

Taking the F-Word Global: Energy and Backlash in Feminist Foreign Policy

2024 will mark a decade since Sweden adopted the first Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP) in 2014. Since its inception, the inclusion of feminism in the discourse and practice of global politics has seen an uptick, which has been met with both optimism and scepticism. Globally, the 'mainstreaming' of feminism in foreign policy has led to a growth in civil society organisations, networks, women's organisations, and (transnational) advocacy groups responding, promoting, and holding governments to account to their FFP commitments as part of their core (gender) work. This policy move has therefore opened up space for the greater inclusion of atypical actors in the discourse and practice of foreign policy. Moreover, with Mexico, Chile, Colombia, and Liberia having now pledged to adopt an FFP in the future, feminist foreign policies not only appear here to stay but its global spread demonstrates that this is not the exclusive agenda of Europe and North America. In parallel to these developments, there has also been a global, rising tide against feminism, which, in the context of FFPs, culminated in the withdrawal of Sweden's policy in 2022. This feminist turn in foreign policy is therefore set against a wider backdrop of the global rise in right-wing, anti-gender political parties and movements; multiple crises constituted of the deepening climate emergency; a resurgence of violent conflicts worldwide; increased authoritarianism, militarism, militarization, and martial politics; the reverberations felt from a global pandemic; the Russian invasion of Ukraine; and, most recently, the humanitarian crises that has unfolded in Israel and Palestine.

Our panel brings together contributors to an anthology edited by Dr Columba Achilleos-Sarll, Prof Toni Hastrup, and Dr Jennifer Thomson that creates a space for scholars, activists, practitioners, and creatives to try and make sense of these developments. The aim of the volume is to broaden and deepen conceptual and practical understandings and engagement with this 'feminist turn in foreign policy'. The anthology includes thematically-driven contributions from academics, creatives, practitioners, and activists, alongside artwork, poetry, and conversations, discussing what feminist foreign policies have (and haven't) achieved so far and asks where it might go next.

Track Classification: University of Birmingham, School of Government/POLSIIS Gender and Feminist Theory Research Group (GAFT)