

What Now for Feminist Foreign Policy? Energy and Backlash

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Almost a decade ago, Sweden declared that it would pursue a ‘feminist foreign policy’. A more explicit signal of political intent than previous commitments to the so-called Women, Peace and Security agenda or gender equality in development assistance, feminist foreign policy generated significant activist and scholarly interest, and was taken up by a series of other governments (to date, Canada, Luxembourg, France, Mexico, Spain, Libya, Germany, Chile, and the Netherlands). Ruling parties elsewhere – such as the Westminster Parliament and the Scottish Government – have advocated for or promised to adopt something similar. Along with activist campaigns for feminist foreign policy in dozens of other contexts, this burst of activity indicates a growing energy and leads to numerous questions about what the ambition means in practice. Yet there is now also a backlash against feminist foreign policy, most obviously in Sweden where the new government has retracted the term and abandoned the commitment. This roundtable convenes scholars of feminist foreign policy to take stock of energy and backlash and to ask where the project now stands. The present and future of feminist foreign policy goes to the heart of ‘Our Common Agenda’ proposals on centering women and on peace and conflict prevention, speaking centrally to conference themes and ongoing policy debates. Each contributor has researched feminist claims on foreign, security and development policy in particular governance settings. Each will speak to one of those sites of contention, from familiar cases such as Sweden to ambivalent developments in the UK to lesser-discussed contexts like South Asia or regional institutions like NATO.

Membership

Track Classification: Gendering International Relations Working Group