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Reimagining Diplomacy: The Case for a Feminist Foreign Policy in India

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ABSTRACT

As global conflict dynamics evolve, feminist foreign policy (FFP) has emerged as a transformative framework that integrates gender equality, human rights, and inclusive security into statecraft. Originating in Sweden and subsequently adopted by states such as Canada, Mexico, and Spain, FFPs seek to reshape international relations by addressing structural inequalities and embedding gender perspectives into diplomacy, development, defence, and trade. For India – a major regional power with a growing global footprint – the adoption of a feminist foreign policy offers both normative and strategic advantages. This paper examines the urgent need for FFP in the Indian context, linking it to the country's constitutional commitments to equality, its obligations under international human rights law, and the principles enshrined in the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. It argues that India's active participation in UN peacekeeping, South-South cooperation, and humanitarian assistance provides a strong platform for mainstreaming gender considerations into foreign policy design. Through comparative analysis of existing FFP models, the paper identifies key lessons adaptable to India's geopolitical realities, including prioritising conflict prevention through inclusive dialogue, ensuring gender parity in diplomatic appointments, and integrating women-led perspectives into peace negotiations and climate-security diplomacy. It also highlights structural barriers patriarchal policy cultures, security-driven diplomacy, and the absence of a National Action Plan for UNSCR 1325 that must be addressed to make such a policy effective. The paper concludes that adopting a feminist foreign policy in India would not only strengthen the country's leadership in shaping equitable global governance but also reinforce domestic human security by aligning external engagements with inclusive, rights-based approaches. By embedding gender justice into the heart of its diplomacy, India could redefine its strategic influence in a manner that is both principled and pragmatic.

KEYWORDS

Feminist foreign policy; India; Women, Peace, and Security; UNSC Resolution 1325; human security; gender equality

INTRODUCTION: RETHINKING GLOBAL SECURITY THROUGH A FEMINIST LENS

The architecture of global security has traditionally been shaped by realist paradigms that prioritize state sovereignty, territorial integrity, and military capability. Yet, in the twenty-first century, these frameworks increasingly appear inadequate to address the complex, interconnected crises that define contemporary international relations—climate change, forced displacement, pandemics, cyber warfare, and rising authoritarianism. These challenges are profoundly gendered in their impacts, disproportionately affecting women, girls, and other marginalized communities through violence, exclusion, and economic vulnerability. In this evolving landscape, Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP) has emerged as a transformative response, challenging the masculinized logic of power and security that underpins conventional diplomacy.[1]

The conceptual roots of FFP can be traced to Sweden's pioneering initiative in 2014 under Foreign Minister Margot Wallström, who redefined foreign policy through the lens of "rights, representation, and resources." This normative innovation reframed gender equality not as a peripheral social concern but as a core strategic objective for peace, development, and human security. The idea rapidly gained traction across continents—Canada (2017), France (2019), Mexico (2020), Spain (2021), Germany (2023), and Chile (2024)—each adapting it to local contexts while reaffirming the universal link between gender justice and sustainable peace. These policies collectively underscore that gender inclusion is not merely a moral imperative but a pragmatic necessity for resilient and equitable international order.[2]

For India, the case for adopting an FFP is both timely and compelling. As the world's largest democracy and a leading voice of the Global South, India wields significant influence in shaping international norms through its diplomacy, peacekeeping, and development partnerships. Its constitutional vision—anchored in justice, equality, and dignity—resonates deeply with the ethical foundations of feminist diplomacy. Moreover, India's increasing engagement in United Nations peacekeeping missions, climate action, and South-South cooperation provides fertile ground for institutionalizing gender-responsive approaches to foreign policy. However, the absence of a National Action

[1] Victoria Scheyer and Marina Kumskova, 'Feminist Foreign Policy: A Fine Line between "Adding Women" and Pursuing a Feminist Agenda' (2019) 72(2) *Journal of International Affairs* 57–76 https://www.jstor.org/stable/26760832 accessed 22 December 2025.

[2] Ekatherina Zhukova, Malena Rosén Sundström and Ole Elgström, 'Feminist Foreign Policies (FFPs) as Strategic Narratives: Norm Translation in Sweden, Canada, France, and Mexico' (2022) 48(1) *Review of International Studies* 195–216 https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210521000413 accessed 22 December 2025.

Plan on UNSCR 1325, persistent gender imbalances in the foreign service, and limited integration of gender perspectives in strategic policy continue to hinder progress.[3]

This paper thus reimagines India's external engagement through a feminist lens—one that privileges dialogue over dominance, cooperation over coercion, and human security over state security. By mainstreaming feminist values into its diplomatic practice, India can redefine its global influence, aligning its international commitments with domestic constitutional principles and contributing to a more peaceful, equitable, and inclusive world order.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND OBJECTIVES

The research adopts a qualitative, analytical, and comparative methodology aimed at understanding the evolution, frameworks, and applicability of Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP) in the Indian context. Given the subject's interdisciplinary nature—spanning international relations, gender studies, and constitutional law—the study integrates both doctrinal and empirical dimensions. The doctrinal analysis involves a detailed review of international instruments such as UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (Women, Peace and Security) and its subsequent resolutions, national policy documents of countries that have adopted FFP (such as Sweden, Canada, Mexico, Spain, and Germany), and relevant Indian constitutional provisions that support gender equality and justice. Empirical insights are drawn from case studies of India's peacekeeping missions, humanitarian diplomacy, and development partnerships to evaluate the implicit presence of feminist values in its global engagements.

The research is supported by secondary data sources, including official government publications, policy papers, international organization reports, academic articles, and United Nations databases. It employs comparative policy analysis to identify the structural similarities and divergences between global FFP models and India's existing diplomatic practices. Additionally, the study follows a descriptive-analytical design, wherein the conceptual foundations of FFP are examined first, followed by a critical assessment of its feasibility and transformative potential in India. The interpretive framework draws from feminist international relations theory, particularly the works of scholars like Cynthia Enloe, Ann Tickner, and Karen Aggestam, to highlight how gendered power structures shape global diplomacy and security discourse.

[3] Tanvi Kulkarni, 'Feminist Foreign Policy and Nuclear Security in India' (*South Asian Voices*, 20 September 2021) https://southasianvoices.org/feminist-foreign-policy-and-nuclear-security-in-india/ accessed 22 December 2025.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To analyze the conceptual evolution of Feminist Foreign Policy and its normative underpinnings in the global context.

2. To examine comparative models of FFP implemented in countries such as Sweden, Canada, Mexico, Spain, and Germany, identifying key policy mechanisms and measurable impacts.

3. To evaluate India's current foreign policy practices—including peacekeeping, humanitarian aid, and multilateral diplomacy—from a feminist perspective, highlighting areas of alignment and gaps.

4. To explore the intersection between feminist foreign policy and human security in addressing gendered vulnerabilities such as conflict-related violence, migration, and climate insecurity.

5. To propose a policy roadmap for India toward adopting an institutionalized Feminist Foreign Policy framework rooted in constitutional values and global commitments under UNSCR 1325 and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Through these objectives, the research aims to demonstrate that a feminist reorientation of India's foreign policy is not only ethically justified but strategically essential for building an inclusive, peaceful, and equitable global order.

CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS OF FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY

Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP) represents a paradigm shift in the theory and practice of international relations. It challenges the realist, patriarchal, and militarized assumptions that have long defined global diplomacy by reimagining security through the lens of equality, justice, and care. At its core, FFP seeks to answer a fundamental question: *whose security, whose peace, and whose interests does foreign policy serve?* Emerging from the feminist critique of international politics, it reframes diplomacy not as an arena of power rivalry but as a platform for promoting human dignity, social justice, and inclusive peace. This reconceptualization draws from feminist international relations theory, which posits that global hierarchies of gender, race, and class shape the distribution of power and resources among states and individuals alike.[4]

[4] Lydia Thompson and Rebecca Clement, *Defining Feminist Foreign Policy* (International Center for Research on Women, 19 April 2019) https://www.icrw.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/ICRW_DefiningFeministForeignPolicy_Brief_Revised_v5_

The intellectual roots of FFP lie in decades of feminist activism and scholarship that have exposed how conventional security frameworks privilege state survival over human well-being. The adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 in 2000 marked a watershed moment, recognizing women's critical roles in conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and post-conflict reconstruction. This resolution—and its successors—laid the normative foundation for integrating gender perspectives into security policymaking. However, feminist scholars argue that gender mainstreaming alone is insufficient; what is required is a structural transformation of foreign policy itself to dismantle the patriarchal logic underpinning international systems.

The Swedish model of FFP, introduced in 2014, articulated this transformation through the "three Rs"—Rights, Representation, and Resources—a framework ensuring that women's rights guide policy priorities, women are equitably represented in decision-making, and resources are allocated to advance gender equality.[5] Later, Mexico's 2020 FFP added a fourth dimension, Reality, emphasizing contextual adaptability and intersectionality—acknowledging that race, class, sexuality, and geography intersect with gender to produce differentiated experiences of insecurity. These conceptual evolutions signify a move from token inclusion to transformative justice, embedding feminist ethics into diplomacy, trade, climate action, and defense.

In the Indian context, feminist foreign policy must be anchored in constitutional values of equality and justice while addressing localized gendered vulnerabilities such as conflict in border regions, displacement, and digital surveillance. It should engage with the plural feminist traditions of India—from Sarojini Naidu's internationalism to Vandana Shiva's ecofeminism—to construct a model that is globally conscious yet culturally grounded. By linking feminist theory with practice, FFP transforms foreign policy from a domain of domination into one of cooperation, empathy, and shared human security. It is not merely about adding women to diplomacy but about redefining diplomacy itself—a shift from power politics to people-centered global governance.

COMPARATIVE MODELS OF FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY: GLOBAL LESSONS

The evolution of Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP) across diverse geopolitical contexts demonstrates how gender equality can be

WebReady.pdf accessed 22 December 2025.

[5] Government Offices of Sweden, *Handbook: Sweden's Feminist Foreign Policy* (2018) https://www.swedenabroad.se/globalassets/ambassader/zimbabwe-harare/documents/handbook_swedens-feminist-foreign-policy.pdf accessed 22 December 2025.

institutionalized as a guiding principle of diplomacy, peacebuilding, and development. Each country that has adopted an FFP framework—Sweden, Canada, Mexico, Spain, Germany, and Chile—has done so by adapting feminist ideals to its own socio-political and strategic environment. Together, these models illustrate that FFP is not a one-size-fits-all approach but a flexible, evolving instrument that translates feminist theory into actionable statecraft.

Sweden's pioneering model (2014) marked a historic moment in rethinking global diplomacy. Initiated by then Foreign Minister Margot Wallström, Sweden's FFP was grounded in the "three Rs" approach—Rights, Representation, and Resources—ensuring that women's rights guided policy priorities, that women's voices were represented in all decision-making processes, and that resources were allocated to advance gender equality globally. It prioritized the inclusion of women in peace negotiations, restricted arms exports to regimes violating women's rights, and restructured diplomatic missions to enhance gender sensitivity.[6] For example, Sweden played a key role in advocating for women's participation in the Yemen peace talks (2018) and mainstreamed gender analysis across its development aid. Although Sweden formally discontinued the explicit label of FFP in 2022 following a change of government, its legacy endures as a template for rights-based and humanitarian-oriented diplomacy.

Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP) (2017) offered a development-centric model that placed gender equality at the heart of foreign aid. Over 95% of Canadian aid programs now target gender equality or women's empowerment as a primary or secondary objective. Canada emphasized education for girls, sexual and reproductive health rights, and economic participation as tools for sustainable peace and inclusive growth. However, its experience in Afghanistan highlighted the limitations of externally imposed gender reforms in fragile states, underscoring that FFP must be context-driven and locally owned.[7]

Mexico's 2020 Feminist Foreign Policy was groundbreaking as the first FFP adopted in the Global South. It expanded the Swedish framework by adding a fourth "R"—Reality—acknowledging the need to integrate intersectionality and local contexts into feminist diplomacy. Mexico's approach emphasizes domestic coherence—ensuring that foreign

[6] Sophia M. Moss, 'An Introduction to Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy' (Nordics.info, 28 January 2020) https://nordics.info/show/artikel/swedish-feminist-foreign-policy accessed 22 December 2025.
[7] Government of Canada, *Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy* (2017) https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_development-enjeux_developpement/priorities-priorites/policy-politique.aspx?lang=eng accessed 22 December 2025.

commitments to gender equality are mirrored in national policies. It has become an influential voice in Latin America, particularly through its engagement in Colombia's peace process, where over 100 gender provisions were incorporated into the 2016 peace accords. Mexico's leadership has demonstrated that FFP can be both transformative and pragmatic, especially in societies grappling with inequality and violence.[8]

Spain (2021) and Germany (2023) have further institutionalized FFP by embedding it into their foreign ministries. Spain's policy emphasizes measurable outcomes through gender budgeting, equitable recruitment in diplomatic corps, and evaluation of foreign policy impacts on women. Germany's FFP, unveiled by Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock, explicitly links gender equality with climate diplomacy, digital security, and conflict prevention, appointing a Special Envoy for Feminist Foreign Policy to ensure coherence and accountability. This model connects feminist principles to structural global challenges—illustrating how gender justice can underpin broader agendas such as environmental sustainability and democratic resilience.

In the aftermath of the Russia–Ukraine conflict (2022–present), women-led initiatives have redefined post-conflict diplomacy. Networks like "Resilience Ukraine" and the Ukrainian Women's Congress have shaped reconstruction and recovery through gender-responsive policies, demonstrating that women's participation enhances legitimacy and long-term peace. The European Union's Gender Action Plan III (2021–2027) further integrates gender equality into security, migration, and humanitarian responses, serving as a model for transnational cooperation.

For India, these diverse models offer valuable insights. Sweden and Canada demonstrate how FFP can institutionalize gender justice in aid and diplomacy; Mexico exemplifies adaptability within the Global South; and Germany illustrates integration of FFP with climate and technology policy. India can draw on these experiences to develop a uniquely Indian feminist foreign policy—anchored in constitutional equality, South-South solidarity, and inclusive development. By ensuring gender parity in the Indian Foreign Service, introducing gender impact assessments in trade and defense agreements, and formulating a National Action Plan for UNSCR 1325, India can translate its normative commitments into transformative diplomacy. These global lessons affirm that feminist foreign policy is not an ideological luxury but a strategic necessity for

[8] The Gender Security Project, 'Mexico' (May 2023) https://www.gendersecurityproject.com/feminist-foreign-policy-countries/mexico accessed 22 December 2025.

sustainable peace and human security in the twenty-first century.

INDIA AND FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY: POTENTIAL AND BARRIERS

India's growing global prominence presents both an opportunity and a responsibility to redefine its foreign policy through a gender-sensitive and inclusive lens. The concept of a Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP) in India holds transformative potential—one that aligns the country's external engagements with its constitutional ethos of equality, justice, and dignity. While India has long been a champion of multilateralism, peacekeeping, and South–South cooperation, its foreign policy has yet to fully institutionalize gender as a strategic dimension of diplomacy. A feminist approach to foreign policy would not only strengthen India's moral legitimacy as a democratic power but also enhance its leadership within the Global South by demonstrating how gender equality can coexist with national interest and strategic pragmatism.[9]

India's normative foundations already provide fertile ground for the development of a feminist foreign policy. The Preamble and Fundamental Rights under the Indian Constitution enshrine equality and justice as foundational values, while Directive Principles of State Policy emphasize peace, international cooperation, and respect for international law. These principles resonate with the ethical and humanistic underpinnings of feminist diplomacy, which seeks to replace hierarchical and militarized approaches with empathetic, rights-based, and cooperative engagement. Furthermore, India's ratification of international instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and its commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development—particularly SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions)—illustrate its international obligations toward gender-responsive governance.

In practice, several elements of India's current diplomacy already reflect feminist principles. India's contributions to United Nations peacekeeping operations are exemplary, with the country deploying the world's first all-women Formed Police Unit (FPU) to Liberia in 2007. This mission became a global symbol of empowerment, inspiring local women to join law enforcement and contributing to post-conflict stabilization. More recently, Indian women peacekeepers have served in Abyei (Sudan) and South Sudan (2023–2024), where they have led

[9] Srija Dash, 'Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP): The Scope of Integrating Gender Sensitivity into Indian Foreign Policies' (Strategic Studies Programme) https://sspconline.org/opinion-analysis/feminist-foreign-policy-ffp-scope-integrating-gender-sensitivity-indian-foreign accessed 22 December 2025.

community policing, child protection, and gender-based violence awareness programs. Similarly, India's humanitarian diplomacy—exemplified during the Nepal earthquake (2015) and the Sri Lankan economic crisis (2022)—has seen the involvement of women-led civil society groups in relief and rehabilitation efforts. India's leadership in the G20 Summit (2023) also showcased the theme of "Women-Led Development," emphasizing gender equity as a cross-sectoral priority in global policymaking.[10]

Despite these promising examples, significant barriers continue to impede the institutionalization of a feminist foreign policy in India. Structurally, the Indian Foreign Service (IFS) remains male-dominated, with women comprising less than 20% of diplomatic personnel and often underrepresented in senior positions or strategic postings. Patriarchal biases and rigid hierarchies within policymaking institutions continue to limit women's agency in decision-making. Moreover, foreign policy has traditionally been treated as a gender-neutral domain, resulting in limited gender analysis of trade, security, and defense policies. India's foreign aid and development partnerships, while expansive, lack systematic gender budgeting or impact assessment frameworks.[11]

Another major gap lies in the absence of a National Action Plan (NAP) for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (Women, Peace and Security). While neighboring countries such as Nepal (2011) and Bangladesh (2019) have adopted NAPs, India has yet to institutionalize the WPS agenda domestically or align it with its foreign policy objectives. This absence reflects a broader challenge—bridging the divide between India's strong normative commitments and their practical realization in international engagements.[12]

Recent developments, however, suggest growing momentum for change. India's women-led initiatives in Afghanistan—particularly through partnerships with organizations like the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA)—demonstrate gender-sensitive diplomacy even in fragile contexts. Similarly, the integration of gender perspectives in India's climate diplomacy, through platforms such as the

[10] Press Information Bureau, Government of India, 'India's Legacy in UN Peacekeeping' (Press Release, 9 March 2025) https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2109587 accessed 22 December 2025.
[11] Dhirendra Jha, 'India Ranked 131 of 148 Nations on Global Gender Gap Index 2025' (*The Times of India*, 12 June 2025) https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/india-ranked-131-of-148-nations-on-global-gender-gap-index-2025/articleshow/121808918.cms accessed 22 December 2025.
[12] Neha S. Raghuvanshi, 'What Can UNSCR 1325 Do for India?' (*The Gender Security Project*) https://www.gendersecurityproject.com/wpsanalysis/what-can-unscr-1325-do-for-india accessed 22 December 2025.

International Solar Alliance (ISA) and the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), reflects early signs of feminist thinking in global governance.

The adoption of a feminist foreign policy in India would thus not represent a radical departure but rather a logical extension of its constitutional and developmental vision. It would allow India to redefine security as human-centered rather than state-centric, position itself as a normative leader in the Global South, and bridge domestic and global commitments to gender equality. Overcoming institutional inertia, ensuring gender parity in diplomatic recruitment, and formulating a National Action Plan on WPS are essential steps toward this transformation. In embracing a feminist foreign policy, India can move beyond symbolic representation to achieve substantive transformation, integrating compassion, justice, and equality as core principles of its international identity.

INTEGRATING FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY WITH HUMAN SECURITY

The conceptual convergence between Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP) and human security represents one of the most significant normative shifts in global governance. Traditional security paradigms have long been dominated by militarism and state-centric thinking, defining safety in terms of borders and territorial integrity. In contrast, the human security framework, first articulated in the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Human Development Report (1994), reoriented the discourse by emphasizing "freedom from fear, freedom from want, and freedom to live in dignity." Feminist perspectives extend this notion further by foregrounding how gender, power, and inequality shape the lived realities of insecurity. They reveal that threats to security are not confined to battlefields but also manifest in domestic violence, economic deprivation, sexual exploitation, and exclusion from political participation.

A feminist lens reframes human security by linking the personal and the political. It challenges the false dichotomy between private and public spheres—asserting that the structural violence women face in households, workplaces, and migration corridors is inseparable from the geopolitical violence perpetuated by states. For instance, the Syrian refugee crisis, Afghanistan's rollback of women's rights (2021–2024), and the ongoing Israel–Palestine conflict (2023–2025) underscore how patriarchal power dynamics intersect with war and displacement, leaving women disproportionately vulnerable. Feminist foreign policy advocates thus call for gender-responsive humanitarian aid, inclusive peacebuilding, and accountability mechanisms that address sexual and

gender-based violence as core security concerns rather than peripheral issues.[13]

In the Indian context, the integration of FFP with human security is particularly vital given the multidimensional nature of threats women face. Internal conflicts in regions such as Manipur, Jammu and Kashmir, and parts of Central India have revealed gendered patterns of violence, displacement, and trauma. Similarly, climate-induced disasters in Assam and Odisha, human trafficking along the India–Bangladesh border, and the exploitation of women migrant workers in the Gulf states highlight the global and local intersections of insecurity. By incorporating feminist principles, India's foreign policy can address these challenges through gender-responsive disaster diplomacy, women-led peace dialogues, and bilateral agreements ensuring protection for migrant women workers.

Ultimately, an Indian Feminist Foreign Policy rooted in human security would redefine power as responsibility rather than dominance. It would promote cooperation over coercion, empathy over exclusion, and justice over hierarchy. In doing so, India could advance a new model of global engagement—one that situates human dignity, equality, and care at the heart of international relations.

FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY AS PUBLIC POLICY AND INTERNATIONAL LAW: AN INDIAN NORMATIVE FRAMEWORK

Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP) must be understood not merely as a diplomatic orientation but as a form of public policy embedded within international legal obligations and constitutional governance. From a public policy perspective, foreign policy is an extension of the state's constitutional values into the international sphere. In India's case, Articles 14, 15, 21, and 51 of the Constitution collectively mandate equality, dignity, non-discrimination, and respect for international law. When read together, these provisions create a normative foundation for integrating feminist principles into India's external engagements. Feminist Foreign Policy thus emerges as a mechanism through which constitutional morality is translated into international conduct.

Under international law, the legitimacy of FFP is firmly anchored in binding and soft-law instruments. India is a State Party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which obligates states to eliminate discrimination not only within domestic jurisdictions but also in international cooperation

[13] Jessica Edelman Levy, 'Why a Feminist Foreign Policy' (*Council on Foreign Relations*, 31 July 2024) https://www.cfr.org/blog/why-feminist-foreign-policy accessed 22 December 2025.

and foreign relations. Additionally, the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) framework initiated by United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) and reinforced through subsequent resolutions establishes women's participation, protection, and leadership as integral to international peace and security. Although these resolutions are formally recommendatory, their consistent reaffirmation and incorporation into state practice have elevated them to persuasive norms influencing customary international law.

From a public policy standpoint, Feminist Foreign Policy represents a shift from reactive, security-centric governance to preventive, human-centric governance. Traditional foreign policy prioritizes military strength, strategic alliances, and economic interests, often sidelining social consequences. Feminist diplomacy, by contrast, applies gender impact assessment to foreign policy decisions, asking how trade agreements affect women's labor, how arms exports influence gender-based violence, or how climate negotiations account for women's disproportionate vulnerability. This approach aligns with contemporary public policy theory that emphasizes evidence-based decision-making, inclusivity, and accountability.

For India, adopting FFP as public policy would also enhance coherence between domestic governance and international commitments. India's emphasis on "women-led development," articulated in recent policy discourse and global forums, remains largely aspirational without institutional backing in foreign affairs. Embedding feminist principles into foreign policy would operationalize this vision by ensuring that international development assistance, climate diplomacy, migration agreements, and peacekeeping mandates are evaluated through gender-responsive frameworks. Such coherence is increasingly viewed in international law as a hallmark of responsible state behavior.

Importantly, an Indian Feminist Foreign Policy must reflect Global South realities rather than replicate Eurocentric models. Issues such as post-colonial inequality, development asymmetries, climate vulnerability, and informal labor markets require a contextualized feminist approach. India is uniquely positioned to articulate a Global South feminist diplomacy that prioritizes capacity-building, South–South cooperation, and structural justice over conditionality-based interventions. This would strengthen India's normative leadership in multilateral institutions while reinforcing its commitment to equitable global governance.[14]

[14] Dr Tishya Khillare, 'Ways of Seeing Feminist Foreign Policy' (*Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung India*) http://in.boell.org/en/feminist-foreign-policy02 accessed 22 December 2025.

In essence, Feminist Foreign Policy, when conceptualized as public policy grounded in international law, transcends symbolism. It becomes a legally informed, constitutionally consistent, and policy-relevant framework for redefining India's role in the international system. Such an approach aligns squarely with the objectives of contemporary public law scholarship, making it both theoretically robust and practically implementable.

POLICY ROADMAP FOR IMPLEMENTING FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY IN INDIA

Operationalizing a Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP) in India requires a holistic and institutionalized approach that bridges normative commitments with actionable strategies. The policy roadmap must integrate gender equality into every aspect of India's diplomatic, defense, development, and trade engagements while ensuring coherence between domestic and international commitments. The first and most urgent step is the formulation of a National Action Plan (NAP) for the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on *Women, Peace and Security (WPS)*. Such a plan should be developed through a consultative process involving the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Ministry of Women and Child Development, defense and home ministries, as well as civil society organizations and women's movements. The NAP should outline clear goals, measurable indicators, and a timeline for integrating gender perspectives into peacekeeping, humanitarian aid, and foreign policy decision-making.

Institutional reform is equally critical. Establishing a dedicated Gender and Peace Unit within the MEA would ensure systematic mainstreaming of feminist principles across all departments—ranging from regional divisions to economic diplomacy and multilateral engagement. This unit could develop gender impact assessment tools, conduct annual audits of policy coherence, and coordinate with India's missions abroad to promote inclusive diplomacy. To sustain progress, India should adopt gender parity targets for the Indian Foreign Service (IFS) and related strategic institutions, aiming for at least 50% representation of women in decision-making positions by 2030. Structural biases within recruitment, postings, and promotions must be addressed through mentorship programs, training in gender-sensitive diplomacy, and leadership initiatives that empower women officers to take on high-level roles in defense, trade, and climate negotiations.

Resource allocation forms the backbone of implementation. India should integrate gender budgeting into its foreign aid, defense, and development assistance frameworks. For example, the Development Partnership Administration (DPA)—which oversees India's aid projects

in Africa, Asia, and the Pacific—can earmark specific funds for women-led initiatives in education, healthcare, and peacebuilding. Similarly, India's leadership in global forums like the G20, BRICS, and the Commonwealth can be leveraged to advocate for feminist principles in trade, technology governance, and climate finance.

Finally, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms must ensure accountability. A National Commission for Feminist Diplomacy, comprising experts from academia, civil society, and government, could periodically assess progress and issue public reports. Collaboration with think tanks such as the Observer Research Foundation (ORF), Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), and universities would facilitate evidence-based policymaking.

In essence, India's roadmap toward a feminist foreign policy should not be a symbolic declaration but a transformative framework that aligns diplomacy with constitutional morality and human security. By institutionalizing gender justice in external affairs, India can redefine its strategic identity—demonstrating that equality and empowerment are not peripheral values but core elements of sustainable global leadership.

CONCLUSION: FROM REPRESENTATION TO TRANSFORMATION

The journey toward a Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP) for India represents not merely a policy adjustment but a profound philosophical and institutional transformation. Moving from tokenistic representation to substantive transformation requires reconceptualizing diplomacy itself—from an arena driven by power competition to one grounded in equality, empathy, and justice. The feminist approach demands that gender equality not be treated as a secondary or symbolic issue but as an essential condition for sustainable peace, inclusive development, and genuine human security. It invites India to align its external engagements with the moral and constitutional ideals of justice, liberty, and dignity for all, which have guided its democratic ethos since independence.

A feminist foreign policy for India would bridge the persistent divide between national interest and global ethics, ensuring that diplomatic priorities reflect both strategic rationality and social responsibility. By mainstreaming feminist principles, India could lead in redefining global governance from the perspective of the Global South—where inequalities of gender, race, and development intersect most visibly. The adoption of FFP would also enhance India's soft power, projecting its image as a nation that not only aspires to economic leadership but also champions inclusive and ethical statecraft. Moreover, embedding feminist principles in peacekeeping, climate diplomacy, and humanitarian assistance would strengthen India's credibility as a

responsible global actor committed to multilateralism and equity.

At a deeper level, this transformation would signify a shift from representation to participation, and ultimately to transformation—where women and marginalized voices are not merely present in diplomatic spaces but actively shape decision-making and outcomes. Such an approach resonates with India's civilizational ethos of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*—the world as one family—and its constitutional morality rooted in equality and social justice. Feminist diplomacy thus becomes not an ideological departure but a continuation of India's moral vision for global harmony.

By adopting a feminist foreign policy, India can pave the way for a new era of diplomacy—one where power is exercised through inclusion rather than exclusion, and where security is defined not by dominance but by the shared dignity of all people. This transformation would not only redefine India's global identity but also reaffirm its timeless commitment to peace, justice, and humanity.