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## **Diffusion of a values-based policy: Germany's Feminist Foreign Policy in European newspapers**

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Master in International Studies

Supervisor:

PhD. Thais França, Invited Assistant Professor,  
Iscte - Instituto Universitário de Lisboa

October, 2023



SOCIOLOGIA  
E POLÍTICAS PÚBLICAS

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Department of History

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*“O não ouvir é a tendência a permanecer num lugar cômodo e confortável daquele que se intitula poder falar sobre os Outros, enquanto esses Outros permanecem silenciados.”*

*Djamila Ribeiro*



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## Resumo

Esta dissertação analisa a cobertura da Política Externa Feminista (PEF) da Alemanha em jornais dos Estados-Membros da UE. A Suécia foi o primeiro país a adotar uma PEF em 2014. Desde então, outros países adotaram essa política, incluindo a Alemanha, em 2021. Entretanto, a Suécia abandonou a sua política externa centrada nos valores feministas. Consideramos a Alemanha um empreendedor de normas que pretende difundir os valores da PEF a outros países, utilizando a UE e outras organizações como plataformas para a sua promoção. Argumentamos que, uma vez que as normas não surgem no vácuo, as novas normas têm de ser entendidas como salientes, legítimas e coerentes para terem uma hipótese de serem aceites. Os media podem ter um papel relevante na construção de imagens externas das políticas externas. Ao definir uma agenda, os meios de comunicação social decidem quais assuntos são relevantes e, através do “enquadramento”, podem posicionar o assunto de forma favorável ou negativa, influenciando os leitores. Este estudo utiliza a análise temática como método para a investigação de 59 artigos de jornais de qualidade de 11 Estados-Membros da UE. Os resultados mostram que a PEF da Alemanha enfrenta desafios no que respeita à sua saliência nos jornais. O número de jornais que enquadraram a PEF como incoerente ou ilegítima é insignificante. Por conseguinte, de um modo geral, estes aspectos não constituem um desafio substancial para esta política. No entanto, os jornais que mais enquadraram a PEF como ilegítima são de países em que o feminismo é contestado.

*Palavras-chave:* Política Externa Feminista, Alemanha, União Europeia, media, difusão de normas





## **Abstract**

This dissertation examines the portrayal of Germany's Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP) in EU Member States' newspapers. Sweden was the first country to adopt an FFP in 2014. Since then, at least ten countries adopted such a policy, including Germany, in 2021. In the meantime, Sweden abandoned its foreign policy centred on feminist values. We, thus, consider Germany as a norm entrepreneur aiming to diffuse the values of the FFP to other countries by using the EU and other organisations as a platform for its promotion. We argue that as norms do not emerge in a vacuum, new norms must be seen at least as salient, legitimate, and coherent to have a chance of being accepted. Media can have a relevant role in constructing external images of foreign policies. By setting an agenda, the media decides which issues readers should discuss and think of and through "framing", media can position the issue favourably or negatively, influencing readers. This study utilises reflexive thematic analysis as a method for the analysis of 59 articles from quality newspapers from 11 EU member states. The results show that Germany's FFP faces challenges regarding its salience in newspapers. The number of newspapers that framed the FFP as incoherent or illegitimate is insignificant. Therefore, overall, these aspects do not pose a substantial challenge to that policy. Nonetheless, the newspapers which mainly framed the FFP as illegitimate are from countries in which feminism is contested.

*Keywords:* Feminist Foreign Policy, Germany, European Union, media, norm diffusion



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## Glossary of Acronyms

AfD	Alternative for Germany
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
FDP	Free Democrats Party
FFP	Feminist Foreign Policy
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and others
MS	Member States
SPD	Social Democratic Party
UKIP	United Kingdom Independence Party
UN	United Nations Security Council Resolution
WPS	Women, Peace, and Security



## Introduction

Traditionally, States and the academic field of International Relations focus on Realpolitik and forms of military security, which they consider as “high politics” in foreign policy, while positioning social policies - including those targeting gender equality and marginalised groups - as “low” or “domestic” politics (Achilleos-Sarll, 2018; Enloe, 2014; Tickner, 1992). Therefore, women’s advocacy groups’ ideas and actions can be overlooked due to the narrow understandings of “security”, “development”, “stability”, “crisis” (Enloe, 2014). Ignoring women's experiences leads to a process of self-selection that leads to an exclusively male population in the sphere of foreign policy and the academic subject of International Relations, in addition to contributing to their exclusion (Tickner, 1992).

According to Ann J. Tickner (1992), politics has for long been associated with masculinity. Traits linked with "manliness," including tenacity, independence, power, and even physical strength, have been highly regarded in the conduct of politics, especially international politics, exacerbating a gender dichotomy, and consequently creating hierarchies (Tickner, 1992).

Efforts to revert the inequality and underrepresentation of women in international relations have been taken in the past few decades (Aggestam & Bergman-Rosamond, 2016).

In order to protect women's sexual, reproductive, political, economic, and social rights, and eradicate gender-based violence, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was adopted in 1979 (United Nations, 1979). Moreover, the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS), adopted on 31 October 2000 was an important step in shedding light on gender inequality in the field of peace and security. The UNSCR 1325 “reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace-building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction and stresses the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security” (OSAGI, n.d.). The resolution calls on all actors to improve the representation of women and insert a gender perspective in all United Nations peace and security efforts. Additionally, it urges all parties to the conflict to take extra precautions to safeguard women and girls in armed conflict from gender-based violence, notably rape and other forms of sexual abuse (United Nations Security Council, 2000).

Regarding the State level, in 2014, Sweden was the first country to adopt a Foreign Policy labelled “Feminist”, with the stated ambition of becoming the “strongest voice for gender equality and full employment of human rights for all women and girls” (Government of Sweden, 2016 in Robinson, 2019). Former Foreign Minister Margot Wallström, at the time, described Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP) as a “feminist toolbox, which consists of three Rs: Representation, Rights, and Resources” (Rosamond, 2020, p.227). Many countries such as Canada (2017), France (2018), Luxembourg (2019), Mexico (2020), Spain (2021), Germany (2021), Lybia (2021), Chile (2022), and Colombia (2023) following this initiative, adopted or are developing FFPs (AchRAINER, 2022; Cancillería, 2023). In October 2022, however, Sweden’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, Tobias Billström, part of the new government composed of the Moderate Party, the Christian Democrats and the Liberal Party, announced that the pioneer country had abandoned its FFP (Thomas, 2022).

Aggestam and Bergman-Rosamond (2016) state that the FFP represents a normative reorientation of foreign policy. That foreign policy is guided by an ethically informed framework built on cosmopolitan norms of global justice and peace. Ethical cosmopolitanism is based on the idea that all human beings are members of a moral common space in which all citizens of other countries should enjoy the same rights (Rosamond, 2020). The adoption of an FFP by Sweden demonstrated Sweden’s role as a norm entrepreneur as it challenges normative frameworks through the intensification of existing gender norms (Sundström & Elgström, 2020).

At the end of the year 2021, the new coalition government of Germany – consisting of the centre-left Social Democratic Party (SPD), the Green Party, and the liberal, market- oriented Free Democrats Party (FDP) – announced, through their coalition agreement, that they would pursue a Feminist Foreign Policy (Die Bundesregierung, 2021). And on March 1st, 2023, the German Foreign Minister, Annalena Baerbock launched the long-awaited Feminist Foreign Policy guidelines, that seek to centralise gender equality and women’s rights in Germany’s external relations (Federal Foreign Office Guidelines, 2023).

Since Germany adopted an FFP, the country has already taken some initiatives with the objective of ensuring gender equality and human rights abroad. Internationally, the German representation, with the support of fifty partner-countries proposed in a Special Session of the Human Rights Council an independent investigative mechanism to assess human rights violations in the context of protests against the death of Mahsa Amini while in the custody of the Iranian morality police after being arrested for not wearing the hijab properly (Federal Foreign Office, 2022). In the European Union, Germany has advocated for the rapid imposition



of sanctions against responsible individuals for serious human rights violations in connection with the repression of protests in Iran (Deutscher Bundestag, 2023). Moreover, in the guidelines of the German Federal Foreign Office stated that they will initiate dialogue with the foreign ministers of the EU about incorporating a feminist orientation of the European foreign and security policy (Federal Foreign Office Guidelines, 2023).

Sundström et al. (2021) argue that for a policy promotion to have any chance of surviving and gaining traction, target communities must at the very least perceive it as salient, coherent and legitimate. These external perceptions can be drawn either from public opinion, from elites or even from media imagery. Since the news media disseminates views about foreign policy, they may play a big part in creating external impressions (Elgström & Chaban, 2015).

Based on these assumptions and considering Germany's efforts to spread the values of the FFP, this dissertation examines the portrayal of the salience, coherence and legitimacy of the German Feminist Foreign Policy in newspapers of EU member states. This study draws on the literature of norm diffusion and perceptions and Feminist International Relations Theory and brings a new country yet to be studied, aiming to answer the research question: *How is the German FFP portrayed by European Union Member States Press?*

This dissertation is composed of four chapters. The first chapter presents concepts and relevant research on Feminist Foreign Policy. Additionally, it exposes the arguments of influential authors of norm entrepreneurship and external perceptions. The second chapter explains the methodological framework developed to answer the research question. That chapter justifies the countries chosen and describes the data collection process, which consists of newspapers from 11 EU member states. Moreover, chapter two explains the operationalisation of the thematic analysis. The third chapter provides an overview of Germany's FFP following its guidelines document to give more context to the analysis. The fourth chapter consists of the presentation and analysis of the results. Finally, it concludes that Germany's FFP faces challenges mainly regarding its salience in newspapers. As few articles covered the FFP as incoherent, this aspect is not a threat to the perceived consistency of the FFP. Nonetheless, the chapter gives suggestions for improvement. Concerning legitimacy, a minority of newspapers from countries with discordant values framed the FFP as illegitimate.



## Literature Review

The present chapter aims to reveal the current state of research on Feminist Foreign Policy by covering arguments from different perspectives of influential authors. Moreover, it seeks to clarify concepts related to the pieces of literature on norm diffusion and perceptions. It consists of three sections: the first part shows the different debates around Feminist Foreign Policy, concluding that while some studies recognise the FFP as based on cosmopolitanism and norm diffusion, few studies have focused on the norm resistance perspective, which includes assessing external perceptions. The second elucidates the concept of norm and the importance of the norm entrepreneur. Finally, the third part shows the connection between perceptions and norm diffusion and the importance of the media as an intermediate.

### 1.1. Feminist Foreign Policy

The meaning of Feminist Foreign Policy has been debated without consensus.

Thompson and Clement (2019) provide a general definition of Feminist Foreign Policy to make up for the lack of agreement:

The policy of a state that defines its interactions with other states and movements in a manner that prioritizes gender equality and enshrines the human rights of women and other traditionally marginalized groups, allocates significant resources to achieve that vision, undertakes robust and public analysis to document the impacts of its implementation, and seeks through its implementation and reflection, to disrupt male-dominated power structures across all of its levers of influence (aid, trade, defense, and diplomacy), informed by the voices of feminist activists, groups and movements. (p.78)

Many feminist scholars have sought to locate the study of pro-gender foreign policy within an ethical framework (Aggestam et al., 2019; Aggestam & Bergman-Rosamond, 2016; Robinson, 2019; Rosamond, 2020). The debate is divided between authors who argue that FFP is based on universalism combined with the contextualisation of local specificities and needs (Aggestam et al., 2019; Aggestam & Bergman-Rosamond, 2016; Rosamond, 2020) and others that reject the transformative potential of the international order through a liberal cosmopolitanism (Robinson, 2019).

Karin Aggestam and Annika Bergman-Rosamond (2016), in their analysis of Sweden's Foreign Policy, argue that the adoption of an FFP is a radical policy change because, first, the adoption of the word “feminist” goes beyond the largely consensual orientation of gender mainstreaming towards more contentious politics, that aim to challenge power hierarchies and gendered institutions which guide foreign and security policies; second, it represents a normative reorientation of foreign policy, one that is governed by a framework that is ethically informed and founded on cosmopolitan norms of global justice and peace (Aggestam & Bergman-Rosamond, 2016). Ethical cosmopolitanism is based on the idea that all human beings are members of a moral common space in which all citizens of other countries should enjoy the same rights (Rosamond, 2020). Feminist Foreign Policy has, thus, the goal of challenging patriarchal power relations beyond its borders with the aim of protecting all human beings (Aggestam & Bergman-Rosamond, 2016; Rosamond, 2020).

The authors, however, point out challenges to Sweden's role as a promoter of FFP, such as inconsistencies between what is “preached” and what is put into practice. Because FFP is not only about representativeness, it also becomes more complicated to fulfil the transformative role it imposes, as a state's foreign policy involves a variety of policy options and trade-offs (Aggestam & Bergman-Rosamond, 2016). Sweden specifically has been criticised for heavy restrictions on migration that affect women and men in different ways, and for being one of the largest exporters of weapons that are often used to exert violence against women. (Aggestam & Bergman-Rosamond, 2016). According to Aggestam and Bergman-Rosamond (2016), these events cause a disparity between Sweden's self-perception and external perception.

In contrast to the association of Feminist Foreign Policy with soft normative power and the idea of it being incapable of addressing aggression, serious security concerns and threats posed by actors such as transnational terrorist organisations, Karin Aggestam and Annika Bergman-Rosamond (2016) argue that a state with an FFP can recur to hard power, and make use of military force in exceptional occasions, such as to guarantee the rights of men and women in combat areas. Hence, Feminist Foreign Policy supports pragmatism in the application of soft and hard power in an alternating manner when appropriate (Aggestam & Bergman-Rosamond, 2016).

Responding to the article of Aggestam and Bergman-Rosamond (2016), Fiona Robinson (2019) takes a critical stance and argues that liberal cosmopolitanism reproduces existing power relations, namely gendered power relations and liberal Western forms of domination. The

author believes that what makes feminist ethics ethical is not its relation to “universalism” but rather its concern with revealing the physical violence caused by constitutive gender binaries.

To illustrate her argument, Robinson (2019) examines the diplomatic crisis faced by Sweden, in 2015 and Canada, in 2018, with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, while both countries maintained arm deals with the latter. In 2015, Sweden’s Foreign Minister Wallström publicly criticized Saudi Arabia’s human rights record. On 2 August 2018, Canada’s Foreign Minister, Chrystia Freeland, showed support to female activists arrested by the Saudi government, including the sister of Raif Badawi, an activist who was arrested in 2012 and whose family members were made Canadian citizens in 2018. In both cases these actions were perceived as interference in Saudi Arabia’s domestic affairs, deteriorating the relations between the countries involved.

Robinson (2019), like Aggestam and Bergman-Rosamond (2016), points out the inconsistency between the adoption of a foreign policy based on feminist ethics and the arms trade, as the countries that import arms can use them to perpetuate gender-based violence. Furthermore, the author argues that the pronouncements of the Swedish and Canadian governments were inadequate due to the lack of context and relational positioning. Moreover, Robinson (2019) asserts that to express the morally corrupt nature of Saudi Arabia and its backwardness is to place Canada and Sweden as superior countries and contributes to erasing the agency of Saudi women. According to the author:

Blindness to this context, and to the agency and diversity of women within Saudi Arabia, reveals both racist logics and a tendency towards ‘culture-blaming’ that depoliticizes social problems and diverts attention away from the ways in which practices are supported and sustained by the structure of the global economy. (Robinson, 2019, p. 11)

She emphasises the idea that “the ethical” as “the universal” is unethical and reproduces hierarchies between states and their peoples and is based on a neocolonialist logic. The author believes that Feminist Foreign Policy “can be a critical, ethical alternative to *realpolitik* (including ‘hyper-masculine nationalism’), but not if it defines itself as a return to the neo-liberal, interventionist governmentalities of post-Cold War liberal internationalism” (Robinson, 2019, p. 2).

Therefore, Robinson (2019) proposes an approach based on moral psychology ethics and politics that consists of the idea of relationality of moral agents, and the importance of contextual moral judgement. The author presents a version of feminist foreign policy, based on “critical ethics of care”, that should not be imposed but must start locally from the will of men and women to resist patriarchy. Moreover, she suggests that states interrogate their roles on the

perpetuation of binary gender roles that oppose realism and idealism, order and justice, and masculinity and femininity.

Karin Aggestam, Annika Bergman Rosamond and Annica Kronsell (2019), in order to theorise feminist foreign policy, reformulate the idea of feminist foreign policy as ethics, using a gender lens based on Feminist International Relations Theory and ethics of care. Hence, they create a theoretical framework that is based on a relational ontology, in line with what is argued by Fiona Robinson (2019). The authors argue that FFP must consider the life experiences and contexts of women and other marginalised groups to whom it is directed. Still, the authors maintain the belief that Feminist Foreign Policy is sometimes pragmatic (Aggestam et al., 2019).

Columba Achilleos-Sarll (2018), in turn, combines two themes from International Relations literature - postcolonial feminism and post-positivist foreign policy analysis - to theorise the relationship between gender, sexuality, race and foreign policy. The author criticises conventional foreign policy analysis, according to which decision-making is considered to be the result of externally focused foreign policies with the intention of obtaining domestic interests. For her, this approach creates inequalities and a dichotomy of protector and protected, both in racial and sexual terms. Therefore, Achilleos-Sarll (2018) suggests a centralisation of intersectionality in foreign policy analysis, as it is not possible to understand gender in isolation, and it is necessary to analyse gender in conjunction with other social categories, such as race, ethnicity, and sexuality, to expose oppression within these groups. Furthermore, she emphasises the need for states to recognise the colonial past as the root of inequalities, with this act having a transformative power in the power relations of the International System, stating that putting more women in positions of power is not enough.

Other scholars discursively analyse how states that have adopted the Feminist Foreign Policy represent it and give meaning to this term. Instead of focusing on what Feminist Foreign Policy should be, they analyse what it has been so far.

Rosamond (2020) utilises a discursive analysis of Sweden's FFP, which she argues is based on its state feminist tradition and its efforts of "gender cosmopolitanism". "Gender cosmopolitanism" is the label used by the author to define the cosmopolitan care of the FFP for vulnerable girls and women of other countries (Rosamond, 2020, p. 218). The author finds that the language presenting Sweden's gender cosmopolitanism is not intersectional as it does not include other categories such as age, ethnicity, and sexual orientation, privileging women, thus limiting the universalism of cosmopolitanism. Furthermore, she states that the reason for the limited conceptualisation of gender is that Sweden's cosmopolitanism is not based on or a desire

to fully transform the international order, but rather to do so in a limited way, as states believe they can bring welfare to citizens beyond their borders. To this end, states reframe the moral prerogative of the national interest through a “cosmopolitan-informed norm entrepreneurship, expressed in the adoption of FFP” (Rosamond, 2020, p. 225). In addition, Rosamond discovers that the language used to advocate pro-gender norms in the FFP is located within a discursive blend of liberal and social democratic ideological language. This language is used to support the economic empowerment of women as a way of achieving gender equality. According to the author, although the policy documents barely engage with postcolonial critiques of Western feminism, Sweden’s FFP guidelines show some understanding of the importance of the dialogue with local women’s organisations. Thus, she concludes that it is difficult to comprehend what kind of feminism Sweden wanted to pursue.

Katarzyna Jezierska and Ann Towns (2018) analyse the insertion of gender equality into Swedish identity from 1990 to the present day using the qualitative method of discourse analysis. The brand of Sweden is based on progressive values, including messages about the environment, equality, inclusiveness, and innovation. Whereas gender equality is present in all documents on nation branding, LGBT rights feature less prominently (Jezierska & Towns, 2018). The authors argue that the brand “Progressive Sweden”, despite not having an androcentric narrative and not sexualising women, represents Sweden as a unified actor, which does not correspond to reality as domestic opposition and diversity are not mentioned. Despite mentioning gender equality, the nation’s branding discourse does not include “feminist foreign policy”, in its generality, due to the association of the word “feminist” with antagonism between different domestic actors (Jezierska & Towns, 2018). Additionally, on February 19, 2017, Donald Trump, president of the United States, expressed concerns about Sweden acceptance of refugees, arguing they were having problems with refugee people and Swedish women. As nothing had happened, the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs contacted the White House and realized that Trump statement was a result of misinformation circulating among right-wing populists involving stories of rape and threats to Swedish women’s rights. The former leader of the UK right-wing populist party UKIP, Nigel Farage, joined Trump and declared that Sweden was the “rape capital of Europe” due to its immigration policy (Jezierska & Towns, 2018, p. 84). Therefore, Jezierska and Towns (2018) argue that associating gender equality with the state brand can be erroneously interpreted as “Swedish values threatened by immigration” by nationalists.

Jennifer Thomson (2020) also uses discourse analysis to uncover the meaning of feminism used to formulate Canada's and Sweden's Feminist Foreign Policies, distinguishing two categories: feminism co-opted for neoliberal economic ends and critical, transformative feminism. Thomson (2020) argues that Sweden's FFP aims to centralise gender equality in its domestic and external commitments and interests, interpreting the Feminist Foreign Policy as an end in itself, while Canada emphasises the private sector. According to Thomson (2020), Sweden sees systemic gender inequalities as the problem and FFP as the solution, while Canada sees poverty as the problem and FFP as the solution, believing that empowering women will make them useful in eradicating poverty. Thus, for Sweden, gender equality is an end in itself to be achieved through FFP in contrast to Canada which considers gender equality as a means to achieve the end of poverty (Thomson, 2020). Ekatherina Zhukova, Malena Rosén and Ole Elgström (2022) come to a similar conclusion in their more complex analysis, a comparative study between Sweden, Canada, France and Mexico, on the strategic adoption of international feminist norms to increase soft power. The comparison considers three types of strategic narratives (thematic, national, and international system) and two types of feminism (liberal and intersectional). The analysis of thematic narratives exposes that Sweden and Mexico overemphasise social policies in contrast to France and Canada. The FFP of France and Canada underline the role of the market and women's economic empowerment, suggesting an instrumentalisation of gender equality to accelerate economic growth (Zhukova et al., 2022).

Some studies highlight the implementation of foreign policy in the area of digital diplomacy (Aggestam et al., 2022; Jeziarska, 2022).

As claimed by Aggestam, Rosamond and Hedling (2022), states increasingly take advantage of social media to project their national identities, preferences, and normative values, increasing their influence outside their borders. In light of this, the authors advance the concept of feminist digital diplomacy, which states use to project their commitment to gender equality. Based on the role of digital diplomacy in projecting the interests of states, Katarzyna Jeziarska (2022) investigates Sweden's Twitter activity on gender equality since the adoption of the Feminist Foreign Policy to understand how it is implemented through digital diplomacy. Thus, the author analyses tweets published by the Swedish embassy directed at Poland and Hungary, countries where feminism is contested, and responses to tweets from the permanent mission.

Drawing theoretically on discursive approaches to the spoken and unspoken and using a feminist lens, Jeziarska (2022) examines how the content of the posts is articulated and also



analyses what is not said in posts, i.e. silence, which is understood as a discursive act. The method used is qualitative and quantitative content analysis. The author concludes that FFP has not impacted digital diplomacy and posts related to gender equality have decreased since 2014. A possible explanation for this is the intention to purposely avoid addressing controversial topics in these countries, such as feminism, gender equality and LGBT rights (Jeziarska, 2022). Several comments were found with xenophobic and patronising language aimed at attacking Sweden, which proves the expectation that online humiliation and silencing are also directed at those who take a feminist stance that challenges gender hierarchies, to whom embassies have also strategically decided to remain silent to show disapproval (Jeziarska, 2022). The author states that “these findings force us to rethink the optimistic assumptions about the democratizing potential of digital diplomacy” (Jeziarska, 2022, p. 86).

However, this analysis cannot be generalised to all digital diplomacy because first, only two embassies are analysed and second, the content analysis covers only one social media. Aggestam et al. (2022), on the other hand, take a more comprehensive approach in which they empirically analyse the change in Sweden's foreign policy and digital diplomacy performance between 2006 and 2020. The authors collect data from annual foreign policy statements of the Swedish government, public strategy documents, press releases informing Swedish foreign policy and the role of digital diplomacy, and data published on the official websites of the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In addition, they analyse the official Youtube, Twitter and Facebook accounts of the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, searching for feminist hashtags such as #feministforeignpolicy and hashtags related to other initiatives (Aggestam et al., 2022). Aggestam et al. (2022) posit that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs played a key role in creating online campaigns that attracted global attention. Accordingly, contrary to Jeziarska (2022), the authors conclude that Sweden's active role in projecting its feminist ideas through social media led to the strengthening of the feminist narrative and offered the opportunity for a new way to communicate this commitment with greater reach, stating that Swedish embassies globally used hashtags and actively communicated the FFP (Aggestam et al., 2022).

Other studies focus on the role of the state as a diffuser of norms (Sundström & Elgström, 2020) and norm translators (Zhukova et al., 2022).

According to Malena Rosén Sundström and Ole Elgström (2020), the Feminist Foreign Policy demonstrates Sweden's role as a norm entrepreneur – the concept will be developed in the next section of this chapter – by challenging normative frameworks through the

intensification of existing gender norms. As norm takers are not passive actors and may resist the adoption of a norm, the authors investigate EU Member States (MS) perceptions of the legitimacy, coherence and effectiveness of FFP to assess the impact of this foreign policy (Sundström & Elgström, 2020). The authors base the study on questionnaires and interviews with diplomats from the EU permanent representations. According to the analysis, in general, MS support Sweden's FFP. Nevertheless, there is some scepticism, with negative opinions coming from Eastern/Central and Southern European countries, which consider the FFP a radical policy.

Taking an approach based on theories of norm translation and strategic narrative, Ekatherina Zhukova, Malena Rosén and Ole Elgström (2022) claim that states translate international feminist norms into their national specificities by constructing strategic narratives that, in turn, increase their soft power. Regarding Feminist Foreign Policy, through the comparative analysis between Sweden, Canada, France and Mexico, the authors conclude that it is not interpreted by states in the same way, having different characteristics (Zhukova et al., 2022).

The research on Feminist Foreign Policy proves that not only do scholars interpret and define FFP in different ways, but also States adapt or “translate” feminist norms to their contexts, producing unique foreign policies by drawing on different kinds of feminisms. Despite the diversity of approaches in the study of Feminist Foreign Policy, the almost consensual idea that FFP has the objective of spreading gender equality norms to other countries stands out, either in a disinterested way or to gain legitimacy, form a unique brand or increase its soft power. However, few studies have centred on the perception of the states to which norm entrepreneurs want to disseminate the norm. Thus, it is interesting to analyse the debates within the literature on norm entrepreneurship or norm diffusion and the links between this literature and ideas about the role of states' perceptions in predicting norm receptivity.

## **1.2. Norm Entrepreneurship**

In a generic sense, norm is defined as the collective (social) expectations of appropriate behaviour for actors with a given identity (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998; Katzenstein, 1996; Klotz 1995 as cited in Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998).

Concerned with international and regional norms that establish standards for proper behaviour, Finnemore and Sikkink (1998), underline the role of norm entrepreneurs in the

construction of norms. According to the authors, “Norms do not appear out of thin air; they are actively built by agents having strong notions about appropriate or desirable behavior in their community.” (p. 896). Norm entrepreneurs are actors that have the compulsion of “moral proselytism”, that is, the desire to persuade others to share their ideas (Nadelmann, 1990). In order to draw attention to an issue, norm entrepreneurs interpret and dramatize that issue, through the adaptation of the language, which is called “framing” (Sikkink & Finnemore, 1998; Snow et al. 1986 as cited in Sikkink & Finnemore, 1998), as “new norms never enter a normative vacuum but instead emerge in a highly contested normative space where they must compete with other norms and perceptions of interest” (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998, p. 897).

Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink (1998) assert that constructivist theory, similar to other theories of International Relations, explains stability better than change, and therefore make an attempt to introduce a dynamic perspective to the foundations of norm constructivist thinking. The authors present the idea that norms evolve in a “life cycle”, combining “rationality” that is illustrated through the adoption of norms to strategic narratives of certain states. The life cycle of the norm is composed of three phases: the first is the emergence of the norm; the second called “norm cascade” refers to the phase in which the norm has been widely accepted; and the third phase is the internalisation of the norm (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). The first and second phases are divided by a tipping point, where a significant number of relevant actors adopt the norm (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). According to the authors, in each phase the actors, motives and mechanisms of influence vary. In the first phase, the mechanism of influence is persuasion carried out by norm entrepreneurs. The second phase is characterised by imitation caused by norm leaders trying to convince or “socialize” other states to follow the norm. The factors driving states to adopt the norm may be the pressure to conform, the aim to increase international legitimacy and the desire of the leading states to increase their self-esteem. In the third and final phase, the norm is no longer subject of contestation (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). Throughout the phases, norm entrepreneurs need an organisational platform on the international level where they can promote and institutionalise the new norms. The authors, nevertheless, draw attention to the fact that the cycle is not always completed, since there are norms that are not successful and do not reach the final stage of internationalisation.

The literature on norm diffusion in the field of International Relations often considers non-state actors as entrepreneurial agents. Davies and True (2017) ) state that scholars, usually, treat the State as the “authoritative decision-making” actor, whose role is solely to turn new norms into law, based on the idea that the most important characteristic of a norm entrepreneurs is to

have a non-interested moral agency instead of being affiliated to global politics (Davies & True, 2017). However, the authors argue that states can also be norm entrepreneurs. While non-state actors set the agenda by advocating for new norms, foreign policy decision-makers can use their position and relative power to enhance certain norms by redefining the “national interest”, what it encompasses, and what it means (Aggestam & True, 2020; Davies & True, 2017).

To demonstrate the role of states as norm entrepreneurs, Sara E. Davies and Jacqui True (2017) analyse the case of the former British foreign secretary, Mr. William Hague. Mr. Hague reframed the norm prohibiting the use of sexual violence in conflict, which had been established for more than a decade, as a threat to national and international peace and security (Davies & True, 2017). The authors draw from the literature on policy diffusion four conditions of norm entrepreneurship: 1) the need to reframe the national interest; 2) the positionality of the norm entrepreneur 3) the use of networks and policy apparatus to advance the promotion of the norm; 4) the ability to take advantage of political opportunities to establish the norm, and relate the case of William Hague to each of these conditions (Davies & True, 2017).

Annika Björkdahl (2007, 2008) explores norm entrepreneurship as a foreign policy strategy for small states. Björkdahl (2007) claims that normative power is at the base of norm entrepreneurship as a foreign policy strategy, as small states try to compensate for their lack of material power, which is traditionally associated with influence. The author argues that since Nordic states, especially Sweden, do not have enough natural, military, economic, or other resources to have an influence on global peace and security, but have political capital, moral authority, and ability of norm construction, they can pursue normative power through norm entrepreneurship (Björkdahl, 2007, 2008). Moreover, the author asserts that norm entrepreneurs need an international organisation where they can change ideas, use their norm advocacy strategies and build coalitions (Björkdahl, 2007). Therefore, the author analyses the Swedish promotion of conflict prevention in the United Nations (2007) and in the European Union (EU, 2008). In the case of the UN, Sweden used norm advocacy based on unidirectional communication through speeches and interactive communication consisting of coalition building and teaching in the UN General Assembly and the Security Council (when Sweden was a member in 1997-1998). Similarly, in the arena of the EU, to insert the issue of conflict prevention in the agenda, Sweden made use of persuasive instruments such as coalition building through informal meetings with like-minded member states, such as Denmark and Norway, and representatives from the Commission and Council Secretariat; “framing”, an instrument to

make the norm fit the existing normative context; and used its Presidency of the Council of the EU. Annika Björkdahl (2007) concludes that this strategy of norm promotion may be successful if adopted by states that despite being short of hard power capabilities, have moral authority, have a solid international reputation, can “practice what they preach”, have credibility and are capable of persuading others.

Whereas there is a vast literature covering norm entrepreneurs and their tactics to persuade, and the processes of norm diffusion, the same cannot be said about the literature addressing norm resistance.

Elgström (2000) combines a constructivist approach to norm diffusion and a negotiation perspective to trace the policy process from agenda-setting until implementation, to shed light on how gender and development norms were adopted in the European Union. According to the authors, as new norms struggle to enter institutional thought, they are translated rather than imitated. This translation is a process of negotiation since it involves promises, common goals, and rival ambitions. Gender entrepreneurs in the EU, for instance, were confronted with traditional norms like economic growth, therefore, while accepting the importance of gender equality, there was a struggle on the level of commitment in the text negotiations and implementation (Elgstrom, 2000).

Amitav Acharya (2004), taking into account that local norms are part of the normative order and criticising the idea that global norms always prevail over local norms, focuses on the agency of local actors, arguing that norm-adopting states can “localise” a norm. Hence, they can reconstruct the norm so that it fits local specificities and identities, performing acts of resistance, rather than just entirely accepting, or rejecting a norm. According to the author, the mechanism of “localisation” goes beyond “framing”, which can make a global norm appear local, and the tactic of “grafting”, in which norm entrepreneurs, to institutionalize a norm, associate the new norm with a preexisting norm. Whereas grafting and framing are acts of reinterpretation, “localisation” is an act of reconstruction. However, localisation can recur to discourse, framing, grafting and cultural selection to construct a norm that fits the local context (Acharya, 2004).

Malena Rosén Sundström, Ekatherina Zhukova and Ole Elgström (2021) argue that for a policy promotion to have any chance of surviving and gaining traction, target communities must at the very least perceive it as salient, coherent and legitimate. Based on this, the authors analyse external perceptions of Sweden’s Feminist Foreign Policy in international newspapers of Western and non-Western countries. The authors conclude that Sweden’s FFP faced challenges

regarding the salience of the FFP as the publications paid little attention to the content of the FFP. Moreover, when coherence was addressed, it was frequently in a negative manner and on some cases of perceived incoherence, such as selling weapons to countries that oppress women, contributed to question the legitimacy of the FFP. Additionally, the misconception of the meaning of “feminism” created a challenge to promote the FFP in contexts where governments are not already known for supporting feminist values. Sundström et al. argue that the context of Swedish domestic gender equality when reported in a positive way (especially in Western countries), can have a positive impact on the FFP abroad.

### **1.2.1. Perceptions and norm diffusion**

Robert Jervis (1976) argues that the responses of a state to another partly depend on how that state sees the other. Moreover, actors select strategies and make judgements based on their political worldviews, which include images of themselves and relevant “others” (Elgström & Chaban, 2015). In international politics, it is common for leaders to consistently reject new norms or facts and oppose shifting their core beliefs (Stein, 2002). Therefore, the analysis of other states’ perceptions of a country’s Foreign Policy is essential because it contributes to our understanding of the roles of that country internationally and sheds light on how the roles of that state impact others (Elgström & Chaban, 2015). The way by which an actor is perceived by others is tied to its success in the international arena (Lucarelli, 2013; Lucarelli & Fioramonti, 2010).

In a critical study regarding the effectiveness of EU’s climate policies and external perceptions, Diarmuid Torney (2014) argues that “the question of how external perceptions enable or constrain effectiveness is not straightforward or automatic. Instead, the effect is mediated through the specificities of particular policy areas and international negotiating arenas” (p.2). Although noting that external perceptions are not the only and the most relevant explanatory factor of effectiveness, Ole Elgström (2015), through the analysis of the EU in climate change negotiations, establishes a connection between the EU perceived legitimacy and credibility and the attitudes (positive or negative) of other countries towards EU policies, translating into the EU influence.

For a policy promotion to have any chance of surviving and gaining tractions, a number of preconditions must be fulfilled – it must be at the very least perceived as salient, coherent, and legitimate (Elgström & Chaban, 2015; Sundström et al., 2021). In these terms, positive external

perception is understood as a necessary but not sufficient condition of foreign policy effectiveness.

According to Ole Elgström and Natalia Chaban (2015), external perceptions can be drawn either from public opinion, or from elites or even from media imagery. The news media can have a significant role in constructing external images, as they spread ideas on foreign policy, and they are positioned in the intersection of flows of information between elites and the public (Elgström & Chaban, 2015).





## CHAPTER 2

# Methodology

The literature on Feminist Foreign Policy has been growing since the adoption of the FFP by Sweden in 2014. Nevertheless, only the experience of a few states has been investigated. The research focuses mainly on Sweden (e.g. Sundström & Elgström, 2020; Sundström et al., 2021; Jezierska, 2022; Aggestam et al., 2019; Aggestam & Bergman-Rosamond, 2016; Aggestam et al., 2022; Rosamond, 2020; Jezierska & Towns, 2018, Thomson, 2020), some others address Canada (e.g. Aggestam et al., 2019; Robinson, 2019; Thomson, 2020). There are residual studies on the other at least ten countries that officially adopted a feminist foreign policy (see Zhukova et al., 2022). Yet, there is no academic research on the case of Germany.

It is pertinent to look at the case of Germany because since its adoption of the FFP, it has already taken some initiatives aiming at gender equality and ensuring human rights. Internationally, the German representation, backed by fifty partner-countries proposed in a Special Session of the Human Rights Council an independent investigative mechanism to assess human rights violations in the context of protests against the death of Mahsa Amini while in the custody of the Iranian morality police after being arrested for not wearing the hijab properly (Federal Foreign Office, 2022). In the realm of the European Union, Germany has advocated for the rapid imposition of sanctions against responsible individuals for serious human rights violations in connection with the repression of protests in Iran (Deutscher Bundestag, 2023). Moreover, as Sweden, the pioneer of the FFP, abandoned its feminist approach to foreign policy, Germany could be trying to fill the gap left of promoter of gender equality in the Union.

Therefore, this dissertation is designed to answer the following research question: *How is the German FFP portrayed by European Union Member States Press?*

Drawing on the literature on Feminist Foreign Policy, norm diffusion, and perceptions, combined with Feminist International Relations theory, this dissertation contributes to the discussion by looking at a case study yet to be explored. Moreover, the analysis of the portrayal of the German FFP in EU member states' media to assess its salience, coherence and legitimacy add a different perspective to the literature.

Mass media has a significant role in the diffusion of norms through the legitimisation of norm entrepreneurs and their ideas, as stated by Joshi and O'Deal (2017). The amount of

information in a news article and the position of the media inform readers not just about a particular topic, but also how much significance to assign to that topic (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Setting an "agenda" allows the media to decide which problems are crucial for the reader to think about. According to McCombs and Shaw (1972) readers acquire information from the mass media in proportion to the emphasis the mass media set on certain issues. Reputable press is believed to “possess a heightened ability to influence images of and attitudes to the EU among the general public, as well as impact other media and foreign policy making” (Elgström & Chaban, 2015, p. 28).

This is particularly interesting to our analysis because, through examination of the media, we can see which opinions and the kind of information related to the German FFP the population and policy makers of EU Member States are absorbing.

## **2.1. Methodological Framework**

The selection of countries to conduct our media analysis includes countries with different level of gender equality and respect of women’s rights, according to the Gender Equality Index<sup>1</sup>, and excludes countries that already have a feminist foreign policy. The selection consists of five countries with a score above the EU average of 68.6 and six countries with a score below. The choice of countries was also based on geographical diversity within Europe. The EU Member States which make part of the selection are Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Austria, Belgium, Portugal, Greece, Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, and Italy.

For each country, were selected the two major quality newspapers based on BBC Media Guides, which publishes the most popular newspapers and describes them mainly as “daily”, “weekly”, and “tabloid”<sup>2</sup>. The newspapers were accessed both through PressReader and through their website in their online version. As the newspapers were accessed through PressReader preferentially, when the platform did not provide access to the two leading newspapers, the next on the list would be selected, if available. If there was no alternative quality newspaper, the order would be respected, and the newspaper would be consulted through its website, except when there were difficulties on accessing the articles. The articles were translated by the author with the tool DeepL an Artificial Intelligence powered translator.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2022/EU>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/topics/c207p54mlzpt>

**Table 2.1.1. Selected newspapers per country**

<b>Country (= articles)</b>	<b>Newspapers (= articles)</b>
Denmark (= 6)	Jylands-Posten (= 1) Politiken (= 5)
Finland (= 6)	Helsingin Sanomat (= 3) Hufvudstadsbladet (= 3)
Ireland (= 5)	The Irish Times (= 3) The Irish Independent (= 2)
Austria (= 9)	Die Presse (= 4) Der Standard (= 5)
Belgium (= 4)	De Standaard (= 2) Het Nieuwsblad (= 2)
Portugal (= 2)	Público (= 1) Diário de Notícias (= 1)
Greece (= 5)	Kathimerini (= 0) Ta Nea (= 5)
Czech Republic (= 7)	Lidove Noviny (= 6) Mlada Fronta Dnes (= 1)
Poland (= 2)	Gazeta Wyborcza (= 2) Rzeczpospolita (= 0)
Hungary (= 10)	Magyar Hirlap (= 9) Nepszava (= 1)
Italy (= 3)	Corriere della Sera (= 1) Il Fatto Quotidiano (= 2)
59 articles in total	

The keywords used for searching the news articles were “Germany Feminist Foreign Policy” in the language of each newspaper and “Annalena Baerbock” as she is the leader of the German Federal Foreign Office. The body of the articles selected had to refer to the Feminist Foreign Policy, even if it did not contain the word “feminist”. The time gap used to filter the results was between 1 November 2021 - the month of the announcement of the FFP- and 31

July 2023. The selection also included opinion articles. Although opinion articles do not necessarily represent the newspaper perspective, it can be useful as readers can still formulate evaluations of the FFP based on those articles.

This research utilises Reflexive Thematic Analysis as a method. Thematic Analysis (TA) consists of developing, analysing, and reporting patterns of shared meaning or themes within the qualitative data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019). It involves systematic data coding procedures to produce themes, which are the basis for the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021). To that end, we follow the six phases of thematic analysis proposed first by Braun & Clarke (2006) and reformulated later as: 1) “Familiarising yourself with the dataset”; 2) “Coding”; 3) “Generating initial themes”; 4) “Developing and reviewing themes”; 5) “Refining, defining and naming themes”; 6) “writing up [the report]” (Braun & Clarke, 2021, pp. 35–36). Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke (2021) named their version of TA “Reflexive Thematic Analysis” because they stress the importance of the subjective, reflexive, questioning, situated researcher to the TA. They add that “Themes do not simply ‘emerge’ from the data (...) Rather, the researcher makes active, interpretative choices in generating codes and in constructing themes” (Clarke & Braun, 2014, p. 1948).

As reflexive TA is a flexible method that can generate different results, it is important to reveal our approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2021). Our analysis is both inductive or “bottom-up” and deductive or “top-down”. Whereas in inductive analysis, the themes generated derive from the data, in deductive analysis, the themes are theoretically informed and driven by the researcher’s theoretical or analytic interest (Braun & Clarke, 2006). While the deductive analysis is informed by the concepts of salience, legitimacy and coherence developed below, the inductive analysis derives from the patterns found in the data, which, in turn, is analysed using Feminist International Relations theory and norm diffusion, addressed in the literature review section, as a lens. Furthermore, we analyse both the semantic meanings, i.e. the explicit meanings at the surface of the data, and the latent significances, at the more implicit or underlying level. These different approaches are not mutually exclusive and are, usually, points on a spectrum (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

To manage the coding process, we recur to Delve, a Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS).

### **2.1.1. Limitations**

We encountered some difficulties while gathering the articles because when they were not available on the PressReader platform, the online version of the newspaper often required a subscription to have access to the articles. In some cases, it was possible to benefit from free trials, on other occasions, when the subscription had a symbolic price, the subscription was paid. When there was none of those options, we had to search for another newspaper.

## **2.2. Theoretical framework for coding**

Following Sundström, Zhukova and Elgström (2021) who argued that a norm must be at least perceived as salient, legitimate, and coherent, we deductively created themes around these concepts.

Media outlets engage in a process of “framing” which consists of “selecting and highlighting some facets of events or issues and making connections among them so as to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation, and/or solution” (Entman, 2004, p. 5).

According to Sundström et al. (2021), salience refers to the importance and prominence given to a particular issue. Based on the theory of media framing by Entman, Chaban and Elgström (2021), interpret salience in relation to three frames: visibility, cultural resonance, and emotive charge, since

Issues endowed with higher visibility and emotive profiles, while addressing priorities defined by local discourses, involving local key actors and resonating with historically informed socio-cultural norms and values will project a message of higher salience for the consumers of political communications (Chaban & Elgström, 2021, p. 147). We operationalised visibility in the analysis according to the number of articles addressing it in each country, the centrality of the FFP in each article and how it is addressed in the articles. For example, if an article included a more complete definition – had long or multiple paragraphs and gave examples – of the FFP, it would be coded as having a high level of visibility. On the other hand, if it did not mention the FFP explicitly, it would be coded as having a low level of visibility. Cultural resonance is evaluated regarding the association of the FFP to the local context, culture, and discourses. According to Entman (2004) the frames which have more cultural resonance have more potential for influence as “they use words and images highly salient in the culture, which is to say noticeable, understandable, memorable, and emotionally charged.” (p. 6).

Legitimacy is a “generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs and definitions” (Suchman, 1995, p. 574). We focus on normative legitimacy which indicates “whether the norms an actor pursues, or is associated with, are regarded as ‘right’, just and appropriate” (Elgström & Chaban, 2015, p. 21).

The level of legitimacy of the FFP depends on the tone towards the Feminist Foreign. If the tone is negative, we consider the level of perceived legitimacy to be low and conversely. Acknowledging that newspapers often do not overtly evaluate certain events, we rely on the concept of “framing” by Entman (2004) to assess which facets of events related to the FFP are highlighted and selected. Substantive frames consist of at least two of the following actions in covering political issues, events and actors: defining effects or conditions as problematic, identifying causes, conveying a moral judgment, and endorsing solutions or improvements (Entman, 2004). Based on this concept, we interpret the frames as in favour or against the FFP. When the articles portray the FFP favourably, the FFP is deemed to have a high level of perceived legitimacy. When they cover the FFP in negative frames, the FFP is considered as having a low level of perceived legitimacy. Furthermore, I also follow the theory of spreading activation, which emphasises the importance of the sequence in which the articles present information since “First impressions may be difficult to dislodge” (Entman, 2004, p.7).

Finally, Coherence here consists of four dimensions: horizontal, chronological and implementation coherence. Horizontal coherence refers to the consistency of foreign policy actions of different government actors (Mayer, 2016), for instance, the Federal Foreign Office, the Federal Ministry of Defence, and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development in the case of Germany. Chronological coherence is associated with the consistency of behaviour of an actor over time (Elgström, 2015). Lastly, implementation coherence means consistency between the narrative and actions of an actor (Elgström, 2015).

## Germany's Feminist Foreign Policy

Before proceeding to the presentation of the results and discussion of the thematic analysis of the portrayal of the German FFP in EU member states' newspapers, it is pertinent to clarify the orienting principles of this foreign policy.

The German official guidelines document (Federal Foreign Office Guidelines, 2023) says that Feminist Foreign Policy is based on the idea that all people have the same rights and must enjoy equal opportunities and freedoms. Germany's FFP, therefore, aims at fostering such equality level.

Despite the document first describing FFP as an end in itself, it also lists several reasons for adopting such an approach. Accordingly, societies are more prosperous and peaceful if all people can equally integrate social, economic, and political life. In addition, when decision-making on security policy is inclusive, peace and security are more durable. The same is true about economic development.

The German FFP is intersectional by principle as it seeks equality for women and marginalised groups based on gender identity, origin, religion, disability, and sexual orientation.

Following in Sweden's footsteps, the German FFP is based on Rights, Representation and Resources.

It advocates for the rights of women and vulnerable groups and equitable participation of women and marginalized groups in foreign policy. The German Federal Foreign Office aims to overcome the low percentage of 35% women in the Germany's parliament and the 27% missions abroad led by women. Moreover, the German FFP advocates for equitable access for women and other disadvantaged groups to all resources, including monetary, human, and natural resources as well as intangible ones like networks and education. Hence, by 2025 Germany's Federal Foreign Office aims to allocate 85% of project funding on a gender-sensitive basis and 8% on a gender-transformative basis.

Furthermore, the German version of the FFP is not entirely pacifist. According to Germany's FFP guidelines, Russia's war against Ukraine, in 2023, demonstrated the need for the protection

of human lives by military means. Therefore, the German FFP combines principles and pragmatism. The German foreign and security policy has at its core gender equity and human security, which, according to the document “makes it an essential component of values-led foreign policy” (Federal Foreign Office Guidelines, 2023, p. 13).

Its official guidelines will be central to every aspect of Germany’s foreign policy, from its policy to the European Union to the United Nations. According to the document, for its implementation to be coherent, they are coordinated with the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. The Federal Foreign Office also strives to work in cooperation with other ministries such as the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action, the Federal Ministry of Defence, and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development.

In the realm of the European Union, Germany will make efforts to include a stronger feminist approach to the Union’s Foreign and Security Policy.



## Findings and discussion

This chapter presents the findings and discussion based on the thematic analysis of the coverage of Germany's Feminist Foreign Policy in newspapers of EU Member States. This analysis aims at answering the research question: *How is the German FFP portrayed by European Union Member States Press?*

### 4.1. Saliency

The theme "Saliency" shows if and how the FFP was made visible in the newspapers analysed, concerning visibility, cultural resonance, and emotional charge linked to its coverage.

As explained in the methodology chapter, visibility is evaluated according to the number of articles per country, the centrality of the FFP in each article and how complete the FFP definition is.

Being that the corpus selection for this thesis comprises 59 newspaper articles from 11 countries, the average is around 5 articles per country. We acknowledged that our sample is small, compared to the average of 9 articles per country from the study by Sundström et al. (2021) of the perceptions of Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy through the analysis of international and non-Western media. Nevertheless, while the referred study covers the period from September 2014 to December 2019, the period on which the present research is based runs from November 2021 to July 2023, hence shorter than that of Sundström et al. (2021). Therefore, we argue that 5 articles per country is an acceptable number.

When it comes to the focus of the meaning of the FFP, most articles – precisely 32 – did not mention explicitly Germany's Feminist Foreign Policy. In those cases, the articles mentioned the foreign policy initiatives taken by Germany, or episodes related to it, which are based on the values that compose the FFP, albeit without connecting them to the FFP: "*German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock on Thursday criticised the 'cruel attack on brave women' which she said 'offends humanity'*" (Magyar Hirlap, 22/09/2022). Another example was the coverage on Germany's priority of evacuating women's and girls from Afghanistan in the context of the humanitarian crisis: "*Germany intends to intensify evacuations from the country. According to the foreign minister, the priority is especially women and girls and the 15,000 people that Germany did not have time to evacuate in the autumn operation*" (Helsingin Sanomat 23/12/2021).

In other cases, newspapers referred to the FFP as “value-based” foreign policy or foreign policy based on “human rights”: *“On Monday, meanwhile, Green cabinet ministers, who promised “value-based foreign policy”, experienced realpolitik hangover over a deal to end Russian gas dependency by cosyng up instead to Qatar.”* (The Irish Times, 21/03/2022). The articles that did not mention the FFP explicitly did not contribute to the salience of the FFP, as readers would not associate initiatives aiming to protect women and human rights with the FFP unless they already knew the FFP from other sources.

Other newspapers articles (27) explicitly mentioned the FFP and/or presented a comprehensive definition of the FFP:

The guidelines for the feminist foreign policy were presented last month. “The basic idea is that we make the rights and representation of women and marginalised groups a priority and also allocate the necessary resources. For example, 85 percent of the funding up to 2025 will be allocated in such a way that women and marginalised groups are taken into account,” says Anna Lührmann.

Within the Foreign Ministry and at German embassies and representations, a “feminist reflex” is being developed, she explains.

“Employees from all over the world are approaching us with ideas on how we can put a more feminist angle on EU issues, for example. In this way, feminist foreign policy fundamentally shapes our priorities and our view of the world”, says Anna Lührmann (Politiken, 19/04/2023)

Articles that defined the FFP and exposed its content had a more significant contribution to the salience of the FFP because readers could acquire more information about the FFP. However, even articles that only mentioned the name “Feminist Foreign Policy” but did not explain it can still be considered contributing to the salience of the FFP, despite its limitedness, as readers could learn about the existence of that foreign policy. Some articles, in addition to mentioning the FFP, illustrate how it is implemented so that feminist values are central to every aspect of foreign policy, including its activities of development aid. To highlight that effort, some articles (4) reported that when decisions as simple as choosing where to locate a toilet in a village are to be taken, according to FFP principles, the ministries should consult women. *“If*

*German money is used to build a toilet in a Nigerian village, the women should also be asked where it should be located, says Baerbock.*” (Die Presse, 08/03/2023).

There were different ways in which the articles framed the FFP.

Some newspapers gave voice to relevant actors in the FFP field. For instance, they gave Kristina Lunz, the co-founder of the Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy, the opportunity to explain the FFP in interviews (3 articles); Anna Lührmann, Minister of State at the Federal Foreign Office was also interviewed; and Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock was the author of an article:

‘Disarmament and demilitarisation are some of the most important demands of feminist thought’. This is not our words, but a quote from Kristina Lunz from the research centre Center for Feminist Foreign Policy. “And it’s absolutely right. NATO’s principles also include disarmament as an important security policy element. But this does not override another fundamental principle, namely that there is a right to self-defence that applies to both people and countries. The decision to supply weapons is not an end in itself and it does not change everything.” (Politiken, 25/05/2022)

The articles in which Kristina Lunz and Anna Lührmann were interviewed and the article Annalena Baerbock wrote augmented the salience of the Feminist Foreign Policy because they shed light on the meaning of the FFP and explain its importance in a comprehensive manner.

Various articles made the FFP visible by addressing German measures and initiatives in international platforms, such as the United Nations, the European Union and the G7, against violence towards women and other minorities, and human rights violations.

The most outstanding initiative related to the FFP was the German call for sanctions in the EU against Iran due to the repression of protesters in the sequence of Mahsa Amini’s death while in custody of the Iranian Morality Police as the extracts show: “*German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock demands that the EU increase the sanctions against the regime in Iran.*” (Hufvudstadsbladet, 09/10/2022); and “*On the protests in Iran, Baerbock stated that ‘the situation is terrible’ and that Germany will help, but admitted that apart from sanctions from outside, it cannot intervene*” (Il Fatto Quotidiano, 03/11/2022).

Some others addressed German bilateral relations with other countries. One example is the coverage of the German Foreign Minister to Saudi Arabia:

Visiting Saudi Arabia was not an easy mission for Annalena Baerbock, Germany's foreign minister and a staunch defender of feminism and human rights. The magazine "Der Spiegel" likened the trip to visiting a "vampire in a garlic shop".

Since taking office in December 2021, the former Green leader has tried to be pragmatic without, at the same time, forgetting her principles. During a press conference with her Saudi counterpart last week, Baerbock praised the country's efforts to find solutions to the crises in Yemen and Sudan and hailed its "incredible potential" for renewable energy cooperation. But she also warned that "it's no secret that many things still divide us" on human rights - and handed the minister a copy of her 80-page manual on feminist foreign policy. (Ta Nea, 24/05/2023)

Despite the approaches of making the FFP visible in relation to German initiatives in international platforms and through the coverage of German bilateral relations being the most common (36 articles) way to address the FFP, the majority of such articles (29) did not explicitly acknowledge them as part of the Feminist Foreign Policy. Following the idea of agenda-setting (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), the news articles assigned more importance to these events than to the FFP. Therefore, those articles, overall, did not contribute to the salience of the FFP since the readers could not know that those measures or situations were an outcome of the implementation of the FFP and would not have direct access, through those articles, to the purpose or content of that foreign policy.

In some cases, the FFP is personified in Annalena Baerbock, the head of the Federal Foreign Office and, most of the times, the spokesperson for the FFP. This personification of the FFP means that it is not seen as a political project but a personal endeavour while not contributing to the clarification of that foreign policy:

The newspaper Hürriyet advised all European ministers "Don't act like teachers", alluding to Baerbock's appearance. (...) She publicly criticised President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's government and spoke with opposition members and women's rights activists - although Berlin had previously been careful not to annoy Erdogan. (Die Presse, 01/08/2022)

Newspapers also made the FFP visible by relating it to the foreign policy of its country. This is the case of newspaper Politiken from Denmark that in two articles related the FFP to the

local context in a negative manner in order to delegitimise it. They refer to their previous value-based foreign policy that failed:

Conversely, Germany's current foreign minister, Annalena Baerbock, has used the same slogan [Feminist Foreign Policy] to focus on the rape of women and children as a war crime that must be prosecuted on an equal footing with other war crimes. You can feel the ambition.

In Denmark, Jeppe Kofod himself emphasised that a value-based foreign policy “must never become empty symbol politics” when he published the latest foreign policy strategy in January last year, as foreign minister in Mette Frederiksen’s first government. And then he was accused of exactly that. (Politiken, 19/03/2023)

And:

In Denmark (...) Foreign Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen (M) is test-driving the key concepts of ‘pragmatic realism’ or ‘pragmatic idealism’ in the media as a replacement for his predecessor's declared ‘value-based foreign policy’.

The values remain, but we must “give up the idea that you can preach your way into making the world the way you want it to be”, Løkke recently told Jyllands-Posten. In Germany, the social democratic-green-liberal government has supplemented its declared ‘values-based’ foreign policy with an ambition to act more proactively and with a newly emphasised ‘feminist’ dimension. (Politiken, 19/04/2023).

Both articles show that the Danish local context is not in favour for an FFP as they report the failures of previous value-based foreign policy. The first article of Politiken addressed Jeppe Kofod incoherence of making Denmark’s value-based foreign policy an empty symbol politics. The second article covers Lars Løkke Rasmussen criticism to all explicitly labelled values-based foreign policy. Nonetheless, the articles give visibility to the FFP by defining it, even in a limited way.

In contrast, four articles from Austria and Finland covered the FFP positively in relation to their local context. In those articles, the FFP resonated culturally with the local context as the countries from the newspapers support the values of the FFP. Thus, based on Entman’s (2009) argument, in the countries of these articles, the FFP has more potential of being influential. The articles reported that Austria and Finland are already following the norms of a “feminist foreign policy”, albeit without carrying the label. Despite that, they considered their country’s efforts

insufficient and presented the German FFP as a model for them to follow. This is the case of the Austrian Der Standard:

The balance sheet of the “deeds” against which Schallenberg wanted to measure the Taliban is clear. But what about Austria's “deeds”? How can they be measured on today's International Women's Day? By doing nothing. (...)

A positive approach to this was presented last week in Germany with the so-called guidelines of feminist foreign policy. This policy approach, which is human rights-based at its core, raises high hopes. Ultimately, it is about considering protecting people particularly affected by human rights violations as the core of foreign policy. (Der Standard, 08/03/2023)

The Finnish article mentions Germany's foreign policy by listing the countries that have already adopted it and demonstrate the willingness of the Finnish government adopting an FFP, indicating a convergence of similar values at the governmental level, i.e., cultural resonance:

(...) according to a press release from the ministry of foreign affairs, more and more countries are calling their foreign policy feminist. They include, among others, Spain, Canada, Mexico, Germany, and France.

Finland's foreign policy has not been officially described as feminist. However, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the promotion of equality has long been ‘at the center of various aspects of Finland's foreign policy’.

‘Nevertheless, Finland needs to be even bolder and more systematic in its foreign policy regarding the promotion of equality, if Finland wants to participate in all global tables where equality issues are discussed. Finland cannot rely solely on its historical reputation as a promoter of equality, but Finland must also demonstrate new actions to promote gender equality’, the release says. (Helsingin Sanomat, 27/10/2022)

Some articles, while presenting the FFP in relation to Germany's domestic context, used quotes of other relevant political actors to demonstrate that the FFP is not unanimously accepted. The representation of a fragmented Germany concerning the FFP harms efforts to diffuse the FFP by damaging its legitimacy. For instance, Der Standard highlighted that the chairman of the CDU (centre-right Cristian party)'s reaction to Baerbock's approach: “*You can*

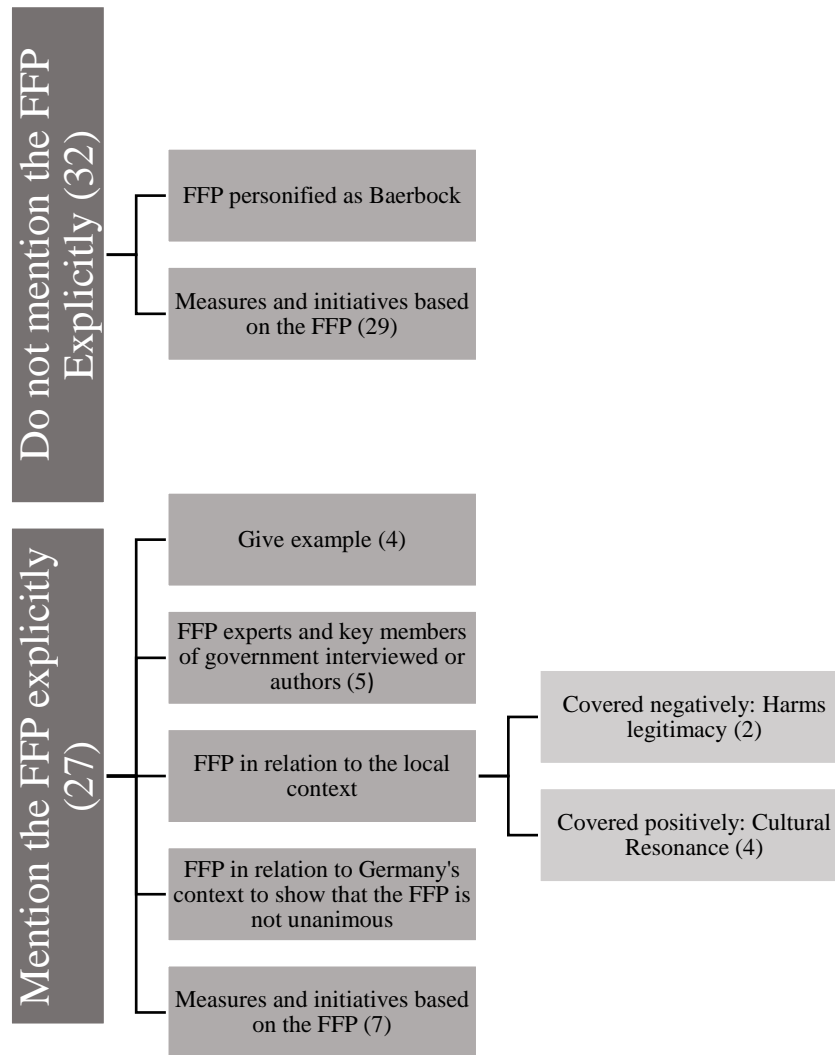
*make feminist foreign policy for all I care, but not with the budget for the German armed forces.”* (Der Standard, 02/03/2023). A sharper criticism was made visible in a Magyar Hirlap article as Bavarian Prime Minister Markus Söder regarded the FFP as incomprehensible and stressed that foreign policy should be based on diplomacy and not on a “mission” and declared that the foreign minister’s plan to *“travel the world and tell everyone what they should and shouldn’t do is doomed from the start.”* (Magyar Hirlap, 01/03/2023). Here, although the articles gave visibility to the opposition, they also shed light to the content of the FFP, hence, increasing its visibility and contributing to its salience: *“Before Baerbock explains her concept, she clarifies: ‘Feminist foreign policy is not a nice-to-have, not a little flower.’ Rather, this kind of policy runs through all areas: ‘Humanitarian aid, stabilisation measures, peace missions, cultural and educational policy’”* (Der Standard, 02/03/2023) and *“Annalena Baerbock wants to create a ‘feminist reflex’ with the announced ‘feminist foreign policy’. According to her, this is necessary primarily because ‘men and women are still not equal worldwide.’”* (Magyar Hirlap, 01/03/2023).

Overall, the salience of the FFP was low since 32 articles did not mention the FFP explicitly, hence hindering its visibility in the public space. The articles that did not explicitly cover the FFP include pieces where the FFP is personified by Annalena Baerbock, and articles that covered episodes related to the FFP, FFP measures, or initiatives, such as the sanctions against Iran. From 27 articles that mentioned the FFP directly, some gave examples of what a foreign policy with a feminist lens should look like, others interviewed FFP experts and relevant government members. Moreover, some referred to the FFP concerning the local context either to delegitimise it or to show cultural resonance – the latter contributed to the increase of salience; others mentioned the FFP in relation to initiatives and measures based on the values of the FFP; and some addressed the FFP regarding Germany’s political context to show that the FFP was not unanimously accepted and, therefore, to damage its image.

The diagram below summarises the ways in which evidence of salience can be found.

**Figure 4.1**

*Ways in which the articles presented the FFP*



#### **4.1.2. Legitimacy**

As explained in the methodology section, the press portrait of FFP legitimacy was measured considering the tone towards the FFP, its framing, the order of the presentation of negative or positive aspects of the FFP, and the focus on positive or negative aspects of said foreign policy.

Only eight articles explicitly considered the FFP as legitimate. An example is the article from the Austrian Der Standard, which explicitly stated the FFP as necessary:

And yet she has now presented her guidelines for a feminist foreign policy that aims to strengthen women's rights. Some things sound naïve, and one may also doubt that these



measures will bring world peace. But in principle, the Green politician is right. In fact, she formulates self-evident things.

Written on 80 pages, they seem like a provocation to many - and that's probably what it's supposed to be, because it's necessary in addition to all the arms deliveries. (Der Standard, 02/03/2023)

Another example is the article from the Portuguese Público newspaper, for which Kristina Lunz was interviewed. This allowed her to argue that the German FFP is a model to be followed at the United Nations:

We hope it will have a trickle-down or domino effect, and I think we're already seeing it. For example, when Annalena Baerbock was at a conference on feminist foreign policy in Berlin in September, there was a panel with representatives from countries that don't yet have a feminist foreign policy but are part of a group at the UN, the Feminist Foreign Policy Club Group, and Germany could be an important role model. (Público, 26/03/2023)

Other articles (29) only implicitly portrayed the FFP as legitimate, which could still foster a positive impact on readers regarding its legitimacy.

For instance, the Iranian repression of protesters and the Taliban oppression of women are emblematic situations in which most of the newspaper framed it in a favourable way:

The dreams and expectations of thousands of girls, who only three months ago had taken their entrance exams, were shattered by a terse message from the Minister of Higher Education, Neda Mohammad Nadim: 'You are all informed to implement the aforementioned order to suspend women's education'. The new sanction will be submitted to tomorrow's G7 meeting - of which Germany holds the presidency until the end of the year – by German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock: the Taliban, she wrote on Twitter, with this measure 'have decided to destroy the future of its own country'. "I will put the issue on the G7 agenda tomorrow". "The world is watching us," she added to Afghan officials. (Il Fatto Quotidiano, 21/12/2022)

The first sentence of the passage – "*The dreams and expectations of thousands of girls (...) were shattered (...)*" – has emotional charge. I argue that the negative emotional charge that the newspapers adopt towards the oppression of women and girls in Afghanistan transfers a

positive emotional charge towards the measure of applying sanctions against the Taliban, potentially increasing the perceived legitimacy of the FFP.

A similar approach can be identified in the section below.

Germany calls the attacks on the Iranian women an "attack on humanity".

- We are on the side of the Iranian, brave women, says the German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock to reporters at the UN meeting.

The women's protests also arouse emotions abroad, and support protests have been organized in various parts of the world. Many Iranian women living abroad feel that Amini's fate might as well have been their own.

- She went to Tehran to meet her family. I told my mother that it could easily have been me, or my sister, or my cousin, says 48-year-old Sara, who is now a teacher in France. (Hufvudstadsbladet, 23/09/2022)

This extract also shows an emotional charge. Covering the protests of Iranian women and giving visibility to declarations of support as "brave women" provokes empathy from the reader and, thus, increases the legitimacy of the FFP. At the same time, it also displays negative emotions towards the death of Mahsa Amini, spurring the sentiments of the readers. This emotional charge augments the legitimacy of the FFP as the articles represent these measures and declarations taken as correct and necessary.

The following example frames the event of the repression and violence against Iranian people, including children, as the problem while portraying the support towards EU's sanctions against Iranian officials as a solution to pressure the Iranian authorities to halt the violence:

Some 185 people, including 19 children, have been killed in the nationwide demonstrations, says human rights group.

Iranian schoolchildren were being arrested inside school premises on Sunday by security forces arriving in vans without licence plates, according to social media reports emerging from the country as the protests against the regime enter their fourth week. (...)

The German foreign minister, Annalena Baerbock, vowed again that the European Union would impose travel bans and asset freezes on Iranian officials trying to suppress the protests. (The Irish Times, 09/10/2022)

The coverage of the killing and the highlight of children deem these actions unacceptable as they go against international human rights norms. In contrast, covering the initiative of Germany to urge for sanctions in the EU shows Germany's efforts to comply with human rights. Moreover, it portrays that country as an active actor in the matter. In light of this, this framing covers the FFP as legitimate and can also influence the reader's perceptions.

Other articles focused on the positive aspects of having an FFP. For instance:

Germany has presented a new plan for a feminist foreign policy, prioritising political and financial support for projects that defend and advance women's rights, gender equality and participation of women in policymaking.

'Women's rights are a barometer of the state that societies are in,' said Ms Baerbock, a senior Green Party politician. 'It places a stronger focus on people who have been pushed to the margins of society on account of, among other things, their origin, religion, disability, gender or sexual identity.'

"When we negotiate peace treaties, these are more stable and robust when all people sit at the table, particularly one half of the population – women," she added. Federal development minister Svenja Schulze agreed, saying that fighting against hunger and poverty and for climate justice would be more effective "if one doesn't do without half of the potential – of women". (The Irish Times, 07/03/2023)

This article gives voice to its main representatives by using quotes from both Annalena Baerbock and Svenja Schulze, responsible for the FFP, and the first thing the piece of news covers are the positive aspects of FFP. These two features communicate a favourable approach towards FFP increases its perceived legitimacy.

Regarding the low level of perceived legitimacy, twenty-three articles had a negative coverage tone and framing towards the FFP. For instance, some newspapers like Magyar Hirlap and Lidové Noviny framed the FFP as an interference in internal affairs. The Hungarian newspaper Magyar Hirlap covered the event when the Chinese Foreign Minister warned the German coalition not to interfere in China's internal affairs, based on what was written in the coalition agreement:

Chinese foreign affairs spokesman Zhao Lijian, according to Tagesschau, a news channel of the public service channel ARD, warned the German parties preparing to

govern not to interfere in China's internal affairs. (...) According to the joint document of the parties, it is important to respect human rights in Xinjiang province, which is home to ten million Uyghurs (Magyar Hirlap, 27/11/2021).

Although, this extract refers to the FFP in an indirect way, it still conveys a disagreement message regarding its implementation. The condemnation of the persecution of Uyghurs in Xinjiang is an outcome of the value-based feminist foreign policy, as given its intersectional aims to protect not only women but also other people from vulnerable groups from different ethnicities. Not only does this article give visibility to the FFP as “interference” in internal affairs, but also the whole article covers criticism towards the new coalition government and the new plan for its foreign policy. This negative framing depicts the FFP as illegitimate. The same article also refers to the LGBTQ community when criticizing the new government coalition. When the coalition agreement announced that the government would pursue an FFP, it also declared that it would advocate for the rights of marginalised groups, namely the LGBTQI:

We strengthen the rights, representation and resources of women, girls and marginalized groups such as LGBTQI. Equal political, economic and social participation, the strengthening of sexual and reproductive health and rights of women and girls, and unrestricted access to equal education and health care are central to us. (Die Bundesregierung, 2021, p. 152)

There are also a number of contentious points in the cross-party agreement, with the future government envisaging a united European state, calling for changes that can only be achieved by amending national treaties and wanting LGBTQ organisations to play a role in education from kindergarten onwards. (Magyar Hirlap, 27/11/2021)

Here, the article drives attention to topics usually controversial in the domestic politics, such as non-heteronormative sexual orientation. Hence the values of the FFP clash with the values of the local government, which means the FFP is perceived as illegitimate.

Other articles gave visibility to members of opposition parties to show that the FFP is not unanimously accepted in Germany. For instance, the Hungarian Magyar Hirlap reports the FFP in relation to Germany's domestic affairs by quoting Petr Bystron, a member of parliament from the AfD, Germany's far-right party. By giving visibility to the opposing views towards

FFP, the article fosters its image as illegitimate. In fact, the whole article has a negative tone towards the then-new coalition government and its policies, including its foreign policy:

(...) said Bystron (...) Under the guise of human rights, Ms Baerbock will interfere in the internal affairs of other sovereign countries, and it is clear from her statements that Germany's relations with Russia and China will be further damaged, he explained. (Magyar Hirlap, 10/12/2021)

The following article from the Czech newspaper Lidové Noviny is one more example of the coverage of negative perspectives about the FFP.

The West has invited not only Zelensky to Hiroshima, but also representatives of India, Brazil and Indonesia. Who will these countries ultimately side with? Is it more attractive for Saudi Arabia to have German diplomatic chief Baerbock preaching a feminist foreign policy or for Beijing to broker a reconciliation with Iran? (...) “the Greens in Germany have dreamed of a more hostile course.” Frankly, the more the hostile course prevails, the more the G7 would appear to people in the global South as the embodiment of the colonial world of the “old white man”, and the more it would be displaced by the G20. (Lidové Noviny, 23/05/2023)

This extract presents the FFP as “hostile” and as the diffusion of its values as a colonial “old white man” perspective. This association of the FFP with colonialism implies that Germany and the G7 are trying to impose their values and customs to communities and people from different background. Therefore, it presents the FFP as illegitimate.

Another article referred indirectly to the FFP by mentioning the right of gender identity defended in the German coalition agreement:

Now it is the gender program that is electrifying the German progressives, who opened a window to never-before-seen perspectives when they realized that the next beauty queen doesn't just have to be beautiful, she doesn't have to be a woman either. (...)

What I like most about this fantastic rebirth is the emphasis on the sense of mission, an area in which the Germans have an overwhelming practice. Who does not

remember the sense of mission that swept the country in the thirties of the last century, and its great exponent was Adolf Hitler. (Magyar Hirlap, 04/03/2023)

The article compares the advocacy for the protection of rights of minority including LGBTQI+ with the sense of mission of Adolf Hitler, harming the perception of legitimacy of the FFP.

#### **4.1.3. Coherence**

For the analysis of how articles portray the (in)coherence of the FFP were considered three strains: horizontal, chronological and implementation. Horizontal coherence concerns the consistency of foreign policy activities performed by different government actors (Mayer, 2016). Chronological coherence consists of the consistency of actions through time (Elgström, 2015). And implementation coherence means consistency between “words vs. deeds” (Elgström, 2015).

Although most of the time only implicitly, the majority of the articles (35) presented the FFP as coherent. Only eleven articles referred to some level of incoherence.

When articles were covering the measures taken by Germany against Iranian officials and the Taliban in Afghanistan – be it public declarations against the regimes, sanctions or putting human rights issues on the agenda of the G7 – most did not question the coherence of the FFP. Newspapers did not contest the coherence of said measures because most of the articles framed protesters repression and women oppression as wrong while they perceived the measures related to the FFP as adequate and sufficient. For instance, the excerpt “*German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said on Saturday that Germany wants to increase EU pressure on Iran*” (Politiken, 09/01/2023).

An article from the newspaper Mlada Fronta Dnes from Czech Republic frames FFP initiatives as coherent:

Given Germany's influence as Europe's largest economy and a key diplomatic player, the move gives new impetus to the feminist foreign policy movement (...)

Baerbock has already focused on gender issues during her travels abroad, such as sexual violence during the conflict in Ukraine or abortion in the United States. (Mlada Fronta Dnes, 01/03/2023)

The expression "has already" implies that Germany has been implementing promptly the FFP. Thus, this coverage contributes to the perception of the FFP as coherent in implementation and chronologically.

Other initiatives, such as the inclusion of women in the decisions of development aid, were addressed by the analysed articles adopting a coherent perspective. This is the case of the Ta Nea coverage on the topic:

‘Feminist’ foreign and development policy simultaneously means equal rights for women to access goods. These include education for women as well as right to own land, the Minister of Development Aid emphasized for her part. In African countries, women are mainly engaged in agricultural work, but without land ownership they have no access to loans. With the development aid of Germany, a new water supply system was set up in Zambia with the decisive participation of women, was the example of Minister Schulze. (Ta Nea, 03/03/2023).

In this case, the consideration of women perspectives in development aid is seen as horizontally coherent because it is an initiative of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development based on the FFP.

Other articles portrayed the FFP as horizontally coherent by presenting actions and declarations of the Ministries that align with the FFP. This is the case of the article published in the newspaper The Irish Times that refers to how the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development adopted FFP values:

When we negotiate peace treaties, these are more stable and robust when all people sit at the table, particularly one half of the population – women,” she added. Federal development minister Svenja Schulze agreed, saying that fighting against hunger and poverty and for climate justice would be more effective “if one doesn’t do without half of the potential – of women. (The Irish Times, 07/03/2023)

Moreover, an article published by the Portuguese Público affirmed that the support of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development for the FFP gives more strength to that foreign policy. The excerpt shows convergence of FFP values throughout the German

ministries: *The fact that the policy [Feminist Foreign Policy] was announced by Annalena Baerbock (of the Greens) and the Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, Svenja Schulze (of the Social Democratic Party), gives it even more strength.*” (Público, 26/03/2023).

More recently, regarding the Russian and Ukraine war, some articles first questioned if the delivery of arms to Ukraine was incompatible with the Feminist Foreign Policy:

Today, many more people are dying in wars and conflicts. But is Annalena Baerbock's call for an international focus on women's rights not contradictory in view of the German government's approved arms exports to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, where women's rights are not worth much? And the arms deliveries to Ukraine? (Der Standard, 08/03/2023)

Is it an apparent contradiction that Baerbock, a minister who has advocated sending arms and combat vehicles to Ukraine, should present a foreign policy in favour of demilitarization? (Público, 26/03/2023)

Arms deliveries and rearmament are generally not part of feminist foreign policy thinking. (Politiken, 25/05/2022)

Despite that, an alternative approach to these positions was covered by the same articles. In a second moment, they shed light to the fact that the deliveries of arms to Ukraine are part of the human security strategy that pertains to the FFP:

We must recognise that we live in a hyper-militarised world, "that is the state of affairs, and everything must now be done to protect people from brute force". And that would include arms deliveries. "Supportive self-defence against violence and aggressors has always been feminist," says Lunz. (Der Standard, 08/03/2023)

And:

Lunz doesn't think so, stressing that demilitarisation is a long-term goal, and pointing out that in Ukraine it is "clear that people have to be supported in their right to self-defence". "It's not only because of Article 51 of the UN Charter [the right to self-defence in the event of an armed attack], but there is also a feminist understanding that people - women working alone, for example - need to be protected." (...) Baerbock also spoke



of sending arms and protecting women as two sides of the same coin, and even coined the term Realfeminismus, in a play on the term Realpolitik, according to the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung. (Público, 26/03/2023)

Feminism does not mean saying to victims of violence: 'Don't defend yourselves! That would be like saying to a woman who has been assaulted: 'Don't resist and don't cry for help'. (Politiken, 25/05/2022).

The three articles quoted above present questions that might arise to the regular public because the FFP is known as a pacifist policy, and some people do not know what that foreign policy consists of. The delivery of arms to Ukraine is one of the exceptional cases justified by human security, as seen in the FFP guidelines and the articles above. That being so, this type of coverage contributes more to the perception of the FFP as coherent as the emphasis is on the explanation of the compatibility and discards any misconception that might arise about the FFP.

Among the few articles that deemed the FFP as incoherent, one criticised Germany's lack of action regarding the suffering of migrants in the Mediterranean while explicitly mentioning the "feminist policy":

“And I wonder if a foreign minister (Annalena Baerbock) who argues that ‘if we ignore what is happening (at the EU's external borders), our values will be lost at the bottom of the Mediterranean’, is ashamed because she knows that this proposal does not describe a hypothetical scenario but a real situation, which Germany is deliberately perpetuating. I wonder if she really wants to implement what is written in the government agreement: to stop the suffering at the external borders of the EU and when this ‘feminist policy’ she advocates will come about.” (Ta Nea, 17/08/2022).

The extract above shows an example of incoherence between words, i.e., the coalition agreement and the guidelines of the FFP, and deeds, that is, their implementation.

An article by Ta Nea on the Iranian protests stated that “*As for a values-based feminist foreign policy, Baerbock's staff failed the first test, taking too long to react to the protests in Iran led by women.*” (Ta Nea, 25/11/2022). This extract unveils chronological incoherence because it considers that the German Federal Foreign Office took too long to take measures against the repression of the protests as by November of 2022 over 300 people had been killed. In addition, this extract shows the Iranian protests in comparison with a “test” to the FFP.

In a similar vein, on the same matter, the Lidové Noviny reported:

For two weeks now, Iranians have been protesting against the crackdown by the religious morality police (...) However, Western solidarity is somehow fading. And even in countries like Germany, where the head of diplomacy Baerbock has declared a ‘feminist foreign policy’. (Lidové Noviny, 27/09/2022)

By claiming that “even” German solidarity is fading, the article highlighted the chronological incoherence that comes with not being consistent over time. It is expected that Germany will continue advocating for the people in Iran, not just when the event is at its peak because of its novelty. The article continues:

If Germany is Iran's biggest trading partner in Europe, why not use this influence? If Germany insists on a ‘feminist foreign policy’, on the fact that gender equality is ‘a prerequisite for sustainable peace and security’ why does it not do something effective? (Lidové Noviny, 27/09/2022)

This excerpt indicates that the actions taken by Germany under its FFP are considered insufficient, which indicates incoherence in implementation.

An article by The Irish Times criticized the German option to replace Russian gas with that from Qatar despite of their “value-based foreign policy”, as many human rights violations involving Qatar emerged recently. “*On Monday, meanwhile, Green cabinet ministers, who promised "value-based foreign policy", experienced realpolitik hangover over a deal to end Russian gas dependency by cosyng up instead to Qatar*” (The Irish Times, 21/03/2022). The referred article underlines the incompatibility of having an FFP and doing business with a country that violates human rights, discriminates women and LGBTQI+ individuals (Human Rights Watch, n.d.). By giving visibility to this case of implementation incoherence, The Irish Times challenges the legitimacy of the FFP, as well as contributes to its negative view internationally. This presentation of Germany as a country whose value-based foreign policy ignores its values to fulfil economic interests may lead some countries to conclude that having an FFP is too costly.

Accordingly, a Danish article claimed that Germany regularly subordinates its values to other interests, adding that, in the context of the military aggression of Russia against Ukraine, Germany replaced the Russian gas with gas from other undemocratic countries: “*Anna Lührmann sees no contradiction between hard power and the feminist dimension (...)*”

*dependence on Russian oil and gas has been partly replaced by contracts with undemocratic states in the Middle East (...) Is this a values-based foreign policy?"* (Politiken, 19/04/2023). The periodic covers Germany as a country with a “values-based foreign policy” that is replacing Russian oil and gas for those from “undemocratic countries”. Labelling the two countries involved in such a trade as values-based and undemocratic points to a dichotomy that indicates incoherence to pursuing a foreign policy based on feminist values and trading oil to fulfil Germany’s interests.

Moreover, the same article mentions the arms exports to countries that could use those arms to exert violence against women: *“Arms exports to misogynistic Saudi Arabia are back to 2018 levels, when the country brutally murdered journalist Jamal Khashoggi.”*. In this extract, the article exposes the incoherence in implementation explicitly. Comparing the arms exports to “misogynistic” Saudi Arabia with the levels of 2018, when Germany did not have an FFP, carries a negative judgment. It is meant to show that the FFP has not changed that aspect of Germany’s foreign policy.

Other articles, like the ones by Lidové Noviny and by Magyar Hirlap, referred to the horizontal incoherence of the different approaches to foreign policy from governmental individuals.

While Scholz wants to continue the restrained and pragmatic foreign policy advocated by his predecessor, Angela Merkel, the diplomatic chief, a generation younger, is more assertive. She also wants to take into account respect for human rights and international legal obligations much more strongly than before. (Lidové Noviny, 11/12/2021)

The director of the Hungarian-German Institute of the Mathias Corvinus Collegium said that the disagreement between Scholz and Baerbock is already visible. He pointed out that the Green Party foreign minister is a young, ambitious politician who prioritizes the left-wing green agenda and acts more militantly and as an activist with regard to human rights issues. (Magyar Hirlap, 27/11/2021)

The FFP guidelines asserts that feminist values would permeate all areas of Germany’s foreign policy. Both Lidové Noviny and Magyar Hirlap, however, report otherwise. Both articles present the FFP – referred to as “respect for human rights”, “left-wing green agenda”, “activist with regard to human rights” – as being something pursued only by Minister Annalena Baerbock, while Scholz approach is described as “pragmatic”. Thus, both articles frame the FFP implementation as horizontally incoherent.

Another example of horizontal incoherence is an article from the Danish newspaper Politiken that mentions Baerbock as the “value-based” voice and characterizes Scholz as “pragmatic”. Additionally, the periodic portrayed them almost as rivals when asked: “Is there such a ‘good cop, bad cop’”: *“Is there such a ‘good cop, bad cop’ with Olaf Scholz as the ‘pragmatic’ voice and Annalena Baerbock as the ‘value-based’ voice in foreign policy?”* (Politiken, 19/04/2023). Comments such as these came concerning Olaf Scholz’s plan to sell parts of a Hamburg container terminal to China. Concomitantly, Annalena Baerbock warned China not to lead to a military escalation in Taiwan and urged Scholz to condemn the repression of Uyghurs in Xinjiang. The article presents the government as not unitedly acting about its foreign policy, that is, as being horizontally incoherent. This can damage the image of the FFP.

## Conclusions

This research aimed to analyse how the German Feminist Foreign Policy is portrayed by EU member states' press. Through a reflexive thematic analysis of 59 articles from 11 countries, published between 1 November 2021 and 31 July 2023, we were able to examine the salience, legitimacy, and coherence of the FFP.

In contrast to the conclusion of Sundström et al. (2021) in their analysis of the perceptions of Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy through the analysis of international Western and non-Western media, these findings suggest that the key challenges Germany faces are that of the salience of its Feminist Foreign Policy, and to a certain extent that of perceived coherence. The findings show that the legitimacy is not questioned at a high level, except in contexts where the values of the FFP clash with the values of the local government.

The most common way of addressing the FFP was to cover German initiatives and episodes related to the FFP, which contributed to the perceived legitimacy of the FFP. However, usually, newspapers did not connect those events and initiatives to the FFP, which did not contribute to its salience. Therefore, the FFP would only be perceived as legitimate by a niche of readers who were already aware of the existence of that foreign policy. Additionally, reporting Annalena Baerbock as the personification of the FFP can damage the FFP in the long term as it complicates the distinction between FFP principles and personal choices.

As for coherence, most articles framed the FFP as coherent. Nonetheless, the few times the articles unveiled incoherence serve as learning. The Russian war against Ukraine posed challenges to the full implementation of the FFP as Germany had to rapidly replace Russian gas, ending up negotiating with undemocratic countries. Moreover, the coverage of Baerbock and Scholz's different approaches to foreign policy damages the image of the FFP. Both leaders must project their image as working in the same direction to enhance the credibility of Germany as a state that wants to diffuse the values of the FFP.

As norms do not enter a normative vacuum but rather exist in a contested normative space (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998), We recommend that Germany pursue strategies to diffuse the FFP. First, it must act according to what it advocates, i.e., "Practice what you preach". For that, it must prepare for unexpected circumstances to avoid compromising its image for lack of long-term preparation. Second, it must do coalition-building with Member States that consider the FFP legitimate (Björkdahl, 2007; Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). Should these steps be followed, Germany can augment the perceived legitimacy of the FFP, its salience and coherence, which

are the prerequisites for the FFP to have a chance of being adopted by other Member States (Sundström et al., 2021).

This dissertation contributes to the literature on Feminist Foreign Policy by studying the case of Germany, a country that did not receive much attention in academic research. At the same time, it adds value to the study of the FFP as norm diffusion due to its focus on the potential resistance evaluated through its salience, legitimacy, and coherence in newspapers. Furthermore, the findings of this research can be fruitful to governments which would like to pursue an FFP to know in advance the potential challenges they might face while implementing that foreign policy.

One limitation of this dissertation was only analysing newspapers and not other media, especially social media. As people spend hours on social media, they acquire information through it. Therefore, it could be valuable to analyse how people interact with the German Federal Foreign Ministry's posts related to the FFP.

Inspired by one Czech article that reported that people in the global South would perceive the FFP cosmopolitanism as an embodiment of colonialism, further studies could investigate the portrayal of the German FFP in non-Western media. Moreover, further research is needed to assess the impact of German development aid directed at gender equality in receiving countries.

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