Foreign Policy Analysis (2020) **0**, 1–20

Gendering Foreign Policy: A Comparative Framework for Analysis

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This article seeks to explain the rise of pro-gender norms and feminist strategies in foreign policy, which are increasingly salient in global politics. How can this trend be theorized? In what ways is this development resisted and contested by other states and international actors? To what extent can we trace continuity and change in regard to gender and foreign policy? To address these major research questions and to spur cross-national comparative studies, this article advances a theoretical framework on gendering foreign policy. It draws on two strands of research, which rarely engage with one another: international feminist theory (IFT) and foreign policy analysis (FPA). We identify three ways in which comparative analysis of gender in foreign policy can be advanced: first, by highlighting the variations of pro-gender norms and enhancing the analytical assessment of cross-national trends; second, by generating a more robust explanation of the rise, embeddedness, and continuity of, as well as resistance to, pro-gender norms in foreign policy in similar and diverse contexts; and third, by examining both continuity and change in pro-gender norms in order to reveal the contestation around gender, which is at the heart of foreign policy.

Introduction

Most of the twentieth century, women's movements struggled globally and steadfastly for the promotion of women's rights and gender equality (Garner 2010). While there is still a long way to go, some major international milestones

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Aggestam, Karin, and Jacqui True. (2020) Gendering Foreign Policy: A Comparative Framework for Analysis. *Foreign Policy Analysis*, doi: 10.1093/fpa/orz026

have been achieved in the last few decades, such as the landmark Convention for the Elimination of all Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1979 and the United Nations (UN) Security Council resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) in 2000 (see Davies and True 2019). Gender equality is an increasingly salient issue on the contemporary global agenda as a standalone Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) and with "gender mainstreaming" now an important objective for many international institutions, states, and organizations (True and Mintrom 2001). Foreign aid given by wealthier states specifically targeting gender equality has "quadrupled . . . to $10 billion in the past decade" (O'Reilly 2016). Women's security is also increasingly linked to national and international security, which the "Hillary doctrine" under US Secretary of State Clinton illustrates (Hudson and Leidl 2015).

In more recent years, a growing number of "women-friendly-states" have taken the lead in promoting gender equality in global affairs, framing the advancement of women issues, representation, gender equality, empowerment, and leadership as "smart diplomacy and economics" (Clinton 2010; Wallström 2016). Hence, there are today a number of states, such as Australia, Canada, Norway, Sweden, South Africa, and the United Kingdom, that are pursuing the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda as one of their core pillars in foreign policy (True 2017b). At the same time, there is emerging research evidence that shows that increases in women's elite participation in peace processes as delegates and representatives, as well as women's participation in politics and in civil society movements, result in a less conflictual world with more sustainable peace settlements (UN Women 2015; Krause et al. 2018) and more gender-inclusive peace agreements that promote women's empowerment and more gender-equal societies after conflict (True and Riveros-Morales 2019).

How are we to explain this rise of these "pro–gender equality" norms and focus on women's empowerment in foreign policy? In what ways is this development resisted and contested by states and international actors? In this article, we define "pro–gender equality norms" (shortened to "pro-gender norms") as the inclusion of one or more of the four following types of commitments in foreign policy: first, the explicit practice of "gender mainstreaming" as a policy approach to advance gender equality and women's rights as key issues within and across foreign security and defense, economic development, trade, aid, and humanitarian policies and at all levels of foreign policy–making;[1] second, international development assistance that substantially targets (usually as a defined proportion of total aid) gender inequality and seeks to transform gender relations; third, a focus on women's security and human rights as indicators of state stability and international security as evidenced by commitment to the UN WPS agenda and the adoption of WPS National Action Plans (NAPs); and fourth, other concrete foreign policy gender equality institutional or legislative mechanisms, such as establishing global ambassadors for women and girls' empowerment or explicit commitments to promoting women's leadership within the foreign policy portfolio to achieve greater gender equality (see Goldsmith 2016).

One overarching question that this article seeks to explain is how far pro-gender norms have become embedded in foreign policy domains, such as development and humanitarian policy versus security and defense domains? To what extent can we trace continuity and change in foreign policies with respect to pro-gender norms? Given the increasingly explicit statements of feminist or pro-gender foreign policies,

[1] UN Economic and Social Council agreed conclusions 1997/2 define gender mainstreaming as: "the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality."

what difference does a gendered approach to foreign policy make compared with traditional approaches to conventional foreign policy?

The research puzzle raised in this article is set against the wider global context of liberal internationalism and the challenges to the rules-based order. For instance, UN Security Council resolution 1325 was adopted in 2000 at the peak of the liberal peacebuilding era, which was characterized by widespread optimism for exporting liberal ideas of human progress, development, and liberal democracy around the world and to the Global South. This was also a response to the growing number of internal and destructive conflicts in the 1990s. With devastating ethnic cleansing and genocide taking place in Western Balkans, Rwanda, and other regions, there were increasing public calls for the international community to take on a more proactive strategy and intervention in contemporary conflicts (e.g., Kaldor 2012; Chinkin 2019). Yet, the framing of this specific peacebuilding paradigm has largely built on what is perceived in the Global North as consensual knowledge, impartial expertise, and technocracy (McGinty 2012). Although there are a growing number of UN-sponsored peace processes today that address and integrate gender and women rights as part of the negotiations (Aggestam 2019; True and Riveros-Morales 2019), the actual implementation of gender clauses in peace agreements is still one of the major hurdles. Since 2016, there has actually been a decline in all areas of establishing gender-sensitive peace processes, including the participation of women and the use of gender technical advisors.[2]

While progress has been made in advancing pro-gender norms in various international fora, individual state foreign policies and their international relations, we can at the same time observe an opposite trend of increasingly antagonistic global politics (Mouffe 2005), which vociferously contests and resists the diffusion of pro-gender norms. There is today a striking "re-masculinisation" (cf. Jeffords 1989) of foreign policy taking place, where traditional short-term security concerns take precedence—for example, in the "global war on terror"—over considered engagements in the long-term security and prevention of conflict. An example of the resistance to pro-gender norms is the 2017 reinstatement and expansion of the Mexico City Policy in the United States—coined "the global gag rule"—that bans the use of US foreign aid funds to nongovernmental healthcare organizations that discuss abortion, advocate for abortion rights, or provide abortions (even if such organizations use non-US funds), as well as ended US financial contributions to the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) (see Tanyag 2017).

Moreover, there is a noticeable rise of illiberal democracies and right-wing populism, in which men in particular seek to reclaim their entitlements. Hence, we argue in line with Inglehart and Norris (2003) that gender constitutes one of the major fault lines in contemporary global politics. It is not so much gender differences in values and attitudes that are of significance in surveys of the World Values Survey but rather the differences in values/attitudes about gender and sexuality within and across countries, which divide global politics (Warriner and Tessler 1997; True 2004; Bjarnegard and Melander 2017, 158). In this regard, men's leadership and attitudes are important since both men and women can hold pro–gender equality or feminist attitudes and therefore purport these ideas through their behavior as foreign policy agents. Furthermore, it is not possible to explain the challenge and resistance to the adoption of pro–gender equality foreign policies without recognizing the structural and hierarchical principles of patriarchy that are historically ingrained as part of state identities, diplomatic practices, and global order (Enloe 2017; True 2017a).

[2] "After consistent increases between 2010 and 2015, the percentage of signed peace agreements containing gender-specific provisions declined in 2016, when only half of the six signed agreements contained such provisions (Afghanistan, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo), and as compared with 70 percent in 2015" (UN Secretary-General 2017, para 16).

Yet, while a number of studies have assessed the impact of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 within and across states (Olsson and Gizelis 2015), there are surprisingly few that address gender and foreign policy overall in which women, peace, and security is just one aspect (Aggestam and Bergman-Rosamond 2016; Bilgic 2016; Henshaw 2017). We can also observe a "gender turn" in the study of diplomacy, which focuses on diplomatic history, descriptive representation, and gendered institutions (Aggestam and Towns 2019). Yet, there is still a whole new area open for research and for comparative studies on gender and foreign policy specifically. Inspired by the pioneering study by McBride Stetson and Mazur (1995) on comparative state feminism, we argue that more scholarship is needed that systematically and cross-nationally assesses the extent to which pro-gender norms and feminist goals are present, adopted, and practiced (if not fully realized) in foreign policy. As such, general trends and specific patterns of foreign policy change can be identified as a gender perspective is applied to key issues on women's status and rights in global politics.

As part of that endeavor, we advance here an analytical framework on gendering foreign policy by drawing upon two strands of research, which rarely engage with one another—namely international feminist theory (IFT) and foreign policy analysis (FPA). We argue that there are a number of key intersections between the fields, which can serve to constructively bridge the divide, thereby generating new theoretical and empirical knowledge on gender and foreign policy of mutual benefit to both feminist theory, gender studies, and foreign policy analysis. There are also synergies and complementarities. For instance, feminist scholarship provides an overarching critical theoretical gaze and conceptual clarity on gender, patriarchy, power configurations, and feminist norms and principles, while FPA helps to advance multilevel and comparative approaches to systematically analyze and explain foreign policy decision-making processes and outcomes.

The article is structured in the following way. In the first part, we explore the potential for opening up a dialogue between the fields of IFT and FPA. We elaborate in what ways they constructively can engage and inform one another. Strengths and weaknesses are identified, as well as key intersections for bridging the two fields. In the second part, we advance a theoretical framework and operationalize some key concepts central for analyzing gender and foreign policy. Drawing on the empirical results from the five country case analyses (Australia, Canada, Norway, South Africa, and Sweden) included in this special issue, we elaborate how cross-national comparative studies can be enhanced to discern regional and global patterns and trends, as well as to generate policy-relevant theoretical premises. The last part identifies three ways to conduct cross-national comparison on gendering foreign policy and how to trace continuity and change.

Bridging the Divide Between IFT and FPA

Obviously, international feminist theory and foreign policy analysis are highly relevant fields of research to the study of gender in foreign policy and offer many rich theoretical and empirical entry points. Yet, there are few scholars (e.g., Hudson and Leidl 2015) until now who have pursued the task of combining these two strands of research. We argue that synthesizing them can provide opportunities to advance theory and explore new lines of empirical inquiry. We also believe that by this cross-fertilization new novel insights can be generated on the agency-structure debate in international relations (IR). In the section below, we first probe the strengths and weaknesses of these bodies of theory in explaining and understanding the dynamics of gender and foreign policy. Note that we make no claim to present a complete state-of-the-art of either field. Instead, we identify synergies and intersections, which

can be used to expand and advance the theoretical framework, which is presented in the next section.

International Feminist Theory

Feminist IR theory is an expansive and diverse field of scholarship, which is applied to a broad range of issues and areas (see, for example, Sjoberg 2013 on global conflict and war; Shepherd 2017 on peacebuilding; and Tickner 2014 on IR theory). As such, it is distinguished by its plural and interdisciplinary theoretical orientation and multilevel approaches to method and empirical analysis. Yet, few feminist scholars have studied the adoption of gender norms in foreign policy (for important exceptions, see Hudson and Leidl 2015; Bilgic 2016; Aggestam, Bergman-Rosamond, and Kronsell 2019). One reason for this may be the general skepticism among feminist scholars regarding the capacity of state-centered institutional frameworks to further feminist political agendas. States are often viewed as ingrained with patriarchal, hierarchical, and oppressive power structures (Peterson 1992; Parashar et al. 2018). Gendered analyses have shown how states extend masculine protection to "womenandchildren" while also perpetrating social, political, and economic inequalities that make women insecure in the first place (Parashar, Tickner, and True 2018). Liberal, postcolonial, and religious states variously all express hierarchies of male entitlement and female subordination; therefore, a state cannot be seen as a neutral agent from a feminist perspective (Peterson 1992; McBride Stetson and Mazur 1995). As a consequence, for women to advance and be successful as agents of the state, they must conform to some extent to its norms and discourses, which reflect a historically male-centered perspective.

Another reason may be a reluctance to engage and analyze accounts from within by diplomats and foreign policy leaders. Token women are often portrayed as operating and adjusting to masculine norms and scripts and co-opted by male power structures, which tend to dominate the foreign policy domain. As feminist scholars of international relations have long observed, "adding women and stirring" does not transform policy outcomes (Peterson 1992). Instead, more emphasis has been placed by feminist scholars on "external" push factors, such as international norms, transnational networks, and restraining patriarchal power structures. Yet, we argue that the time is ripe to advance a more sophisticated gendered notion of agency in foreign policy leadership. Moreover, as this article is concerned with change and continuity in foreign policy, we believe that such an approach can generate more nuanced understandings and explanations of the rise of pro-gender norms in foreign policy.

Given the skepticism toward the state, feminist theory has emphasized the state itself as consisting of multiple, often contradictory agencies and actors, highlighting the spaces and opportunities for feminist interventions (Pringle and Watson 1992; Kantola and Dahl 2005). Marian Sawer and Sandra Grey (2009) have developed the concept of insider-outsider support structures that enable women bureaucrats working in the state to connect with women's movement actors working outside the state (see Eisenstein 1996 on the concept of "femocrat"). Moreover, Htun and Weldon (2012) have sought to measure the influence of women's civil society movements on key state policy outcomes, such as the rise of new laws to reduce and end violence against women.

Comparative feminist studies are also highly relevant to theorizing change and continuity in foreign policy (McBride Stetson and Mazur 1995; McBride Stetson 2001; Outshoorn 2009). They explore the range of factors affecting the ways in which gender norms and gender-sensitive policies are diffused within and across state institutions. Htun and Weldon (2018) ask when and why do governments promote women's rights? By analyzing seventy countries across three decades, 1975–2005, they are able to show how different logics of politics operate in different

policy domains: on violence against women and workplace equality policy, norms are influential because of a logic of (international) status hierarchy among states, whereas on policies regarding family law, abortion, and contraception, a logic of doctrinal politics at the domestic level dominates, given the influence of religious institutional actors.

Feminist theory in the international relations field building on constructivist scholarship has also pioneered the study of nonstate actors and transnational forces below and above the state in promoting normative changes that have implications for state foreign policies (Klotz 1995; Finnemore 1996; Zwingel 2015). The presence and acceptance of quotas for equitable gender representation, institutions for mainstreaming gender analysis, and antiviolence against women policies, for instance, are prior structures that increasingly shape contemporary foreign policy, giving rise to specific pro–gender equality norms and strategies. Compared with constructivist and institutional frameworks for norm diffusion, international feminist theory has been even more focused on how transnational networks within and across states are instigated by locally connected grassroots actors, such as women's groups and organizations, rather than international organizations or epistemic "expert" communities (True and Mintrom 2001; cf. Acharya 2004). In fact, the research agenda on norm diffusion has been vitally shaped by feminist research on feminist networks as agents of diffusion (Htun and Weldon 2012; Krook and True 2012; Hughes, Krook, and Paxton 2015). These networks are seen as works in progress that actively shape the international norms that are themselves dynamic processes subject to contestation and change. Moreover, feminist scholars have addressed practical challenges in researching these networks. They could not rely on existing databases or knowledge. Thus, they have built new repositories of knowledge, collecting international data from the ground-up on women's organizations, pro–gender equality laws, quotas, and institutions in as many states as possible, enlisting the assistance of key partners in policy and justice institutions and civil society (True 2019).

While studying international normative change, feminist theorists have noticed the dynamic and nonlinear evolution of the meaning of norms on gender and gender equality (Lombardo, Meier, and Verloo 2009; Zwingel 2015). We would therefore expect similar dynamic understandings of gender and gender equality to affect foreign policies. Focusing on the fluidity and multiple meanings of a norm provides greater analytical leverage for explaining why gender equality norms emerge and appear to be widely accepted across states even though they hardly ever achieve their intended aims (True 2019). This insight is directly applicable to foreign policy analysis and the analysis of the outcomes of pro–gender equality foreign policies. For instance, in the WPS foreign policy domain, a binary conception of sex can be found at the heart of UNSCR 1325. Yet over nearly two decades, WPS as an international community of practice has progressively recognized greater diversity and intersectionality in the category of woman (girls/youth, minority status/ethnicity, disability), as well as recognizing the category of men and boys (gender rather than sex), particularly as victims of sexual and gender-based violence and supporters of women's agency in peacebuilding, thus changing the dominant meaning of "gender" as understood in international peace and security discourse and practice.

In sum, feminist international theory is both structure and agency focused and offers a dynamic, nonlinear account of policy change and continuity to foreign policy analysis as well as the import of gender. In recognizing the ongoing constitution of norms, it confers an active role to gendered agents in identifying and interpreting norms and policy problems (Bacchi 1999). At the same time, advocacy networks that continually alter their membership and policy agendas constitute an ontological standpoint that mediates the tension between analyzing agency versus structure. As Zwingel argues, transnational networks have their own political agendas and are not automatically knowledgeable and supportive of international norms (2013, 113). They engage in trial and error processes, in theory and practice, to

see what works for translating principled ideas into concrete outcomes (Krook and True 2012, 117).

Foreign Policy Analysis

While there are major epistemological differences between IFT and FPA, there are also a number of overlapping areas and intersections—for example, the centrality of linking the domestic to the international, addressing the interplay between agency and structure, and an openness to pursuing interdisciplinary studies and multilevel theory as well as empirical analysis. FPA has, in many ways, strived and developed in the shadow of IR. Whereas IR for a long time dominated the discipline with its reliance primarily on structural theoretical explanations, FPA has, since its establishment as a research field, centered more on foreign policy decision-making—the complexities of international politics that practitioners and decision makers are confronted with. As such, FPA has sought to open up the black box of decision-making by pursuing actor-oriented and multilevel theories of foreign policy processes, resulting in complex multifactorial analyses on a broad range of issues (Rosenau 1974; George 1993; Hill 2015; Smith et al. 2016).

Although FPA traditionally puts a strong emphasis on behavioralism, a broad range of theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches have been advanced—for example, to highlight how psychological, individual, organizational, and bureaucratic processes impact foreign policy outcomes (Allison 1971; Brecher 1972; Gross Stein and Pauly 1992; Hudson 2014). Ole Holsti's pathbreaking research in the 1970s on national role conceptions, societal characteristics, and their influence on policy making, state agency, and foreign policy outcomes has been instrumental in advancing the field.

Linking domestic politics to international relations, Putnam has advanced the novel notions of "double-edged diplomacy" and "two-level games" (1988) as a way to capture how diplomats, politicians, and political leaders are constrained and enabled by the interaction between these contexts—for instance, in international negotiations. In another study, Jeffrey Checkel (1999) argues that we can only fully understand foreign policy and cross-national variation by linking international norms to domestic change. In a similar vein, Michael Barnett (1999) analyses how foreign policy change can be legitimized by studying the interaction between normative international structures and domestic institutional contexts and cultural landscapes, which inform political actors and guide social practices.

In addition, FPA offers a useful entry point, as the field contains large and rich numbers of comparative empirical studies of foreign policies. Hence, FPA scholarship has ambitiously sought to conduct major cross-national studies, with big data collection and data sets. At the same time, it has generated more limited advancement of foreign policy theory. Furthermore, FPA is heavily centered on and confined to state-centrism. It is only recently that FPA has begun to move beyond North America and Europe and to assess the impact of nonstate actors in foreign policy processes and in the broader realm of international relations (Hudson 2014). As part of this endeavor, critical foreign policy analysis has developed and grown as a subfield in FPA (Williams 2005). This strand of research underlines the importance of both structure and agency and puts forward a much broader view of international politics (Smith et al. 2017). Similar to IFT, critical foreign policy analysis highlights how states' foreign policies are shaped both by nongovernmental organizations on the inside and transnational social movements and norms on the outside. For instance, with a time-series cross-sectional data set, Youngwan (2017) shows how NGOs directly influence states' foreign aid policy behaviors toward other states. Furthermore, critical FPA scholars probe discrepancies between theory, knowledge, and reality, as well as the mismatch that exists between foreign policy rhetoric and

Table 1. Bridging international feminist theory and foreign policy analysis.

International feminist theory	Foreign policy analysis	Prospects for theory development
• Multilevel analysis (local-global, inside/outside accounts) • Multiple actors (state, nonstate) • Interdisciplinary theories on gender, patriarchy, power, transnationalism, global networks • Nonlinear explanations of pro-gender norms in state institutions • Gender mainstreaming in global politics • Bridging theory-practice divide	• Actor-oriented analysis (leadership, decision making) • Complex multifactor analysis and large cross-national studies • National role conception of states • Double edge diplomacy/ two-level games • International norms and domestic change • Bridging theory-practice divide	• Gendered multilevel foreign policy games • Women's foreign policy leadership • Change and continuity of pro-gender foreign policy norms and explaining cross-national trends • Gender identity and foreign policy entrepreneurship • Gender equality as state branding • Gendered recognition in inter-state diplomacy
Lacunae		
• Studies on women's foreign policy leadership • Insider accounts of foreign policy processes highlighting gender dynamics • Adoption, diffusion, and institutionalization of pro-gender norms in foreign policy	• Gender-sensitive analyses in theory and empirical studies • Theory advancement • Studies beyond North America and Europe	

action. As a result, these studies show that foreign policies and decisions can always be framed differently and are rarely made only because of "necessity" (Smith et al. 2017, 6).

Still, FPA theories overall tend to be "gender blind" (Hudson 2005). In an article published as early as 1981 on the foreign policy beliefs of women in leadership positions, Holsti and Rosenau stated: "few predictions about social change seems as safe as the position that women will play an increasingly important role in leadership positions. However, one may judge the pace of change in this respect, there can be little disagreement about the trend." Yet, scholarship on gender in foreign policy is still scarce in FPA. Obviously, the path-breaking research by Hudson and Leidl (2015) on the Hillary doctrine has opened up the field to gender-sensitive foreign policy analysis. Yet, there are nearly no studies, to our knowledge, that seek to explain the overall rise of pro-gender norms and, in particular, how gender identities and practices impact foreign policy processes and outcomes, by using international feminist theory. Hence, there is a great opportunity to advance theory by drawing on both IFT and FPA in examining these research questions as shown in table 1.

A Comparative Framework for the Study of Gender and Foreign Policy

Departing from the points of intersection between IFT and FPA, we advance in this section a comparative theoretical framework on gendering foreign policy for empirical analyses. We clarify some of the metatheoretical assumptions, which the framework builds on. We then elaborate on some of the key concepts of the framework and their operationalizations for empirical analysis. Finally, we focus on the comparative and methodological application of the framework.

Foreign policy is notoriously difficult to define and often lacks precision and a common definition. However, we find Walter Carlsnaes' (2002, 335) emphasis on

the purposive nature of foreign policy useful because it focuses on foreign policy that is expressed in the form of explicitly stated goals, commitments, and directives. As such, foreign policy is seen more as actor-oriented practice than simply a structured response or adaption to external factors.

As mentioned above, one of the big debates in the field of FPA relates to agency and structure (Giddens 1979; Carlsnaes 1992), which focuses on the dualism between them. In this article, we view human agents and structures as fundamentally interrelated and mutually constituted. But again, few if any of the contributions to this debate explicitly problematize gendered structures, hierarchies, and political actors in foreign policy. Hence, one of our ambitions is to make a novel contribution to this debate by highlighting how patriarchy functions as a structuring and ordering principle of international society. As such, we want to highlight how patriarchal structures constrain feminist or pro–gender equality actions. At the same time, we seek to identify specific enabling structures that can create "window of opportunities" in the diffusion and institutionalization of pro-gender norms in foreign policy. To capture the gendered mutual constitution of agent and structure, we think it is useful to think of the interaction between agent and structure as *gendered multilevel games* (inspired by the work of Harding [2004] on structuration and standpoint theory, as well as Putnam [1988] on two-level games). Foreign policy actors must negotiate a complex international social world of gender symbolism and gendered practices, which affect how states and individuals present themselves and are perceived and the modes of communication and interaction among them. It thereby sensitizes our empirical analysis to the material lived experiences of people, where gender intersects and often reinforces other social categories of inequality and identity, such as race/ethnicity, sexuality, class, nationality status, and so forth, within, across, and between states.

Gender

To study continuity and change of pro-gender norms in foreign policy requires some delimitation of the scope for empirical analysis. We suggest three ways in which gendering foreign policy can be studied. First, as one of the five pillars of resolution 1325 centers on participation, descriptive and substantive representation are central. *Gender representation* and inclusion feature large in contemporary policy discourses, as well as in feminist political theory and activism. Gender representation is also central in the growing number of studies on diplomacy that map and analyze gendered practices of diplomats (Towns and Niklasson 2017; Aggestam and Svensson 2018; Aggestam and Towns 2018; Cassidy 2018). The analysis should also be attentive to the reproduction of intersectional relations of class, ethnicity, and sexuality inter alia. Second, *gender mainstreaming* is embedded in international liberalism and has been widely adopted in the last two decades by international institutions. As such, this context has provided a window of opportunity (ripe conditions) to promote gender equality and women's rights. In this regard, it is relevant to assess to what extent gender mainstreaming has influenced the foreign policy of specific countries. Third, as gender mainstreaming tends to favor depoliticized and technocratic approaches and outcomes, it is also important that the analysis is assessed according to some *feminist transformative principles.* This will enable a critical scrutiny of gendered relations, which will illuminate contentious politics and patriarchal power practices, as well as the extent to which a specific country is advancing toward a more explicit feminist transformative foreign policy.

Women, Norm Entrepreneurs, and Leadership

Leadership is another contested concept where some emphasize the role played by individual actors. Others argue that it is the structural contexts that enable and

constrain leadership. As such, studies on leadership put different emphases on the position, the individual, the process, and the strategy chosen. Obviously, leadership is a relational activity, and the leader-follower nexus is, therefore, central to the analysis (Aggestam and Johansson 2017). But, yet again, there are very few studies that directly analyze the foreign policy leadership of women and men as gendered beings. For instance, we know that women leaders often seek to be more masculine and aggressive in foreign policy actions to overcome the perception of feminine weakness (Genovese 1993). However, men leaders may also wield their masculine gender identities, whether consciously or subconsciously and with positive and negative outcomes for foreign policy.

Guided by the theoretical framework, we are interested in highlighting women's political agency, leadership, and statecraft but also the use of femininity and masculinity in foreign policy. This highlights how women and men perform and behave in gendered ways, deploying gender images, language, tropes, and actions and how gendered structures pertaining to institutions and states influence and shape foreign policy processes and decisions. But we also want to probe and unpack how the rise of women's leadership of pro–gender equality and feminist foreign policies can help us understand the relationship between agency and structure and, vice versa, how agency and structure help us explain and interpret women's leadership in foreign policy, its limits, and its possibilities? Furthermore, we seek to explore whether there is a shift in going from women's political participation to meaningful women's participation with influence and leadership where women are the decision-makers who lead a new vision for foreign policy and take action on it. There is increasing evidence that the rise of women in public life, in particular as political representatives, results in more gender-inclusive policies in government agendas and greater public service responsiveness to the concerns of female citizens (Iyer et al. 2011; Bashevkin 2014).

Different collective leadership styles can impact the adoption of pro–gender equality and/or feminist strategies. We therefore propose the following categories of leadership, which can be applied for empirical analysis: (a) *status quo–oriented*, (b) *gender-sensitive* and inclusive, and (c) *transformative* by deliberately confronting gendered power structures. Yet, one central conundrum is: to what extent do individual leaders matter in the adoption of pro–gender equality and feminist foreign policy? Without a doubt, the promotion of pro-gender norms in foreign policy is strongly attached to the roles of key political figures and foreign ministers, such as Hilary Clinton, Margot Wallström, Julie Bishop, Justin Trudeau, and William Hague (Bashevkin 2014). In this regard, the concept of *norm entrepreneur* in foreign policy can be useful (Nadelmann 1990). A norm entrepreneur can be understood as a political actor who actively and consciously seeks to promote foreign policy change by integrating pro–gender equality norms (Davies and True 2017). Of interest is also what specific foreign policy roles norm entrepreneurs are pursuing. Theories of international norm diffusion most often assume that nonstate actors are the entrepreneurial agents persuading powerful states to change their behavior. By contrast, we argue that state agents can (also) be principled norm entrepreneurs. We explicate the foreign policy acts that make them significant agents of international socialization. Unlike nonstate actors, who set the agenda by advocating for new norms, foreign policy decision-makers can take advantage of their positionality and their relative power to advance the recognition of certain underimplemented norms by redefining the "national interest," what is included in it, and what is meant by it. Hence, the gender identity and positionality of the entrepreneur or foreign policy actor matters (Davies and True 2017). That identity may also facilitate the diffusion of the norm, particularly when it is juxtaposed to the content of the normative or policy change and when the change being sought challenges conventional foreign policy action. For example, male foreign policy leaders may be unlikely

messengers of pro-gender norms leading to quite successful agendas of international socialization (Davies and True 2017).

Practice and Foreign Policy Orientation

The foreign policy orientation of a state provides an overarching frame to explain the rise, continuity, change, and/or resistance to pro–gender equality norms. The foreign policy orientation also includes state identity, which is (re-)constituted by a broad range of historical, domestic, and international conditions, actors, and practices. In Ole Holsti's (1970) original work on national role conception, he tries to capture how nations view themselves and their roles in the international arena (see also Aggestam 2004). This is, according to Holsti, shaped by elite perceptions as well as by societal characteristics and domestic political imperatives. This is fitting with our ambition to identify enabling and constraining conditions for the promotion of pro-gender norms in foreign policy. Hence, the study of gender and democracy stresses the domestic factors that affect how receptive nation-states are to the promotion of gender equality norms: for instance, the more democratic a state is with respect to its governance, the more likely women's political perspectives, including their "gender perspective" is likely to be politically articulated. Other variables such as the degree of women's political representation and the strength and autonomy of women's movement are also emphasised (Htun and Weldon 2012; Bashevkin 2014; True 2016). Hence, we would expect pro–gender equality foreign policies to be advanced by democratic states where women's political presence is most manifest and supported by broader women's movements (McBride Stetson and Mazur 1995). Also, we would expect that states with a national role conception or identity as a peacemaker or peaceful democracy would be more likely to adopt pro-gender foreign policy norms to be consistent with this conception. Moreover, sometimes the adoption of pro-gender norms in a peace agreement—for instance, in the case of Columbia or in third-party peace mediation in the case of Norway—can lead to or reinforce the construction of the peacemaker/peaceful democracy identity.

We also argue that it is important to identify key representations and discursive structures that legitimize foreign policies. Hence, the empirical analysis should explore whether some ideas are targeting some specific spheres and whether some domains of foreign policy, such as international aid and humanitarian policy, are more responsive to pro-gender norm diffusion than others, such as national security or international trade policy, and why this is the case? Moreover, how is resistance against such norm promotion articulated and mobilized? Are there linkages or disconnection between various foreign policy spheres, such as trade, economic policy, security, peace diplomacy, and humanitarian affairs?

It is also relevant to analyze and identify how pro-gender norms are anchored and formulated into more specific foreign policy strategies. Practices may, for instance, be expressed in coalition building with both domestic and international actors and other states; for instance, the coalition "friends of WPS" at the UN Security Council expresses such foreign policy coordination, as do the "champions" of the UK's Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative. Furthermore, in what contexts and under what conditions are pro–gender equality practices identified and launched as an important foreign policy change? Conversely, what strategies are other actors using to resist and/or contest such foreign policy change?

Finally, state feminism focuses on changing state structures by institutionalizing women's state machinery, feminist social movements, and women's rights and empowerment (Hernes 1987). We therefore argue that states need to be taken seriously but not by privileging state actors as the main or only unit of our theoretical and empirical analysis. Instead, we challenge the domestic-international divide in

foreign policy by recognizing that the state itself consists of multiple actors and is a site of diverse domestic and international structures, processes, and actors. As such, foreign policy diplomacy increasingly involves harnessing the power of global networks that cut across traditional sovereignties to address common and often intractable challenges as much as managing interstate relations.

Norm Diffusion and Transnational Networks

Feminist international theorists have forged new approaches to conceptualize transnational networks as nonstate actors that both directly influence foreign policies through advocacy and indirectly influence these policies through the international normative change they contribute to, which has a bearing on foreign policies (Paxton, Hughes, and Green 2006; Htun and Weldon 2012; Hughes, Krook, and Paxton 2015). Transnational feminist or women's networks work across jurisdictions negotiating and localizing international norms to bring about social change as well as policy change, even when there may be no favorable foreign policy leader or norm entrepreneur or an international power structure that mitigates against the adoption of such change. Often these networks depend on generations of local and national social movement activism to make such change possible by forging new alliances, reframing previous ideas and actions (Joachim 2008; Zwingel 2013). Going global is a strategy that is expected to increase public support and remove key obstacles to change, but the politics of connecting issues across jurisdictions has the effect of changing both the agents and the norms being pushed (True 2019). We therefore propose to pay particular attention to networks in the analysis because they play a critical role in the creation of new institutions advancing gender equality—for instance, in foreign policy. At the same time, networks do not work as a unified social movement. As Hughes, Krook, and Paxton (2015) find, women's organizing across states is highly diverse and, in the case of electoral gender quotas, it frequently comes up against proto-feminist agendas that undermine the case for quotas despite the international support for them.

Networks, like norms, can also be viewed as works "in progress." They are most important in the phase after the introduction of a new norm, when the norm in question attains a level of international acceptance. At this stage, networks often become less informal and ad hoc and more professionalized and engaged with governments and intergovernmental institutions. They are distinct from the concept of norm entrepreneur—which is usually understood as an individual leader or single group, rather than a loosely connected set of individuals and groups that actively shapes a norm in progress—which unconsciously reflects the network's own changing formation (Nadelmann 1990).

Power

Power is conventionally understood by international relations scholars, including in FPA, as referring to the material capabilities of states and as a zero-sum quantity in the interstate realm. However, conceptions of power are multiple and increasingly understood as ideational more than positional and shaped by knowledge and symbolic as well as military and production structures (Strange 1988). Power is located not merely in material structures, such as the international gender division of labor or control by specific actors; it also lies in "systems of signification and meaning" that are socially produced and affect actors' self-understandings and perceived interests (Barnett and Duvall 2005, 20). In some respects, the popular term in diplomacy "soft power" captures this ideational, symbolic, and indeed performative concept of power (Nye 1990). Furthermore, from a feminist perspective, gender relations are considered intrinsic to the meaning of power itself (Scott 1986). Power is always relational (Tickner 1988; Sylvester 1994) and conceived less as power-over than as the

Table 2. Comparative framework on the study of gender and foreign policy.

	Continuity and change
Power	Power of ideas, identities, and material capabilities; relational power, gendered multilevel games; networks
Gender	Substantive and descriptive representation; gender mainstreaming; feminist transformative principles
Leadership	Norm entrepreneurs; leaders-followers, leadership styles (status-quo, gender-sensitive, gender-inclusive, transformative)
Practice	Gendered practices (feminine, masculine); national role conception (e.g., state feminism); domestic-international coalition building, foreign policy coordination
Norm diffusion	Specific areas of norm promotion; degree of embeddedness and institutionalization; linkages between foreign policy spheres; transnational networks
Foreign policy outcome	Liberal rule-based system in trade and security; less militaristic orientation; investment in development aid and humanitarianism; norm adoption in similar and diverse contexts and political domains; soft power/smart power

power to act in concert, which is part of the notion of empowerment—both individual and collective. In the realm of foreign policy, conceived as "gendered, multilevel games," such an understanding of power as relational and shaped by gender, among other facets of identity and structure, seems crucial. Hypermasculine performances of foreign policy that emphasize the use of strong-arm tactics and displays of hard power may seriously constrain the possibility for pro-gender norms in foreign policy to come to the fore. Importantly, this approach takes into account the power of identity, the power of ideas, and the power of networks and movements, as well as the material capabilities of states. Most importantly, it captures both in theory and in practice the critical interplay between agency and structure, which can explain the rise as well as the resistance of pro-gender norms in foreign policy, as shown in table 2.

Advancing Comparative Analysis

Comparative analysis of gender in foreign policy can be advanced in a number of ways. By highlighting the variations of pro-gender norms, the theoretical framework enhances analytical precision and generates more robust explanations for the presence, adoption, and practice of pro-gender norms in foreign policy. The framework enables systematic studies, which can track and map cross-national trends, as well as regional and global patterns, with regard to women's status and rights. For instance, variations in pro-gender norms may be traced by examining the extent to which gender representation, gender mainstreaming, and feminist strategies in foreign policy are developed by states. Variations in these gender norms may be explained by assessing (a) the attitudes of beliefs of men and women foreign policy leaders in a state (Bjarnegard and Melander 2017), (b) the presence of activists often connected to transnational networks pushing for locally meaningful pro-gender norms and whether or not a state is committed: (c) to advancing the liberal rules-based system in trade and security whether under the leadership of the United States or not (Ikenberry 2011); (d) to a less militaristic orientation as judged by rising or declining military expenditures (e.g., Barnes and O'Brien 2018); (e) to the level of investment in development aid and humanitarianism as judged by percentage of GDP and by the reception to a country's foreign aid policy by recipient communities (Engberg-Pedersen 2018); (f) to norm adoption—as seen in the openness to international policy norm diffusion and networks; and (g) to the relative material power of states versus their attention to symbolic and persuasive

power, some elements of which are now judged by indexes that rank states on their public diplomacy or ideological power capabilities, with the latter best expressed in the notion of "soft power" (Portland, Facebook, and USC Public Diplomacy 2018).

Our comparative framework guides empirical studies to analyze the degree of embeddedness of pro-gender norms in foreign policy in similar and diverse national contexts, as well as in different foreign policy domains, such as security and defense versus development and humanitarian domains. It is not surprising that the five cases (Australia, Canada, Norway, South Africa, and Sweden) featured in this special issue are all, in effect, middle **powers** in the international system. Though one could argue that some great powers (for example, the United Kingdom and the United States as penholders on WPS in the United Nations Security Council) have also adopted aspects of pro-gender norms in their foreign policies, it is significant that it is the states aspiring to be "middle powers" that have most consistently and explicitly prioritized pro-gender foreign policies. Our case selection reflects this intersection between middle power status in the international realm and the adoption of pro-gender foreign policies as tools of "soft power." As the authors in this issue show, all states—albeit in distinct ways—have promoted their own self-interest and quest for greater global influence through pro-gender foreign policies. For example, Skjelsbaek and Tryggestad (this issue) discuss how Norway has used its foreign policy investment in WPS to gain political access and influence with the United States. Similarly, Haastrup (this issue) highlights in her article, how South Africa has been able to elevate its regional power status and its credibility on the UN Security Council precisely through its promotion of women's mediators in African conflicts. Thus, various states from the Global North and Global South have seized the opportunity of pro-gender international norms to advance a range of foreign policy goals and their middle power status.

We can compare state foreign policies in terms of how centrally **gender** is articulated within a state's foreign policy orientation and practice. In this issue, we have two cases that have critically labeled their foreign policy "feminist" (Sweden, Canada) and, at least in the Swedish case analyzed by Bergmann-Rosamond (this issue), have developed a framework for promoting cosmopolitan feminist principles across foreign policy domains and two cases that have adopted strategies for mainstreaming gender across foreign policies but without the explicit feminist branding. Lee-Koo's article (this issue) argues, for instance, that Australia has consistently promoted pro-gender norms in foreign aid, humanitarian, and security policy "by stealth," avoiding the open contestation in domestic politics that would be required to credibly promote a feminist foreign policy in the international realm. Norway, by contrast with Sweden, has effectively promoted gender-inclusion in its support of peace processes, without broaching the question of feminism. Norway's foreign policy aims to generate international consensus where feminism may be seen as too provocative and undermining rather than advancing peacemaking, despite the domestic consensus on state feminism.

We can also analyze how transformative the focus on gender in foreign policy is. For example, in the Swedish case, the impetus is to transform patriarchal structures of gender inequality especially in conflict-affected countries; whereas in Canada, the adoption of a feminist international assistance policy, Parisi (this issue) argues, is informed by instrumentalized assumptions of women as agents of economic development and growth in the Global South with little attention to men or masculinities and how they might enable and/or constrain processes of development and change. Gender equality norms that highlight the socially constructed nature of masculinity and femininity are highly contested internationally. Some states reinforce essentialist understandings of gender, while others seek to challenge both the gender hierarchy between men and women and the binary conception of gender identity. For instance, as Haastrup argues, South Africa has consistently promoted the visible representation of women in foreign policy decision-making forums since

the 1990s, but rarely has it addressed substantive issues of gender justice in foreign policy.

The articles in the special issue reveal the significance of **leadership** in the promotion of pro-gender foreign policy. We posit that we are unlikely to see foreign policy change driven by pro-gender norms without significant women's or male feminist leadership. As Bashevkin (2018) shows in her analysis of successive US administrations, not all women secretaries of state have supported pro-gender norms. In this issue, all cases of pro–gender equality foreign policy consist of some degree of individual leadership—if not the political leader or minister in the foreign policy portfolio. The agency of leaders such as Margot Wallström in Sweden, Julie Bishop in Australia, Gro-Harlem Brundtland historically in Norway, Nkozasana Dlamini-Zuma in South Africa, and Justin Trudeau/Chrystia Freeland in Canada has been critical in seizing the opportunity for pro-gender foreign policies. These leaders have all sought to mark themselves out in the political and international realm through their advocacy of pro-gender-equality or feminist foreign policy. Their leadership styles, however, can be compared both in terms of their projection of masculine and feminine power and their foreign policy approach. Some leaders (e.g., Dlamini-Zuma in South Africa) have prioritized gender-inclusion in foreign policy by advocating for diverse actors to be involved in foreign policy, while other leaders have sought to make foreign policies more "gender-sensitive," mainstreaming gender analysis into foreign aid spending and development programs (e.g., Bishop in Australia, Freeland in Canada). In a more far-reaching way, other leaders, such as Margot Wallström in Sweden, have aspired to transform the unequal, gendered structures of international politics through foreign policy. There are obvious strengths and weaknesses in the extent to which pro-gender foreign policy can be advanced through the leadership of individuals. If feminist or pro-gender foreign policies are too closely linked to the particular personalities and legacies of leaders, then they may not be sustained following a change in government or minister or adequately institutionalized within the bureaucratic structures of the foreign policy machinery. At the same time, charismatic foreign policy leaders may be able to generate a wide followership for pro-gender foreign policies that can promote both their domestic embeddedness and international influence.

In the cases of Sweden, Norway, and Canada, the advancement of pro-gender norms in foreign policy **practice** corresponds with their long-held self-images as "good" and/or "women-friendly" states. Gender equality has been widely institutionalized and domestically embedded in the state feminism practiced by Sweden and Norway. As such, their foreign policy role conception reflects the states' bureaucratic capacities to practically implement pro-gender norms in foreign policy. For instance, Bergman-Rosamond shows in her analysis of Sweden how the launching of a feminist foreign policy emerged from the long-held humanistic idea of "gender cosmopolitanism." Likewise, Norway has invested considerable resources over the last decade to become a "superpower" in peacemaking. Increasing professionalization of diplomats and institutionalization of pro-gender norms has made possible the advancement of gender-inclusive peace processes. In the case of Canada, Parisi shows in her analysis how the country under Trudeau's leadership has been "rebranding" itself through its practices of feminist international development assistance, which are part of broader efforts to project an image of Canada as a compassionate and generous member of the global community.

It is striking that in all the cases in this special issue, the global **diffusion** of pro-gender norms has been perceived as a "window of opportunity" for foreign policy change. Without a doubt, the adoption of UNCR 1325 in 2000 and the global mobilization around the WPS agenda have provided an incentive structure for states to advance pro-gender norms. Moreover, transnational networks and "women-friendly" coalition building among states have been visible in various international fora as a way to advance pro-gender norms. At the same time, norm

diffusion requires both contestation and consensus-building. In this regard, Sweden and Canada stand out as driving forces in expanding the space for a "feminist" framing of foreign policy. Their public commitments have been met with praise, contestation, and resistance. In contrast, Australia and Norway have opted for consensus-building strategies and gender mainstreaming.

In the cases featured in this issue, we can observe a selective approach to the advancement of pro-gender **foreign policy outcomes**. The favored areas for integrating these norms have corresponded chiefly to the WPS agenda, such as promoting women's participation in peace processes and peacekeeping, supporting women's economic empowerment, and preventing and combatting gendered violence. As Haastrup reveals in her analysis of South Africa, the country's projection of pro-gender norms abroad has been a way of silencing critiques of the pervasiveness of gendered violence at home. Canada also provides an illustration of selective promotion of feminism in its international development assistance while its NATO member military expenditures are on the rise. Likewise, rhetorically, Sweden is committed to a comprehensive feminist foreign policy in all its areas, and yet, pragmatism, compromises, and trade-offs between the diplomacy and defense foreign policy domains are constantly made. It is apparent in all the cases in this issue that the advancement of pro-gender norms is framed as both "smart politics" and "smart economics" in the national interest and as integral to the liberal rule-based order and its reinforcement. Given that the multilateral world order is today being progressively undermined by an increasing number of states, we expect that the incentive structures and windows of opportunity for the advancement of pro-gender norms could easily shift.

The cross-national comparison in this issue indicates the progress that has been made in a number of countries toward pro-gender and/or feminist foreign policy. Yet, a major question is how transformative and resilient this foreign policy change is? The rise of illiberal democracies, right-wing populism, and authoritarian leaders around the world has brought with it the striking remasculinization of contemporary global politics. The attack, in particular, on women's reproductive rights and bodily autonomy suggests the possibility for significant regression in pro-gender foreign policy outcomes. Hence, in critically assessing continuity and change in pro-gender norms in foreign policy, we need to pay particular attention to the presence and dynamics of gendered multilevel games. Analyzing three interrelated and mutually constituted conditions of agency (transformative leadership), practice (degree of institutionalization), and structure (favoring conditions) enables us to explain change and continuity in foreign policy with greater precision. This special issue shows how political leaders in many cases act as critical agents for foreign policy change. At the same time, leadership rotation, as in the case of the former foreign ministers Julie Bishop and Margot Wallström, raises questions regarding the continuity of pro-gender foreign policy. If these norms and practices are not consolidated within the foreign policy bureaucracy and wider national role conception, it is most likely that pro-gender norms may rescind in significance. Yet, Norway provides a contrasting example where the integration of pro-gender norms has been "depersonalized" and less reliant on leadership. Instead, greater attention has been given to processes of institutionalization and professionalization of gender-sensitive foreign policy practices. As such, the continuity depends to a large extent on the degree of embeddedness of pro-gender norms in foreign policy practices and bureaucratic structures. As Parisi illustrates in the case of Canada, during the reign of the right-wing government of Harper, "femocrats" were able to continue their work on gender equality despite shifting government priorities.

Yet, there exist global incentive structures that provide agents and enable practices with an overarching rationale for pursuing pro-gender norms in foreign policy. As noted in all of the case analyses, the prospect of short-term gains of economic growth, security, and sustainable peace have been used as persuasive arguments for

pro-gender foreign policy change. But what happens when a shifting international environment makes it increasingly difficult to pursue soft power arguments, tools, and practices? Patriarchal structures are deeply entrenched in states and global politics and take time to transform. The feminist "pragmatist" approach to smart economics and politics may be limited and vulnerable when, for instance, confronted with the rise of hypermasculine leaders. If the present rule-based liberal order is further eroded, there is a greater risk of gender backlash against transformative foreign policy and regression to traditional foreign policy. Hence, contestation through antagonistic discourses and nonimplementation as a way of resisting pro-gender norms may characterize global politics in the future (cf. True and Wiener 2019).

Conclusion

Over the last decade, a growing number of countries have adopted pro-gender norms as part of their foreign policies. Hence, we argue that the time is ripe to explore and explain this development. As theoretical and empirical knowledge is still scarce, we propose as a first step to compare cases of pro–gender equality state foreign policy. In this article, we have therefore advanced a theoretical framework gendering foreign policy as a way of spurring scholarship in the field and encouraging more systematic studies. The framework harnesses feminist international theory and foreign policy analysis to generate new conceptualizations. To facilitate explanation, it synthesizes the broader international relations scholarship on leadership and norm entrepreneurship, transnational networks, foreign policy orientation and state identity, and different conceptions and projections of power. In seeking to develop a new field of gender and comparative foreign policy, we argue that continuity and change is crucial to focus on given that gender equality and women's rights norms are among the most contested political phenomena globally. We do not expect there to be a linear, progressive trajectory wherein more and more states adopt pro–gender equality or feminist strategies in foreign policy. Rather, the theoretical framework here can be equally used to examine advances and setbacks or challenges to pro-gender norms in foreign policy. Above all, the approach we propose, which identifies and explains pro-gender norms, should transform the way foreign policymaking and foreign policy leadership have been studied in, to date, a largely "gender blind" field (Hudson 2005).

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