, after introducing the methodology, we first provide a historical account of human security as an analytical concept and as a foreign policy framework. We then examine feminist critiques of the human security agenda. Following this, we present a comparative analysis of feminist foreign policy initiatives by Sweden, Canada, Mexico, France, Germany, Spain, Chile and Luxembourg, discussing the extent to which these initiatives address the issues related to human security identified by feminist approaches.

1. METHODOLOGY

Davies defines "feminist inquiry" as "[w]hichever disciplines it taps into, feminist inquiry finds itself moving across their boundaries, shifting them, and working beyond their conceptual limitations. Its task is to generate new forms of thought, analyzing and deconstructing what is taken for granted in everyday relations of power and powerlessness, both with/in the disciplines it draws on and with/in the everyday world. It cuts together and apart in its search for the new" (2024: 126). Driven by feminist inquiry, we aim to offer a critical discussion to the human security approach through the case studies of feminist foreign policies.

The research is based on the comparative approach to be able to comprehend how feminist foreign policies are conceptualized and operationalized by different states. As the first step, we identified all states that announced to implement a feminist foreign policy through an online search as of June 2023. Those states were Sweden, Canada, Mexico, France, Germany, Spain, Chile and Luxembourg. We followed the suggestion of Lijphart to "increase the number of cases as much as possible" to overcome "many variables, small N" problem of the comparative method (1971: 686). Despite their socio-economic differences, as our selection criteria for comparison is "all cases", we included all of the identified states to the analysis.

In order to analyze their policies, we mainly relied on primary documents as data sources. While some of these states published comprehensive feminist foreign policy guidelines, some others released brief statements. After obtaining these official documents through an online search, we used interpretive analysis to identify the similarities and differences (Bevir and Daddov, 2015). We complemented the research with the reports of international organizations, civil society organizations or think tanks, where relevant.

2. HUMAN SECURITY

The conventional understanding of security takes the state as the "referent object of security" (MacFarlane and Khong, 2006). In other words, in this understanding, it is the state that needs to be protected. Therefore, issues are framed as security threats based on the perceived challenges they present to the state's survival. This conceptualization is also called the Westphalian understanding of security and has its roots in the birth of the modern nation-state (Waltz, 1986). The underlying logic is that the international system is anarchic and anarchy creates a self-help system where states can trust only themselves to ensure their survival (MacFarlane and Khong, 2006). In this environment of anarchy, the state is believed to be entitled to take measures necessary to protect itself even in cases when this has to be done at the expense of individuals' security.

While protecting the state is the key to traditional security policies, it is important to highlight that the concept of national security has been evolving in such a way that the limits of what can be done to protect the state at the expense of citizens (both your own as well as the others') have been narrowed over time. This change happened as a result of both increasing domestic (such as through consolidation of democracy) and international (such as through the establishment of international regimes) commitments of states. The norms about the protection of refugees that started to flourish after the First World War is an example of such development so as the increased salience of the idea that sovereignty is conditional and that democratic nations have a responsibility to act in cases of ethnic cleansing and genocide (Hampson et al., 2002).

The end of the Cold War marked an important turning point in how security is perceived and addressed. As the black-and-white perceptions of threat and enemy that were dominant during the Cold War began to blur, intrastate wars started to become more frequent than interstate wars. This changing nature of conflict also translated into an increased human toll, as wars became prolonged and were no longer primarily confined to battlefields (Kaldor, 2000).

It is within this context of "unrelenting human costs of violent conflict" that led the concept of security to be questioned (Edström, 2011: 7). Despite growing attention to protecting individuals in national security policy, these policies often fell short in addressing individual vulnerabilities. This limitation paved the way for the rise of human security as an alternative foreign policy framework. Human security, very fundamentally, can be defined as "the absence of threats to ... core human values, including the most basic human value, the physical safety of the individual" (Hampson et al., 2002: 4). While the physical security of individuals is at the core of human security, over time, the concept expanded to include "economic, environmental, social, and other forms of privation that adversely affect the overall livelihood and well-being of individuals" (Hampson et al., 2002: 5).

While conceptual ambiguity is at the heart of human security, it is possible to group various approaches into three.[1] The first approach, framed as the "rights and rule of law," is rooted in liberal democratic theory and envisions the protection of human rights and the development of legal systems as means to achieve human security (Hampson et al., 2002). The second, broader approach is referred to as the "humanitarian" approach, which considers political and military

[1] It is important to note that the categorization presented in this work is just one of several analytical approaches to human security. Another common categorization distinguishes between human security as "freedom from want," which emphasizes the links between development and disarmament, and human security as "freedom from fear," which focuses primarily on physical security. For further discussion on this approach, see Owen (2004) and Kaldor (2020).

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actions to protect civilians as potential policy tools (Hampson et al., 2002). This perspective is based on the belief that there should be limits to what can be done during armed conflict (Paris, 2001). The third and most expansive approach addresses not only military but also non-military threats, such as "unchecked population growth, disparities in economic opportunities, pandemic diseases, and environmental degradation" advocating for a range of policy actions to address these issues (Hampson et al., 2002: 28).

The third approach has gained the most traction over time and started to guide both academic and policy discussions. Despite the critical role the UN played in coining the term, the efforts to incorporate human security into UN policies evolved only gradually. The United Nations Development Programme's annual report in 1994 is the first time when the concept of human security was outlined (UNDP, 1994). Based on the elements of human security identified in the 1994 Report—economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political—and following Japan's diplomatic leadership, the UN Trust Fund for Human Security was established. This was soon followed by the creation of the Human Security Network, with the goal of "promot[ing] the concept of human security as a feature of national and international policies" (UNTFHS). The UN Millennium Summit in 2000 culminated a decade of efforts with Secretary-General Kofi Annan's call for the UN to address both new and ongoing challenges by developing policy agendas focused on "freedom from fear" (physical security) and "freedom from want" (material security).

By the turn of the millennium, the concept had become a foreign policy buzzword. Despite gaining diplomatic traction, its translation into actionable policies remained unclear. To address this issue, an Independent Commission on Human Security was established, co-chaired by Sadako Ogata and Amartya Sen. The Commission was tasked with developing the concept into an operational tool and creating a concrete plan for its implementation (UNTFHS). The Commission published its final report in 2003. Following its recommendations, the Human Security Unit was established to mainstream human security activities within the UN.

Several countries quickly championed the concept of human security, adopting it not only into their foreign policy rhetoric but also as a guiding principle in their efforts to entrench the concept within UN policies. However, the varying interpretations of human security led to different foreign policy objectives and agendas. For example, Canada adopted a "humanitarian" understanding of human security, as defined earlier, and used it as a framework for shaping its involvement in humanitarian operations (Axworthy, 1997). Canada's leadership in drafting the Ottawa Convention, which bans the use of landmines, is considered one of the first major achievements of its human security agenda (McRae and

Hubert, 2001). However, Canada's interpretation notably excludes development issues from its human security-guided foreign policy (Alkire, 2003). In contrast, Japan, while embracing human security as a foreign policy approach, chose to avoid military connotations. Instead, Japan focused on the implications of human security for development, aligning this focus with its "search for an international role commensurate with its considerable economic power" (Edström, 2011: 7).

Although the UN has been central to efforts to define and incorporate human security into international politics, regional initiatives also reflect variations in interpreting human security-guided foreign policies. These regional efforts have contributed to both the mainstreaming of human security perspectives and the diversification of its interpretation. For example, the European approach, as outlined in "A Human Security Doctrine for Europe," exemplifies the first school of thought described earlier. It defines human security as "what individuals enjoy in rights-based, law-governed societies" (Kaldor, 2020). The EU envisions human security policies as efforts to protect individuals' rights both within and beyond state borders.

In contrast, the African Union adopts a broader interpretation of human security, emphasizing the links between social insecurities and political instability and focusing on preventive measures (Tieku, 2010). Meanwhile, discussions within ASEAN reflect concerns about the potential for the concept to justify external political and military intervention, leading to a more cautious stance (Alkire, 2003).

As discussed, human security has become the dominant conceptual framework for designing, justifying, and implementing UN policies and actions over the last three decades. It has also been integrated into the foreign policy approaches of various countries, albeit with differing conceptualizations. However, the widespread endorsement of human security has not been without criticism. Early critiques focused on the concept's vagueness and questioned its utility as an analytical tool (Paris, 2001). Other criticisms highlighted the uneven application of the concept, noting that while it prompted swift action in some cases, such as interventions, it failed to prevent tragedies like the Rwandan genocide due to inadequate international response (Hampson et al., 2002). Additionally, some critics argue that human security is a Northern agenda that disguises interventionist policies in the Global South (Tadjbakhsh, 2005).

Over time, more nuanced criticisms of human security have emerged, including those central to feminist critiques that this study sheds light on. These criticisms focus on the need to unpack who is considered the "human" in the concept of "human security." Although the concept was developed as a reaction to state-oriented security perspectives and emphasizes protecting individuals from

both military and non-military threats, it cannot universally protect all individuals simultaneously. Different groups face varying threats, and prioritizing the protection of one group often comes at the expense of another. This trade-off may be an inevitable aspect of addressing specific issues or an unintended consequence of policy decisions. Refugee policies illustrate this problem. Open-door policies in response to mass influxes of refugees fleeing violent conflicts are often praised as examples of human security-guided policies. However, if the aftermath is poorly managed, these policies can adversely impact host populations, failing to safeguard the human security of both refugees and host communities. Additionally, protection measures developed within policy circles and negotiated at diplomatic tables often overlook the specific vulnerabilities of disadvantaged groups within the refugee populations (Molla, 2021; Liebig and Tronstad, 2018). Thus, an important limitation of human security is the lack of acknowledgment of the costs borne by certain groups within society.

In the following sections, we will first explore feminist critiques of human security and then present a comparative overview of feminist foreign policies that aim to develop more nuanced human security-guided approaches and will be evaluated for their limitations.

3. HUMAN SECURITY FROM A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE

As discussed, the human security approach highlights the threats faced by individuals and communities, shifting the focus from states to non-state actors in global politics. This approach emphasizes the need to empower these actors to address their own risks and challenges. Consequently, human security has broadened the understanding of security beyond traditional state-centric views, which correlates with the attempts to integrate feminist theory into security studies since the late 1980s (Tickner, 2004). By adopting a feminist methodology, feminist security scholars have been investigating neglected issues such as wartime sexual assault, sex work, and the links between masculinity, militarism, and domestic violence (Cockburn, 2007; Enloe, 1990; Henshaw, 2023; Tickner, 2004; Whitworth, 2004). By doing so, feminism has developed a broader understanding of security defined by Tickner "as the diminution of all forms of violence, including physical, structural, and ecological" (2004: 62).

Feminism, which critiques concepts defined by masculine experiences such as power and security (Runyan, 1992; Sylvester, 1992; MacKenzie and Wegner; 2023), has initially viewed the emergence of human security as a positive development. For instance, while the concept of human security was not explicitly used, UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security has contributed to advancing human security within the UN framework. This resolution addressed the specific challenges that conflicts create for women and

girls and emphasized the importance of their active involvement in peace processes.

However, feminist critiques of human security have emerged. The first criticism is that the term "human" is often treated as gender-neutral, despite its roots in a masculine understanding based on liberal intellectual traditions (Davies, 2024; Hudson, 2005; MacKenzie and Wegner; 2023; Marhia, 2013). The second criticism is that human security often portrays "women" as a homogeneous group, ignoring the diverse experiences of women across different cultures (Hudson, 2005). Hudson argues that "Western feminists often treat Third World women as a uniformly oppressed group—by definition religious, family-oriented, conservative, illiterate, and domestic—on whose behalf so-called enlightened feminists must speak" (Hudson, 2005: 168).

A third criticism is that human security frames the state as gender-neutral, despite feminist scholarship demonstrating otherwise (Tripp, 2013). The state itself can be a source of women's insecurity (MacKenzie and Wegner; 2023; Tickner 2004), and not only states but also leaders and international organizations might act in accordance with gender norms (Wadley, 2010). The final criticism concerns intersectionality, emphasizing that sources of insecurity include not only gender but also religion, ethnicity, race, class, and sexuality (Hudson, 2005; Marx Ferree, 2013). These critiques underscore the need for a more nuanced approach to human security that recognizes and addresses the varied experiences and needs of different groups, ensuring that policies are both inclusive and effective. In the following section, we examine the extent to which these criticisms have been incorporated into the foreign policies of countries that have adopted a "feminist foreign policy".

4. FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY IN ACTION

Feminist foreign policy can be defined as "the policy of a state that defines its interactions with other states and movements in a manner that prioritizes gender equality and enshrines the human rights of women and other traditionally marginalized groups, allocates significant resources to achieve that vision and seeks through its implementation to disrupt patriarchal and male-dominated power structures across all of its levers of influence (aid, trade, defense and diplomacy), informed by the voices of feminist activists, groups and movements." (Thompson and Clement, 2019: 7)

In principle, feminist foreign policy seeks to address and dismantle systemic inequalities that disproportionately affect women and marginalized communities by integrating feminist principles into decision-making processes. Central to this is the recognition that systems of oppression—such as patriarchy, racism, and classism—are deeply intertwined with the historical legacies of colonialism.

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Feminist foreign policy, through both intersectionality and postcolonial analysis, acknowledges that gender inequality cannot be separated from other forms of discrimination rooted in colonial exploitation, racial hierarchies, and economic inequality. By addressing these overlapping systems, it aims to create more nuanced and transformative policies that confront both the intersectional and postcolonial dimensions of global injustice.

In 2014, Sweden became the first country in the world to adopt a feminist foreign policy. To elucidate this policy, Sweden published a comprehensive handbook in 2018 detailing the conceptual and practical aspects of its feminist foreign policy from 2014 to 2018. This policy is structured around three Rs: Rights, Representation, and Resources, with an additional 4th R for Reality. The Swedish Foreign Service aimed to promote the human rights of women and girls, ensure their participation in decision-making processes, and allocate necessary resources to achieve gender equality and equal opportunities in practice (2018: 3). The three Rs were intended to be reflected in Sweden's foreign and security policies, development policies, and trade policies. Based on these principles, Sweden outlined six long-term external objectives for the period from 2015 to 2018:

> "The Swedish Foreign Service shall contribute to all women's and girls':
> 1. Full enjoyment of human rights
> 2. Freedom from physical, psychological and sexual violence
> 3. Participation in preventing and resolving conflicts, and post-conflict peacebuilding
> 4. Political participation and influence in all areas of society
> 5. Economic rights and empowerment
> 6. Sexual and reproductive health and rights" (2018: 19).

The 2018 handbook detailing Sweden's feminist foreign policy includes a specific section on disarmament and non-proliferation. This section outlines Sweden's efforts to increase women's representation in disarmament and non-proliferation, raise awareness about the disproportionate impact of small arms and light weapons on women, and incorporate a gender equality perspective into international weapons inspections and disarmament (2018: 72). The handbook highlights Sweden's commitment to implementing Article 7.4 of the UN Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), which states: "The exporting State Party, in making this assessment, shall take into account the risk of the conventional arms covered under Article 2 (1) or of the items covered under Article 3 or Article 4 being used to commit or facilitate serious acts of gender-based violence or serious acts of violence against women and children" (UN, 2013: 6).

In 2018, Sweden amended its legislation to consider the democratic status of the receiving country when exporting military equipment (2018: 74). However, this aspect of Sweden's feminist foreign policy has faced criticism (Papagioti,

2023). Despite emphasizing women's security in conflict zones and the impact of small arms proliferation on domestic violence, Sweden remains a major arms exporter (Thompson, et. al., 2021). Another criticized area is Sweden's migration policies. Although the handbook highlights efforts to protect the human rights of refugee and immigrant women and girls (2018: 83), Sweden has tightened its immigration and asylum policies, disproportionately affecting women.

Following Sweden's lead, other countries have adopted similar approaches. In 2017, Canada introduced its "Feminist International Assistance Policy," which focuses on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls within its international assistance framework. The policy also addresses areas such as "human dignity, growth that works for everyone, which targets areas such as sustainable agriculture, green technologies and renewable energy, environment and climate action, inclusive governance, peace and security" (Global Affairs Canada, 2017: 14). For these six action areas, Canada decided to support initiatives that "enhance the protection and promotion of the human rights of women and girls; increase the participation of women and girls in equal decision making […]; and give women and girls more equitable access to and control over the resources they need to secure ongoing economic and social equality" (Global Affairs Canada, 2017: 13). The policy is criticized for lacking sufficient financial resources and being limited to specific areas of foreign policy (Brown and Swiss, 2020).

France, which first published a gender and development strategy in 2007, began promoting "feminist diplomacy" in 2018. France's third "International Strategy on Gender Equality" for 2018-2022 primarily focuses on development policy and lacks a clear conceptual definition. In 2020, the High Council for Gender Equality (HCE) submitted a mid-term evaluation report, acknowledging several shortcomings. The HCE suggested adding three criteria to the Swedish 3 Rs: a transformative approach, policy coherence, and a dedicated and sustainable institutional framework. The HCE also emphasized international solidarity with women fighting for their rights and providing support for them (HCE, 2020: 29). The HCE defines feminist diplomacy as:

Feminist diplomacy is the policy of a State which places equality between women and men, the freedom and rights of women, and the struggle for the abolition of patriarchy at the heart of its foreign action, across all dimensions (official development aid, diplomacy, trade, economy, culture, education, influence, defense and security, climate and environment, etc.). To do this, it ensures the equal participation of women and feminist movements (in the country and outside the country) in its co-construction and implementation. It allocates significant resources over time to the achievement of this objective and it sets up, within the State, a dedicated and lasting institutional and administrative

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organization, which makes it possible to ensure the coherence of policies and which includes a system of accountability (HCE, 2020: 30).[2]

This definition underscores the importance of addressing power relations and the need for strong institutional support in feminist foreign policy. The HCE's recommendations aim to improve France's feminist diplomacy by integrating these aspects.

In 2020, Mexico became the first country from the Global South to announce a feminist foreign policy. Mexico's feminist foreign policy is based on "foreign policy with a gender perspective, and a feminist agenda abroad; parity within Foreign Ministry; a Foreign Ministry free of the violence that is safe for all; visible equality; feminism in all areas of the Foreign Ministry" (Government of Mexico, 2020). However, Mexico's feminist foreign policy is criticized for not being aligned with its migration policy (push-backs from the US border and its gendered effects), state violence against women, and gender-based violence during armed conflict (Deslandes, 2020; Papagioti, 2023: 19).

In 2021, Luxembourg detailed its feminist foreign policy through "the promotion of women's rights, strengthening the representation and participation of women, promotion of gender equality within the structures of Luxembourg diplomacy" in the areas of diplomacy, development and defense (Chronicle.lu, 2021). Spain published its "Guide to Feminist Foreign Policy" in 2021. Spanish feminist foreign policy is based on five principles; transformative approach; committed leadership; ownership; inclusive participation and promotion of alliances; intersectionality and diversity that shall be implemented in its foreign service as well as all aspects of foreign policy actions (Government of Spain, 2021: 7-8).

In 2022, Chile joined these states and underlined its feminist foreign policy priorities as "to strengthen democracy with a focus on gender equality; to promote greater empowerment and representation of women; to deepen the women, peace and security agenda; to address issues such as trade and gender, climate change, science, technology and innovation; and to promote a comprehensive care system" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2023).

Germany announced a feminist foreign policy in 2021 and published its feminist foreign policy guidelines in 2022 based on the 3Rs as Swedish conceptualization. However, German feminist foreign policy conceptualization distinguishes itself from the previous ones on a crucial point. It underlines "combining firm principles with pragmatism"; meaning their understanding of feminist foreign policy does not mean pacifism, and does not ignore "interests of

[2] Translated by the authors from French.

German foreign policy" therefore, the need for using military means when necessary (Federal Foreign Office, 2022).

Feminist foreign policy, as we understand it, relies on both firm principles and pragmatism. It takes on the responsibility of balancing the different factors and reaching decisions within the larger context of our foreign and security policy. In doing so, it centres gender equity and human security more strongly in foreign policy activities. This makes it an essential component of values-led foreign policy. (Federal Foreign Office, 2022: 13).

In terms of women's security, feminist foreign policies focus on sexual and reproductive rights, protection from sexual and gender-based violence, the economic security of women and the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325. Other related and common themes can be summarized as the increasing representation of women in decision-making processes, advocacy for the amendment of national and international legislation or introduction of new ones if necessary, using international organizations effectively; providing opportunities in education and economics. To be able to achieve those, feminist foreign policies mostly focus on supporting initiatives with a gender equality focus in official development assistance policies. In addition to supporting local initiatives financially, they also focus on training, raising awareness and research activities. Some states aim to implement these principles within their institutional structures as well.

Feminist foreign policies have only partially fulfilled their aims so far, and have been subjected to a series of feminist criticisms. First, despite mentioning intersectionality, LGBTQI+, and the responsibility of boys and men; the target is mostly "women and girls" in Swedish and Canadian conceptual documents. This reminds critiques from intersectional feminism (Thompson and Clement, 2019). It is possible to observe the changes in German and Spanish conceptualization. Both guidelines have more references to "marginalized groups" and LGBTQI+ therefore, adopting a more intersectional, non-binary approach.

The second criticism is in line with the postcolonial feminist approach (Thompson and Clement, 2019). As most of the states announcing feminist foreign policies are former colonial powers, it is questioned whether the feminist foreign policy is a new form of neo-colonialism particularly when it is conducted without a substantial effort of confronting the gendered effects of colonialism. Considering that most of the policies target development and humanitarian assistance through technical support, training, advising, consulting, etc.; it is criticized to resemble "Western women teaching non-Western women how to emancipate" (Smith and Ajadi, 2020).

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Third, feminist foreign policies in their current forms do not challenge power relations or conventional concepts such as national interest, or national security, hence the structure of patriarchy. They consider human/women security as complementary to national security. They attribute a central role to the states whereas the state is not gender-neutral, and can be a source of insecurity as can be seen from the example of Mexico. The example of the arms trade is equally illustrative. As discussed above for the case of Sweden, while announcing feminist foreign policies; France, Germany, Spain, Sweden, and Canada rank among the largest exporters of arms (SIPRI, 2023). The recipients of those arms can be rights-violating states and/or conflict zones (Brown and Swiss, 2020; SIPRI, 2023; Vucetic, 2018).

Overall, these shortcomings led to the perception of considering feminist foreign policies as being branding initiatives that prioritize style and rhetoric over concrete transformative change (Brown and Swiss, 2020; Smith and Ajadi, 2020). It does not help that the pioneer of feminist foreign policies; Sweden announced that it is no longer implementing a feminist foreign policy after the election of a new government in 2022 (BBC, 2022).

5. CONCLUSION

Over the last three decades, human security has evolved into a buzzword used to frame a wide range of unilateral and multilateral actions, from military operations and development aid to climate initiatives. While human security is valued for its focus on the effects of foreign policy measures on individuals' daily lives, it is also criticized for often serving as a catch-all term that can obscure important nuances. Feminist approaches offer both a critique and a potential solution by highlighting the differentiated impacts of human security policies on various groups within societies. These approaches make feminist foreign policy initiatives a valuable testing ground for exploring and applying these critical perspectives.

A central question is how truly feminist, feminist foreign policies are. This question is challenging because there is no single definition of feminism. Feminist foreign policies address gender inequalities and seek to alleviate these issues. However, as state-led initiatives, they often align more closely with liberal feminism, which adopts a problem-solving approach and places significant emphasis on the role of the state. In contrast, other feminist perspectives critique the state's role in creating insecurities and aim to transform power dynamics and challenge traditional notions of security and the state itself. From these viewpoints, feminist foreign policies may fall short of the transformative potential suggested by their labels. For example, the German feminist foreign policy

highlights a blend of firm principles with pragmatism, reflecting a more conservative approach rather than a radical rethinking of security structures.

Therefore, while feminist foreign policy holds promise for addressing the conceptual and operational shortcomings of human security frameworks, its effectiveness in truly redefining who is considered the "human" in human security will only be realized if it transcends its current conformist constraints and fully embraces a transformative agenda.

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