

What is a feminist approach to foreign policy? And what could it look like in Scottish Government Policy and Practice?

Workshop Report

25 August 2022, 10am – 4pm,
Godfrey Thomson Hall, Moray House, University of Edinburgh

Welcome and Introduction

Everyone was welcomed to the workshop by Claire Duncanson, Senior Lecturer in International Relations at University of Edinburgh, and co-organiser of the event with Dr Annika Bergman Rosamond (Lund) and Professor Caron Gentry (Northumbria).

Claire started by stating that the Scottish Government's commitment to develop a feminist approach to foreign policy in its Programme for Government 21-22 is a hugely exciting development. It is exciting because, if you're someone who cares about the impacts of ongoing armed conflict on the most marginalised, including women; gross and growing inequality (with the 252 richest men owning more wealth than all the women in Africa, Latin American and Caribbean¹); and ever more apparent and acute climate and biodiversity crises, the world can look pretty bleak right now, but feminism is an approach that is full of hope. It is – for the co-organisers at least – a “passionate politics”² of transformation.

Feminism offers resources for tackling the marginalizations, inequalities and destruction that make many women's lives unliveable and the dynamics that drive them. The co-organisers were thus pleased to be able to put down on paper some initial thoughts about what a feminist approach to foreign policy could look like in Scotland in an Opinion Paper, as a prompt for discussion in the workshop.

¹ <https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/inequality-kills>

² Hooks, Bell. *Feminism is for everybody: Passionate politics*. Pluto Press, 2000.

Of course, Claire observed, the paper will have missed things and got things wrong. It is brief and written with the intention of provoking debate and discussion. Indeed, the purpose of the workshop is to enter into a collaborative process of developing a feminist approach to foreign policy in Scotland, and beyond. The aim is to construct, collectively, a feminist approach that really makes a difference. One that can, in other words, make things better for women and other marginalized groups around the world by tackling the structures that drive insecurity, inequality, and ecological collapse.

Claire acknowledged the generous support from the Scottish Council for Global Affairs (SCGA) hosts of the workshop. The SCGA was recently launched by the Universities of Glasgow, Edinburgh, and St Andrews, with support from the Scottish and UK Governments, with a mission to:

- facilitate and promote policy-relevant research on global affairs and ink this expertise to policy stakeholders in Scotland, the UK, and beyond;
- promote informed debate and discourse on international affairs
- and forge partnerships with cognate civil society and research institutes outside of academia

The workshop is an example of precisely the sort of thing SCGA seeks to do and achieve: draw on researchers from across Scottish universities and civil society to conduct activities that deepen knowledge and inform policy, on matters of significance in global affairs.

Presentation of Opinion Paper: *Scotland the Brave? An Authentic, Ambitious, and Accountable Feminist Approach to Foreign Policy*

Annika and Caron then presented the key ideas in the Opinion Paper *Scotland the Brave? An Authentic, Ambitious, and Accountable Feminist Approach to Foreign Policy* – available here: <https://scga.scot/2022/07/25/opinion-paper-feminist-foreign-policy/>

The paper 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 the co-authors think should inform the idea of a feminist approach to foreign policy. It briefly considers the ideas and ambitions of the FFPs adopted to date, with a focus on Sweden as the pioneer of the concept. It argues 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, replacing the 3Rs with 3As: authenticity, ambition, and accountability.

