

OPINION PAPER

Scotland the Brave? An authentic, ambitious and accountable Feminist Foreign Policy

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Introduction

The Scottish Government's *Programme for Government 2021-2022* (Scottish Government 2021a, 110) promised a new “global affairs framework ... to guide Scotland's international engagement, grounded in a values-based approach, and a feminist approach to foreign policy.” With this, Scotland joins Sweden, Canada, Chile, Mexico, France, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and others in developing a feminist approach to foreign policy. But what does a feminist foreign policy (FFP) actually entail? What do FFPs look like in practice? And what would it mean for Scotland – a small, sub-state, without a traditional foreign policy remit² – to develop a feminist approach to foreign policy? Does the Scottish Government's aim to be a “good global citizen” through, for example, its commitment to international climate justice, welcoming of refugees and aspiration to develop a wellbeing economy, enable it to be a progressive feminist actor on the world stage? Or will its reluctance to do more to end its role in fossil fuel extraction, arms manufacturing and nuclear weapons undermine its feminist aspirations?

This paper is not an attempt to cover all feminist approaches to foreign policy, in theory and in practice. There are many different feminisms, but rather than surveying their differences in detail and exploring the implications each might have for Scottish Government policy, this position paper presents the key insights from decades of feminist scholarship, activism and practice that, in our opinion, should inform the Scottish Government's approach. Likewise, the paper does not offer a full analysis of all FFPs, but focuses on the lessons learnt from Sweden, as the first, and, hitherto, most developed example. Nor does the paper lay out what a Scottish feminist approach to foreign policy might look like in a comprehensive way, but

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² The Scottish Government Act (1998) states that “international relations, including relations with territories outside the United Kingdom, the European Union (and their institutions) and other international organisations, regulation of international trade, and international development assistance and cooperation are reserved matters.” This means that defence and national security, foreign affairs, immigration and asylum as well as trade and industry – areas that are part of other countries' feminist foreign policies – are all reserved powers. Nevertheless, the Scottish Government has developed an increasingly ambitious role in the international arena and it is widely acknowledged that it is increasingly impossible, in an age of a globalised economy and global challenges, to draw strict distinctions between countries' domestic and external policies.

offers illustrative examples of what the Scottish Government could do. Our intention is to spark conversation and debate in Scotland and beyond.³

The first section of the paper considers feminists' criticisms of traditional approaches to foreign policy and the alternatives for which they have advocated. It draws on the rich feminist scholarship, practice and activism of the 20th and 21st centuries to present some of the central feminist ideas, concepts and principles that we think should inform the idea of a feminist approach to foreign policy. The second section considers the ideas and ambitions of the FFPs adopted to date, with a focus on Sweden as the pioneer of the concept. In the third section, we turn to the question of what a Scottish feminist approach to foreign policy could and should look like, arguing that rather than repeating the Swedish focus – often encapsulated as the “3Rs,” rights, representation and resources – the Scottish Government could aim to be bolder and braver. We propose that a feminist approach to Scottish Foreign Policy should replace the 3Rs with 3As: authenticity, ambition, and accountability.

What is a feminist approach to Foreign Policy?

Foreign policy is conventionally about pursuing national and international security, economic growth and a variety of other national interests. Feminists have challenged every aspect of this understanding of foreign policy, asking questions such as “what is security?” “How is it best achieved?” “What kind of growth?” “Growth of what and for whom?” and “What is meant by national interest?”

Many feminists argue for an FFP that “fundamentally challenges rather than maintains the status quo” (Achilleos-Sarll 2018, 36; also see Goetz 2021). They seek systemic transformations: from a system of nation states in military and economic competition to an understanding of security based on recognition of our fundamental interdependence and shared needs; and from an extractivist, destructive, inequality-driving economic system towards just, inclusive, and sustainable economies, aimed at human and planetary flourishing. Transforming these systems will require not only challenging firmly established vested economic, financial, extractivist and security interests but also prominent discourses of power. It also requires challenging the foundational binaries that structure western culture and language, and the privileging of that which is considered masculine over that which is considered feminine. While FFP cannot accomplish this all by itself, any FFP should *contribute* to those systemic transformations.

³ The conversations will inform the publication of a more comprehensive Policy Brief by the end of 2022.

This feminist approach draws on several foundational feminist insights and principles including:

- 1) A commitment to equality, justice and security *for all*

Feminist approaches to foreign policy should be concerned not just with gender inequality, but with the eradication of all forms of oppression and domination. This is based on what for many feminists is a core feminist value: finding all inequalities unacceptable (hooks 2000). Informed by the concept of “intersectionality” (Collins and Bilge 2020), the idea that people’s lived experiences are shaped by interlocking structures of inequality based on gender, class, and race/ethnicity, among others, and the recognition that many groups of men also suffer oppression and exploitation, many feminists are convinced that a focus on women and gender equality alone is insufficient. For many feminists, the goal is not just for women to be equal with men, but for all people to live lives free from oppression, exploitation and domination. For ecofeminists, this goal extends beyond human life to all life: the goal is human and planetary flourishing.

- 2) A commitment to challenging inequalities, injustices and insecurities *at their root*

Feminist approaches to foreign policy should be concerned with addressing the *drivers* of inequality and insecurity. This is because intersectionality is not just “compounded ‘disadvantages’ that individuals or groups experience” but “interlocking systems of subordination and privilege” “influenced by legacies of colonialism” (UN Women 2021, 11). In the current context of record breaking refugee numbers (UNHCR 2022), intensifying inequalities (Oxfam International 2022), and eco-systems on the point of collapse (IPCC 2021), it is clear to feminists that policy tweaks here and there, or efforts to include and empower women and girls, will not suffice; only efforts to tackle the root causes of inequality, injustice and insecurity will do (Achilleos-Sarll 2018; Robinson 2021).

A feminist intersectional approach thus demands transformation of the international structures that work to create, support and perpetuate inequalities, injustices and insecurities. These structures are laid out by Cynthia Cockburn in the manifesto she drafted to mark the centenary of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF 2015; also see Cockburn 2010): *militarism*, the policy approach and practice whereby perceived interests are likely to be pursued by “weaponry rather than words”; *the capitalist economic system*, a system based on the “exploitation of the labour and resources of the many by the few, that wantonly harms people and the environment, and that generates conglomerates of global reach and unaccountable power”; and *the norm that nation-states must prioritise self-interest*, a norm that generates colonial and imperialist projects, inter-state rivalry,

occupation and invasion, contested borders, and, inside those borders, extraction and the rise of populist and far right politics.

3) A challenge to the privileging of “masculine” approaches

Feminist approaches to foreign policy should be based on and champion values and policies that have hitherto been delegitimized by their association with women and femininity: cooperation, compassion, empathy, care, and interdependence (Aggestam, Bergman Rosamond, and Kronsell 2019; Robinson 2021; Sjoberg 2006). This point is based on the feminist insight that gender is not just a property of bodies, but also acts as a symbolic system. In this system, activities, behaviors, policies and practices are coded as masculine or feminine, with the former valued over the latter in subtle but insidious ways (Cohn 1993).

Feminists argue that it is the association of strength, toughness and winning over opponents with masculinity that enables and legitimizes adversarial foreign policies, and delegitimizes approaches that are more cooperative. Pointing out that “many of our assumptions and beliefs about which security policies will be effective arise from a series of gendered ideas about how to most effectively exercise power, what it means to be ‘strong’ and what ‘works’ to keep us secure” (Cohn 2019, 9), they argue for investing seriously in approaches that have been delegitimized as weak, naïve or “unrealistic” (Cohn 2019, 10).

Likewise, many feminists argue that the association of masculinity with the task of dominating and deploying nature legitimizes the extractivist economic system that has led us to a point of near planetary collapse (Merchant 1980; Klein 2015). Feminists argue not only for repair and reparations but for alternative economic models and the foreign policies that would promote such transformations. Many feminists argue for policies that acknowledge that nature is not something for humans to dominate, control, or even protect; rather it is something with which humans and non-humans live in complex interdependence (WECAN 2016; Salleh 2020).

Taken together, these three fundamental feminist points explain why feminists have taken issue with traditional foreign policy and its conceptualisation of ‘security,’ ‘growth,’ and the ‘national interest’. Traditional conceptualisations tend to reinforce the very structures that drive insecurities, inequalities and injustices. Conceiving of security as military strength and strong borders perpetuates a violent world; championing economic growth drives ecological breakdown; prioritising the national interest reinforces a competitive state system that further fuels both militarism and extractive capitalism.

That feminist approaches to foreign policy should contribute to challenging these structures is particularly significant in the case of states that have benefited from colonialism, whose

military might and economic security have resulted from centuries of wealth extraction, invasion and “divide and rule” policies. A feminist approach to foreign policy demands a reckoning with the past as part of an effort to transform global economic and political structures. It should involve meaningful reparation and at times apology and cannot be restricted to ameliorating the condition of women and girls overseas, their challenges conceived of as arising from patriarchal cultures “over there” (Ansorg, Haastrup, and Wright 2020; Bergman Rosamond 2020).

The next section considers how feminist approaches to foreign policies have fared in practice, using the example of Sweden, the first country to adopt an FFP. We ask what we can learn from the Swedish experience and how it can inform the development of a feminist approach to foreign policy in Scotland.

Feminist Foreign Policies in Practice: the case of Sweden

While Sweden’s FFP, first adopted in 2014 by a Social Democratic-Green Party coalition government, is innovative and progressive in many ways and has inspired a range of countries to follow suit, it does not exemplify the intersectional, decolonial feminist approach we outline above. The Swedish Government frames its feminist aims in a more limited way, as achieving gender equality in its international activities, drawing upon its long standing domestic commitment to gender equality (Bergman Rosamond 2020; Thomson 2020). It is representative of what is often described as “liberal feminism”: focused on analysing the effects of gendered power relations on women and girls worldwide, and strengthening their rights, representations and resources, which Sweden terms the “3Rs” (Government Offices of Sweden 2018, 10). As such, it is an innovative and enlightened approach to foreign policy, but falls short of engaging with the transformation of systems that many feminists identify as essential to achieving a just, peaceful and sustainable global order.

By *Rights*, the Swedish FFP aims to promote “all women’s and girls’ full enjoyment of human rights, which includes combating all forms of violence and discrimination that restrict their freedom of action” (Government Offices of Sweden 2018, 10). *Representation* refers to efforts to promote “women’s participation and influence in decision-making processes at all levels and in all areas,” and “dialogue with women representatives at all levels, including in civil society” (Government Offices of Sweden 2018, 10). Regarding *resources*, Sweden’s FFP aims to “ensure that resources are allocated to promote gender equality and equal opportunities for all women and girls to enjoy human rights” (Government Offices of Sweden 2018, 10). The Swedish Government often adds a fourth R, realism, to emphasise the importance of being grounded in the “reality” of the daily lives of girls and women in order to conduct effective foreign policy (Government Offices of Sweden 2018, 6). This focus on

realism also indicates the Swedish government's desire to conduct a foreign policy that is pragmatic as well as ethically-informed (Aggestam, Bergman Rosamond, and Kronsell 2019).

There is no doubt that Sweden's FFP has enabled the Swedish Government to place gender more firmly on its agenda in its international relations. The Swedish Government used its position as chair of the UN Security Council to highlight the concerns of women's rights defenders, for example, and set up a network for women peace mediators, including supporting training for women's representatives in conflict areas (Concord Sweden 2017). It has actively pushed to ensure a gender perspective was incorporated into the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development; the 2030 Agenda (the Sustainable Development Goals); the Paris climate agreement (COP21) and in EU trade agreements with third countries (Swedish MFA 2017; OECD 2019). It has arguably made some impact in making the case that the 3Rs, women's rights, representation and need for resources, should be central to foreign policy.

Combatting discrimination against women and girls and increasing their participation are, of course, important goals which should feature within FFPs, but which in isolation fall short of the transformations to economic and social systems required for the peaceful, just and equitable world that we understand as the core feminist goal. For example, Sweden often reiterates the liberal idea, that when women are involved in peace processes, the likelihood of lasting peace increases, assuming that global peace, equality and justice can be better achieved by adding women to various policy and decision-making processes (Aggestam and Bergman Rosamond 2016; Aggestam and Bergman-Rosamond 2019; Rosén Sundström and Elgström 2019). However, this is unlikely to be the case without simultaneous concerted efforts to tackle the transnational economic, political and social dynamics that shape the distribution of resources and rights during war and its aftermath (Cohn and Duncanson 2020).

Sweden's FFP arguably "mirrors broader depoliticized global strategies of simply 'counting' women and 'adding' them to peace negotiations, without questioning the militarized infrastructure and power dynamics that underpin such negotiations" (Aggestam and Bergman Rosamond 2019, 41). There is a clear prioritization of measurable results over systemic changes. Focussing on that which can be measured allows the Swedish government to showcase its role as an efficient and smart diplomatic actor, but prevents it from focusing on the transformations of the political, economic and social systems driving inequalities, injustice and insecurities (Aggestam, Bergman Rosamond, and Kronsell 2019; also see Merry 2016). There is little in Sweden's FFP that problematizes the economic system that is driving inequality and ecological collapse, and, strikingly, military and defence are excluded from

Sweden's FFP, which continues unabated. Sweden has recently re-militarized its borders in response to Russian activities in the Baltic Sea region (Agius and Edenborg 2019) and there is broad agreement in the Swedish parliament to escalate its military spending to reach 2 percent in the next couple of years (Försvarsmakten 2022). What is more, the Russian invasion of Ukraine has led the Swedish government to apply for NATO membership with FFP hardly, if ever, being mentioned in recent political debates.

Although the third R brings in a focus on "resources," which might be considered an attempt to go beyond liberal concerns with tackling discrimination and increasing representation, the understanding of resources in Sweden's FFP is also relatively limited. Some of the rhetoric is impressive: Foreign Minister Linde, for example, calls for "extensive reforms for economic gender equality.... Only then can we achieve the global goals on gender equality" (Government Offices of Sweden 2021). But, in practice, there is little to see in terms of those "extensive reforms." Rather, the interpretation and implementation of the 'resources' pillar has predominantly been framed as either the financial and human resources that Sweden commits to its feminist foreign policy or as "women's economic empowerment." Resourcing a gender-equality policy is important, but not the same as transforming the economic model that drives inequalities and insecurities. Promoting "women's economic empowerment" too often means encouraging individual women to enter the labour market or to develop entrepreneurial activities (Bergman Rosamond and Gregoratti 2020). As many feminists have argued, this is an approach which is as likely to add to women's burdens and trap them in debt, poverty and insecurity as it is to result in women's empowerment (Chant and Sweetman 2012; Duncanson 2018). At best, the "women's economic empowerment" approach leads to benefits in some individual women's lives but it does little to transform the economic model which is driving both inequalities and ecological collapse at breakneck speed. Thus, while "resources" is an important ingredient of an FFP, it is inadequate unless conceptualized as a meaningful redistribution of wealth, and a transformation of the economic model that drives inequalities.

In its attention to climate change, Sweden's Feminist Foreign Policy 2019-2022 Action Plan (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sweden 2019) has a similarly liberal orientation. It recognises the links between climate change, conflict and the quality of life of women and girls, and commits the country to a range of policy objectives including "the promotion of gender mainstreaming, the participation of women and girls, and women's and girls' full enjoyment of human rights (including sexual and reproductive health rights) in climate and environment action." Furthermore, it seeks "to ensure that international and national climate adaptation strategies combat discrimination against women and girls and that the national action plans (nationally determined contributions) are prepared and implemented in dialogue with women

and girls.” Such efforts to ensure that “women and girls are reached by climate adaptation fund initiatives,” and that “women climate activists enjoy protection and security,” are laudable, but there is nothing in the policy about tackling the systemic drivers of the climate crisis.

In any case, the policy’s ambitions to take women’s rights and participation into account in its work on climate change have been undermined by a range of actions. For example, the Swedish government has recently announced that the British mining firm Beowulf will be granted an exploitation concession for the Kallak North Iron Project in the north of Sweden, despite loud protests from Indigenous communities, whose land rights and livelihood are under threat (Bergman Rosamond 2022). Sweden claims colonial innocence, rarely, if ever, conceding its role in the colonial oppression and land confiscation of Indigenous Sami communities in the Arctic north (Bergman Rosamond 2022). Nor has the Swedish government critically reflected on its privileged location within the colonial structures of the global economy, despite those privileges being the very root causes of poverty, insecurity and racialised hierarchies, injustices that Sweden’s FFP supposedly is seeking to address. Hence, there is an explicit inconsistency between the country’s pledges to improve the lives of the world’s women and girls facing climate disaster and the policies of extraction favoured by the current Social Democratic government.

Even in terms of its own relatively limited, liberal aims of protecting women’s rights and increasing their representation and resources, the Swedish FFP has not achieved the gains it might have. For a start, the aforementioned exclusion of militaries and defence means that Sweden has continued apace in arms sales, exporting arms to places that are defined by lack of democracy and human rights and where those arms might indeed be used to harm civilian populations including women and children, which clearly works against the goal of protecting women’s and girls’ rights (Aggestam and Bergman Rosamond 2016; Robinson 2021). Another action that did not embody the Swedish FFP’s commitment to safeguard women’s rights has been the government’s response to the rapid rise of refugees arriving from Syria in 2015. The restrictions on migration have had harmful effects on female migrants in particular, preventing them from entering Sweden in equal numbers to men (Aggestam and Bergman Rosamond 2016; Robinson 2021).⁴

In conclusion, with its focus on the liberal goals of rights, representation and resources, Sweden’s FFP is more limited in its ambitions than the intersectional, decolonial feminist approach for which we advocate. Even in terms of its own more limited aims, it has not had as much impact as it could. What is crucial to grasp here is that, in many ways, the reasons it

⁴ As other EU states Sweden, however, has welcomed large number of Ukrainian women and children fleeing the war in Ukraine.

has not had as much impact as it could is *because* it has not taken on the more expansive, structural way of thinking about the systems that cause gendered inequalities and insecurities that we have outlined above.

Scotland and a Feminist Foreign Policy

What can we learn, then, from the Swedish experience to inform the development of a feminist approach to foreign policy in Scotland? With the revisiting of foundational feminist insights and the Swedish experience with FFP to date in mind, we think that the Scottish Government should be braver and bolder in its feminist approach to foreign policy. We advocate for a shift away from the 3+1 Rs of the Swedish Government approach and an embrace of what we term “the 3 As”: Ambition, Authenticity, and Accountability. By *ambitious* we mean a FFP that would go beyond the goals of women’s rights, representation and (limited distribution of) resources, and seek to transform the structures that undermine their rights, prevent their representation, and expropriate their resources: the structures that we outline in section one above. By *authenticity*, we mean a FFP that demonstrates a coherence between feminist commitments at home and those directed outward. By *accountability*, we mean an FFP that would grapple with the harms wrought by colonialism and imperialism, namely racial hierarchies, extreme inequalities of power and wealth, and the climate and biodiversity crises. Through the following illustrative examples, we demonstrate how the Scottish Government’s adoption of FFP could follow the 3 As.

Ambition

As we saw in the first section’s discussion of feminist thinking about global peace and justice, an ambitious Feminist Foreign Policy would not just be concerned with gender equality or women’s insecurity, but be attentive to all inequalities and insecurities, and be focused on how to dismantle the structures that hold these inequalities and insecurities in place. In other words, an ambitious FFP would aim to transform the economic, political and social structures that keep marginalised and vulnerable people marginalised and vulnerable.

Therefore, an ambitious FFP would not only be concerned with war’s impacts on women, or how to increase women’s representation in security and peacebuilding institutions (which is too often the focus of the ‘women and security’ conversation), but would be focused on tackling the structures of militarism and war. Although as noted above, defence and national security are reserved powers, the Scottish Government could take several steps as a devolved nation to demonstrate its commitment to tackling masculinised militarism and to reinforce its commitment to peace and justice.

For example, the Scottish Government could reconsider the support it gives to the arms industry in Scotland. There are currently about 10,000 people employed in arms manufacturing in Scotland, most for the five big players: BAE Systems, Leonardo, Lockheed Martin, and Raytheon (CAAT 2021; Briggs 2021). Scottish Enterprise, the Scottish Government's business agency, has given millions of pounds of taxpayers' money to these firms via business grants (Briggs 2021; Learmonth 2021). BAE Systems, employing 3000 workers in Scotland, was given £1.6m between 2016 and 2020, and has sold weaponry worth £17.6bn to Saudi Arabia (Briggs 2021). The Scottish Government defends this funding by arguing that it does not provide funding for the manufacture of munitions but for "helping firms to diversify their activities and technology and ensure Scotland continues to benefit from the thousands of jobs in the defence, aerospace and shipbuilding sectors" (cited in Briggs 2021) but this distinction is impossible to maintain in practice. A central plank of an ambitious feminist approach would be to end this support and to support workers into alternative forms of employment.

The issue of nuclear weapons would have to be addressed as well. As Nick Ritchie, international security scholar at University of York (2021), writes: "Scotland has an important role to play in the global nuclear disarmament movement in two ways: 1) by reinforcing the web of international norms and law that constrains and delegitimises nuclear weapons; 2) by challenging the nuclear weapons practices and ideology of the British state." Part of an ambitious FFP would be to continue to play both those roles and intensify them by refusing to host the UK's nuclear weapons.

An ambitious approach that is committed to tackling militarism, moreover, would enable the Scottish Government to question the masculinised logics of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Such an approach would be grounded in notions of human security, disarmament, demilitarisation and intersectional justice, in distinction to approaches that argue for further militarisation. An ambitious feminist approach would prohibit treating the war in Ukraine as something separate from other aspects of FFP, a tendency that has defined Sweden's approach to the Russian invasion. This is not to dismiss the entitlement, laid down in international law, of the Ukrainian regime to defend itself, rather to recognise that feminism does not see militarization and the sending of weaponry as a long-term solution to achieving peace (Porobić 2022).

Should Scotland become independent, there would be further opportunities to tackle militarism. Given the ways in which militaries both absorb resources that could be devoted to social justice and social welfare, and the way in which they contribute to militaristic foreign policies, the Scottish Government could consider not having a military, following the

example of Costa Rica (Lipton and Barash 2018), or to restrict a military to peacekeeping and peacebuilding duties alone. Either way, the Scottish Government should, as set out in its new Global Affairs Framework (2022, 2), operate in constructive and cooperative ways—ways that are too often pre-empted by the easy availability of military modes of response.

An ambitious FFP would not only aim to tackle militarism; if it is committed to achieving gender justice, peace and security, and to tackling the ecological crises, it would aim for fundamental transformations to the current global economic system. The Scottish Government recognises this to an extent. In its Trade Vision (Scottish Government 2021b, 9), the Scottish Government notes that “tackling the global climate and nature crises will require transformative changes to the economies and societies of countries around the world, particularly of wealthy nations like Scotland.” In the new Global Affairs Framework (2022), the Scottish Government, in its acknowledgement of the undervalued yet crucial care work carried out largely by women, recognises that our current system depends not only on the exploitation and extraction of nature but the extraction of women’s labour as if it were freely and infinitely available. These acknowledgements need to be built upon as the Scottish Government develops its feminist approach to foreign policy. A transformation of the system that is driving inequalities, insecurities and ecological collapse requires action at the global level, but the Scottish Government could contribute by using its voice in multilateral fora, and within the UK, to lobby for, *inter alia*:

- a mechanism for multilateral debt workouts under the auspices of the United Nations;
- an end to illicit financial flows such as tax avoidance through a universal and intergovernmental UN Tax Convention that generates binding commitments;
- a new international architecture for actual fair and free trade to replace the WTO; and
- investment in care infrastructure

The forthcoming Wellbeing and Sustainable Development Bill provides a more direct opportunity for the Scottish Government to contribute to economic transformation. It must, as Scotland’s International Development Alliance proposes, adopt a definition of sustainable development that acknowledges the detrimental effects of pursuing perpetual economic growth and be focused on the “protection of ecological integrity and pursuit of socially equitable wellbeing for people in Scotland and elsewhere, both now and in the future” (SIDA 2022, 18). Moreover, the Scottish Government should do all it can to promote the replacement of the goal of growth by the goal of human and planetary wellbeing internationally, through continuing its leading role in the Wellbeing Economy Governments Group (WEGo).

Authenticity

For the Scottish Government to avoid the accusations of inconsistency that other adoptees of FFPs have faced, it is important that domestic and international policies are consistent with each other and with FFP principles. This is sometimes known as “policy coherence” (see SIDA 2022). Coherence adds credibility, but it is also part of what it means to conduct an ethical foreign policy.

The Scottish Government is clearly attentive to this demand and has made coherence part of its key principles. Over the past 20 years, Scotland has increasingly adopted progressive social policies aimed at dismantling systems of exclusion, and it has declared it central to its vision of being a good global citizen that these goals, values and policies infuse its international work (Law and Mooney 2012; Mooney and Scott 2011; Mulvey 2018). For instance, the Scottish Government’s National Performance Framework and National Outcomes intends to “give opportunities to *all* people” by:

- Increasing the wellbeing of people (address child poverty, end homelessness);
- Creating sustainable and inclusive growth via net-zero society and by following UN SDGs;
- Reducing inequalities and give equal importance to economic, environmental and social progress; and
- Removing legal, social, and economic barriers so all people can prosper, is demonstrative of a commitment to equality and inclusivity.

Questions can be asked, however, about the extent to which the talk of coherence is just that: talk. For example, posing as a champion of international climate justice, as the Scottish Government does, is undermined by the continued extraction of North Sea gas and oil and the failure to stay below the legal emissions targets three years in a row (see Church, McNulty, and Scandrett 2022). Facilitating training for women peacebuilders from Yemen is pointless if you are simultaneously encouraging the manufacture of weapons for export to Saudi Arabia (see CAAT 2021).

And, indeed, the extent to which the commitment to a well-being economy at home goes beyond rhetoric is an open question. The Scottish Government has, to date, included the goal of wellbeing as an “add-on” rather than a replacement for the goal of economic growth. Indeed, Scottish Government economic strategies have continued to show a preference for conventional economic growth, a position that is not compatible with preventing ecological collapse or tackling inequalities (SIDA 2022, 34; also see Gall 2022).

If the Scottish Government is to develop an authentic feminist foreign policy, it needs to ensure that both domestic and international policies are pointing in the same direction, in a coherent way: towards peace, justice, equality, security and sustainability.

Accountability

Finally, we are of the opinion that the Scottish Government needs to develop a foreign policy that reckons with Scotland's past, that accounts for Scotland's colonial history and its participation in extractive systems. It is often forgotten that Scotland has benefitted from the UK's colonial past, and still does. Owning a slave in Scotland did not become illegal until 1778; until then it was "fashionable for wealthy families to have a young 'black boy' or girl attending them" (MacPherson 2020). Lord Melville, who profited from slavery, opposed William Wilberforce's abolition movement. Even though Scottish people made up a minority of the UK population, Scottish people owned 30% of the slave estates and 32% of slaves in Jamaica and comprised 25% of the British ruling class in India; Scotland also directly colonised Nova Scotia, Canada and the failed Darien Scheme in Panama (Boyd 2017; also see Mulvey, Ahmed, and Clark 2022). The harms and brutalities caused by the colonisation of those parts of Canada are still felt in indigenous communities. Like other parts of the United Kingdom, streets, buildings, and statues are named after or made in the image of those who directly benefited from colonial imperialism and slavery. It is incumbent upon the Scottish Government in its adoption of FFP to consider its history and work closely with the populations harmed by these practices in finding appropriate and carefully considered ways of making reparations, engaging in truth and reconciliation as well as offering an apology for its implication in racialised colonial practices, the legacies of which have not been fully addressed.

The *New Global Affairs Framework* (2022, 3) takes steps to acknowledge Scotland's colonial experience:

But Scotland's legacy is not universally positive. We recognise, for example, our part in the historic injustices of the transatlantic slave trade and our contribution to global warming. The position we now enjoy results in part from that historical legacy. We are determined to acknowledge and learn from our past, including in the way our schools address Scotland's colonial history and through our approach to climate justice.

The Scottish Government also explicitly referenced its colonial past when announcing its £1million contribution, subsequently increased to £2m, to fund Loss and Damage caused by climate change. First Minister Nicola Sturgeon framed the contribution not as an act of charity but as reparation for the damage driven by countries in the global north (Bol 2022).

Though this is heartening, there is more that the Scottish Government could do to recognise that its relative prosperity is the result of its colonial experience. As mentioned above,

structural reforms to the global economy, to address the debt crisis, illicit financial flows, and unfair trade agreements, as well as even more generous climate reparations, are all required in order to address the legacies of colonialism and provide for fairer futures. Pushing for these structural reforms would make for an accountable FFP.

Conclusion

This paper has not attempted to set out a comprehensive analysis of extant FFPs. Nor has it offered a comprehensive set of policy recommendations. It has instead offered a vision of an ambitious, authentic and accountable feminist approach to foreign policy, based on insights of decades of feminist scholarship and activism, and the lessons we can learn from the Swedish FFP, and suggested some illustrative examples of ways in which the Scottish Government could realize that vision. In brief, we think that Scotland should be both braver and bolder in its feminist approach to foreign policy by going beyond a focus on women's rights, representation and resources to a focus on transforming the systems that are driving global inequalities, insecurities and ecological crises. To do this the Scottish Government's approach needs to reckon with Scotland's colonial history and its participation in a variety of extractive and destructive systems.

For foreign policy to remain focused on the traditional goals of national security and economic growth, and conventional ways of achieving them, is to remain stuck in the mindset and policies that have driven the impoverishment and insecurity of women and other marginalised groups. A new approach is required. Feminist approaches, such as the ambitious, authentic and accountable feminist approach to foreign policy outlined here, are often portrayed as naïve, unrealistic or utopian. But feminism, with its attention to the work gender is doing when some actions are labelled as realistic and rational, and others considered unrealistic, enables us to take a fresh look at what is actually required to address global challenges. Indeed, is it realistic to extract precious resources and to burn fossil fuels as the world burns, coastal settlements flood, and pandemics ensue? Is it rational to spend billions on nuclear weapons as people line up outside foodbanks and wait for healthcare?

This paper could not attempt to cover all feminist approaches, an analysis of all extant FFPs, and all the many ways the Scottish Government could put a feminist approach into practice. We hope to have conveyed what we think are the key insights from decades of feminist scholarship and activism and how they might inform a Scottish approach, but we are aware that there is much more that could be said – more insights from feminist scholarship, activism and practice, more to be learned from other countries with FFPs, and more creative thinking about the particular opportunities and challenges facing the Scottish Government as it

develops its feminist approach to foreign policy. This paper is intended as conversation prompt, and it is a conversation we look forward to continuing in a variety of venues over the coming years.

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