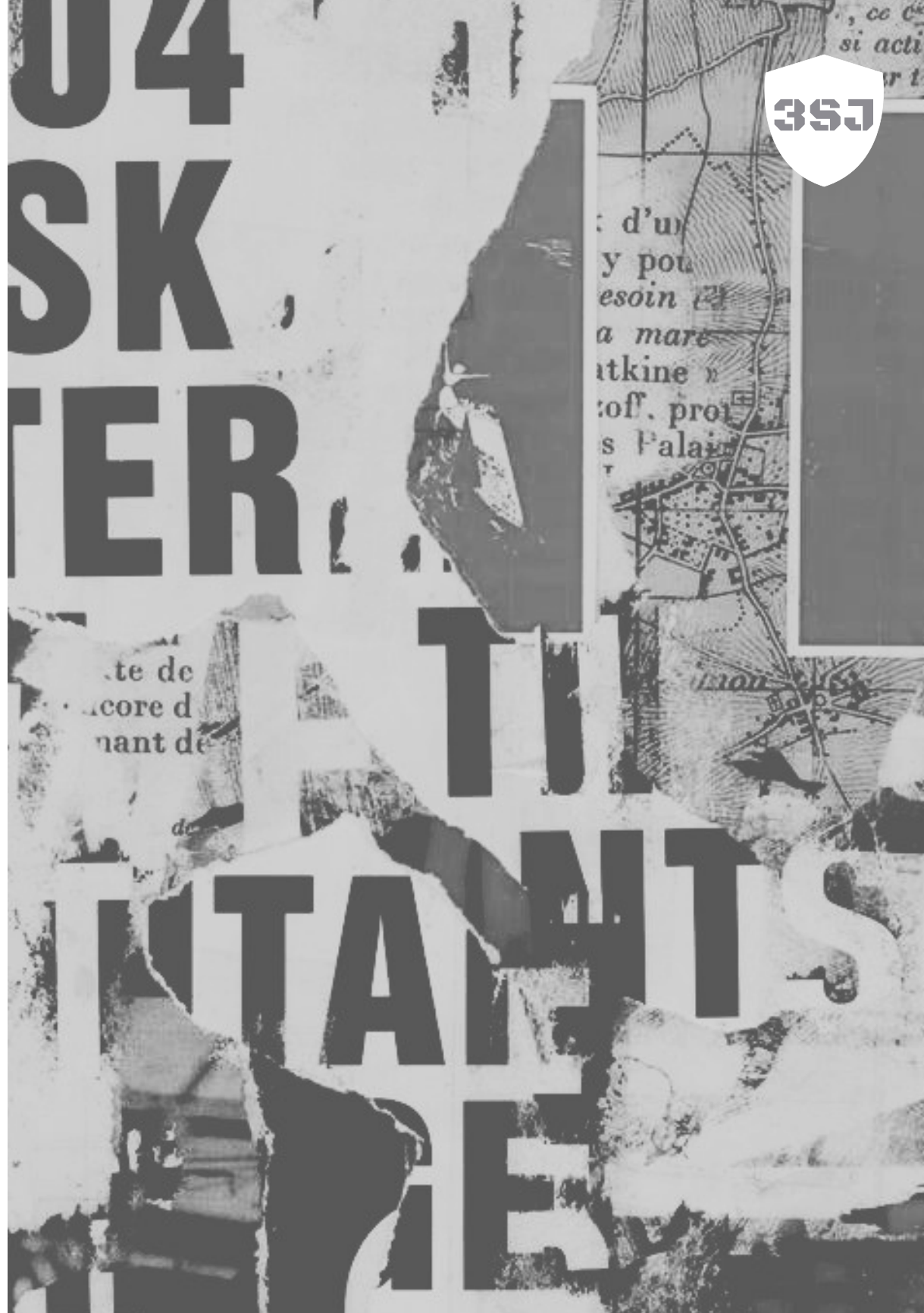


# THE HOT TAKE

BY THE STUDENT STRATEGY & SECURITY JOURNAL

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**DE-COLONISING** AN EVIL EMPIRE: IS IT FOR THE BEST IF THE **RUSSIAN** FEDERATION FALLS APART?

**FEMINIST** FOREIGN POLICY – ANOTHER FAD OR SUBSTANTIAL **PROGRESS**?

FIFTH  
RELEASE

# THE RUSSIA IMPERATIVE: INTEGRATION, NOT DECOLONIZATION

*by a PhD Candidate in International Affairs at Queen's University, Canada*

Carl von Clausewitz is best known for his writings *On War*; however, he also spelled out the conditions for achieving a just and durable peace. He believed that “politics has to construct a peace settlement in which all sides have a vested interest. Only then is military victory the true end of war and the foundation of peace, not a prelude to the next war:”

These words are more relevant than ever today, as the Russo-Ukrainian conflict shows no signs of abating and risks escalating into a nuclear confrontation between Moscow and Washington, DC. The critical question that now preoccupies chancelleries on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean is therefore “How can Ukraine and its Western allies ensure that the end of the current conflict will be followed by a lasting, sustainable peace - a peace that will encourage military disarmament and ensure nuclear non-proliferation in Europe and across the globe?”

“The nightmare that haunts all diplomats is of this war being followed not by such a peace, but rather by what would in effect be a prolonged armistice, one that would allow a resentful and humiliated, but still militarily powerful and authoritarian Russia to re-arm and restart hostilities.”

The nightmare that haunts all diplomats engaged in such discussions is of this war being followed not by such a peace, but rather by what would in effect be a prolonged armistice, one that would allow a resentful and humiliated, but still militarily powerful and authoritarian Russia to re-arm and restart hostilities. In response, an increasing number of voices now argue for ‘decolonising Russia’ - in effect, for breaking up the Russian Federation and recognising the right to “self-determination of its 83 internationally recognised federal subjects and over 190 ethnic groups”, in a process similar to the Soviet Union’s disappearance when its fifteen constituent republics became independent.

The focus of this note is not, however, on whether this comparison between the USSR in 1991 and today’s Russia is accurate, or whether Russia’s constituent territorial units and ethnic communities do indeed have a right to self-determination - although these questions are both relevant and important. Its aim is rather directed at outlining the conditions of a sustainable peace, followed by military disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation.

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Clausewitz's writings are clear and unambiguous on how such a peace can be achieved in practice: "A long-term victory that leads to a robust peace must change the enemy's mind and not just his will. It must convince him, not just temporarily disable him. It must win over the heart of the enemy so that his population is no longer hostile."

This assertion is confirmed by Europe's historical record over the past three centuries.

The first global conflict, the Seven Years' War, between two coalitions of European states resulted in a defeated but still powerful France that signed the humiliating Treaty of Paris of 1763. Within three decades, Europe was at war again, as Revolutionary, then Napoleonic France engaged in a twenty-year-long conflict with Britain and its allies. Only the wisdom and forbearance of Lord Castlereagh and Chancellor Klemens von Metternich at the Congress of Vienna, in 1815, finally brought about lasting peace. They both accepted the French ambassador's entreaties to include France as an equal partner in the negotiations and treat it not as a defeated enemy but as a future partner in peace. In effect, as Henry Kissinger aptly notes, "France came to participate in European affairs, because they could not be settled without her." This comment can now be equally well applied to Russia in 2023.

Germany's challenge to British and US hegemony during the early 20th century, resulting in two devastating world wars, is well documented. Here as well, the Versailles Peace Treaty

of 1919 humiliated but did not considerably weaken Germany, and triggered French General Ferdinand Foch's famous exclamation: "This is not Peace. It is an Armistice for twenty years". Adolf Hitler and his Nazi war machine proved him exactly right. This is why, in 1945, when Hitler's troops lay defeated and most of Europe in ruins, US diplomats were determined not to repeat the errors of 1919. Instead, they devised a 'Versailles remedial', claiming that 'vanquished Germany should be rehabilitated as a democracy and readmitted to the community of nations in equal terms'. As a result, West Germany was admitted as a NATO member in 1955 and became a founder of the European Economic Community in 1957. Over the next three decades, NATO and the EEC were anchored by a Germany that constituted both the main bulwark against Soviet expansionism and the economic engine for a rapidly integrating Western Europe.

**"De-colonising a defeated but not significantly weakened and still authoritarian Russia would be no more than a ten-year suspension of hostilities - enough for the Kremlin's master to re-arm and re-start anew the same old conflict on their terms. In short, the Western allies must make both Ukraine and Russia an offer neither of them can refuse: immediate membership in both NATO and the EU."**

Both the French and the German cases have a lot to teach us today, as we aim to end the on-going Russo-Ukrainian war and craft a sustainable and equitable peace in Europe. Containing, deterring, even

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de-colonising a defeated but not significantly weakened and still authoritarian Russia would be no more than a ten-year suspension of hostilities – enough for the Kremlin’s masters to re-arm and re-start anew the same old conflict on their terms.

The only viable alternative is to recognise that Russia is an indispensable partner in any robust and durable European peace, resulting in real disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation.

In short, the Western allies must make both Ukraine and Russia an offer neither of them can refuse: immediate membership in both NATO and the EU, accompanied by institutional, technical and financial assistance to help both former adversaries successfully integrate into both organizations over the long term. The ‘Moscow Remedial’ can thus be succinctly defined as an extension of the Versailles Remedial, this time applied to Russia – aiming, this time around, to replace an unstable and deadly balance of power in Europe by building a Trans-Atlantic community including a re-habilitated Russia, “forged through interdependence and the acceptance of shared democratic values, in and among states”. As history shows, similar strategies worked well for both post-Napoleonic France and post-Nazi Germany; there is much reason to hope that the Moscow Remedial will indeed succeed in post-Putin Russia.

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# A WHOLE CAKE IS ALWAYS BETTER THAN A SMASHED ONE

*by Yixu Zhou, Department of Political Studies, Queen's University*

Since the outbreak of the Russo-Ukrainian war, there has been much speculation about its end and outcome. In a short article in the WSJ in late 2022, John Mearsheimer suggested that many Westerners believe that the best hope for ending the war in Ukraine is for Vladimir Putin to step down. However, Putin's successor is likely to be at least as hostile to Ukraine and the West. Russia's foreign policy elite is virtually unanimous in its belief that the U.S.-led Western policy of integrating Ukraine into NATO would directly threaten their security.

**“If Putin steps down, the disintegration of Russia could lead to greater chaos in the Russia-Ukraine region.”**

Some scholars and experts have stated outrightly that Putin is the dovish one at the center of Russian power. If Putin steps down, the emergence of a more radical leader is very likely. Furthermore, if Putin steps down, the disintegration of Russia could lead to greater chaos in the Russia-Ukraine region.

Looking back at the series of concerns that had arisen after the collapse of the Soviet Union, one can see that it is not necessarily a good thing for Russia to disintegrate as a result of a Russo-Ukrainian war.

In M. E. Sarotte's new work, "Not One Inch," the fears raised by the collapse of the Soviet Union about the spread of dangerous weapons are vividly illustrated.

**“Government and military hardliners may attempt to establish independent kingdoms, perhaps even leading to more inhumane wars and turf grabs.”**

In today's Russia, the situation may be even more complicated, as many government and military hardliners may attempt to establish independent kingdoms to extend the lifespan of their power, perhaps even leading to more inhumane wars and turf grabs. In such a scenario, a large number of Russian missiles and nuclear weapons would be dispersed into the hands of different regional armies, which is reminiscent of the disorderly panic created by the collapse of the Soviet Union.

In addition, energy issues also need to be considered. With the outbreak of the Russo-Ukrainian War and escalating tensions in the South China Sea, Russia and China are forming a strong alliance. For China, the benefits of this alliance lie in the reliable energy supply from Russia. Russia has abundant natural resources and strategic energy reserves in the Far East, which are very attractive to Beijing.

“Overall, a divided Russia would not make the world a better place.”

During his meeting with Putin in March, Xi Jinping revealed that China would purchase more oil and gas from Russia and would accelerate the development of heavy industry in Russia's Far East. Chinese customs also announced that Russia had replaced Saudi Arabia as China's largest crude oil supplier, with Russian oil exports to China increasing by 24% to 15.68 million tons in the first two months of 2023 compared to the same period last year. As cooperation deepens in the future, China will have more influence in the Far East region. It is conceivable that if Russia falls into division, China is likely to try to occupy the rich energy resources in the Far East, leading to further chaos in the situation.

Overall, a divided Russia would not make the world a better place. Instead, it would add a lot of uncertainty. It's unpredictable how the complex political environment of the Kremlin will react to a divided country. If chaos ensues, there is a strong possibility that China will take over the Far East and try to make a move in the energy sector. This would undoubtedly greatly increase China's overall capabilities, making it more aggressive.

# RUSSIA'S PRIDE IN HAVING BEEN AN EMPIRE

*by Bartalotta Giuseppe Maria, Master's student in International Public Affairs from Rome.*

The line is thin between the Russian security dilemma and the pride of being an empire. So much so that the Ukrainian military campaign has been defined as a “special military operation”, then as an operation regarding the Russian security dilemma and, ultimately, as an operation concerned with integrating some Ukrainian areas where people speak Russian. The reality can be seen in the fact that the Russian Federation was unhappy regarding the adverse attitudes it was seeing around it, even in countries historically close to it, countries once under its influence.

The Russian Federation showed us that Soviet historic pride is still alive, in some kinds, in the country, surely at the highest level. The Soviet Union was a vast empire, and when it fell apart in 1991, the “West” started to expand toward the East, politically and militarily.

**“The fact that Putin still talks about being ‘one people’ with the neighboring countries is evidence of his ‘romantic’ or ‘imperialistic’ point of view.”**

The Russian Federation found its internal balance only after a decade, in 2000, when Putin took power over the country. Putin organized the country again, politically and economically, and carried out military

projects so that the Russian Federation could regain its role in the international arena. Several times Putin talked about the communist and the Soviet Union's past, and the fact that he still talks about being “one people” with the neighbouring countries is evidence of his “romantic” or “imperialistic” point of view.

However, we gradually saw a deterioration of Russia's power, and the EU's and NATO's enlargements are proof of it.

The primary reason for Russia's economic difference from other significant economic powers is its trade, which focuses on primary resources. However, counterbalancing the Russian economic weakness is its military power, which is impossible not to mention and which has always been a Soviet, and now, Russian strength. It is not the case that they are afraid to use their military power as a foreign policy tool.

The Russian Federation used military power in the wars it started in Georgia (2008) and then against Ukraine (2014) due to their independent, pro-Western orientations. These wars benefited the Russian Federation territorially and regionally - which was the mistake Europe and the other significant power made: they gave

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Russia incentives to continue these actions, which we saw again in Ukraine in 2022.

**“The Russian Federation did not fall apart only due to the new relationship between Russia and China.**

However, the recent war did not bring the result Putin hoped for. He wanted a quick victory, but it is not how it went. Putin faced unexpected resistance from the Ukrainians. After some time, there was also significant resistance from Europe, which unified in its purpose, decided to put sanctions, and gradually cut the European dependency on Russian gas, putting difficulty on itself and Russia on its knees.

The Russian Federation did not fall apart only due to the new relationship between Russia and China, this last which gained massive importance in Russia and compromised its independence informally from China from several points of view, among which the financial and goods market.

**“While its previous wars had given some results and some benefits to the Russian Federation, this war did not achieve anything. Russia is destroying itself as the Soviet Union did.”**

While its previous wars had given some results and some benefits to the Russian Federation, in this case, this war did not achieve anything: the Ukrainian-occupied areas are still only occupied and not globally recognized as Russian territories. Ultimately, these actions opened a

new phase where several countries, which never had considered joining NATO, make the request. It is news these days that Finland entered NATO.

Russia is destroying itself as the Soviet Union did.

Some analysts put much emphasis on the ethnic division within Russia. And we saw what happened in other countries such as Libya, Syria, Yemen and so on; yet when we talk about Russia, we do not talk about a simple country - but a nuclear one.

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# THE NUKES AND THE C-FACTOR

*by a Graduate Student in International Relations, Università degli Studi di Torino (Italy) and Beijing Foreign Studies University (People's Republic of China)*

What if? This is the question that should lead the geostrategic analysis regarding the current Ukrainian conflict and the contraposition to Vladimir Putin's Russia. The answer could give us some insights that can be useful to understand better how great power politics works.

Fighting without killing has been the mantra during the Cold War. Not just because of the well-known MAD but because of this question: what if the power with the largest number of nukes loses control over its nuclear arsenal?

Even if the Cold War ended 30 years ago and the USSR doesn't exist anymore, the Soviet nuclear arsenal is mostly still there. This was and is preventing any Russian antagonist from pushing too hard to make it fall. Do we really think that the USA and the West, in general, have not the power to defeat today's Russian Federation both economically and on the ground? Russia is a country with a GDP of just 2/3 of Italy's, with an economy driven mainly by energy commodities and fighting in Ukraine with armaments from the Soviet era.

**“Vladimir Putin, the son of the fall of the Soviet Union, learned the lesson and linked his personal political destiny to global security and stability.”**

Speaking about the current situation and Putin's Russia, the question now is, what if Putin falls? As decades ago, the answer is who will control the nuclear arsenal? What if even just a few nukes end up in the hands of non-state actors like terrorist groups, criminal organizations or a faction inside the deep state? In any case, every logic behind nuclear deterrence and balance of power valid among state actors would not be valid anymore. This would become the biggest security concern for every actor in the world system. Vladimir Putin, the son of the fall of the Soviet Union, learned the lesson and linked his personal political destiny to global security and stability.

**“It is in the best interest of Washington and the West to keep a sort of balance between Moscow and Beijing.”**

Finally, considering the potential rapid fall of Putin's Russia brings another problem for the long term for the USA and the West: the China factor. Beijing considers itself a Near Arctic-State and it never hides its interest in the Arctic route both in economic and strategic terms. The USA bought Alaska for the same reason with the USSR/Russia in mind. So, what if a very weak Russia could allow China to have direct or facilitate access to the Arctic posing

a new strategic challenge for global stability and security?

Looking at the C-factor is in the best interest of Washington and the West to keep a sort of balance between Moscow and Beijing. The two powers have been comrades, foes, enemies, and allies in the last decade. Keeping in mind the lesson that Kissinger taught us during the 60s, having an additional option to balance or counter China in the next decades could be incredibly useful. A fast fall of Russia would just complicate the picture.

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# COLLAPSE THE EVIL EMPIRE, BUT NOT THE RUSSIAN STATE

*by an anonymous contributor*

If there is one thing that the Russian invasion of Ukraine tells us, it is that Putin is committed to the victory of the Russian Federation no matter the cost. He is committed to maximalist ideals about Russian re-unification and has staked his entire presidency on this war. The *raison d'être* for Russia seems now to be built around the idea of Russian nationalism, at least in the rhetoric of Moscow. What this all tells us is that the secession of Putin's Russia will not go easily, and it is very unlikely that it will mirror the relatively peaceful dissolution of the Soviet Union.

On the surface, the collapse of the Russian Federation can seem to be a better and more sustainable option in the long-term, an outcome which can better protect global human rights and peacekeeping.

**“The ‘decolonisation’ project could provide an ideological reckoning through the failure of illiberal autocracy and defiance of cooperation and institutional integration. But it is all too simplistic to cast Russia in the role of the malevolent ‘enemy’ which must be defeated at all costs.”**

With this outcome, the ‘decolonisation’ project of Russia can take place where its ethnic minority groups sharing little ties to the Russian culture and language will

have the opportunity to self-govern and determine. Further, the global security threat of the current Russian regime will be destabilised. It could also provide an ideological reckoning through the failure of illiberal autocracy and defiance of cooperation and institutional integration. But it is all too simplistic to cast Russia in the role of the malevolent ‘enemy’ which must be defeated at all costs. In fact, it is likely that this collapse will generate further Russian violence, civil wars, and economic and political stability.

Marlene Laruelle, the director of the Institute for European, Russian, and Eurasian Studies at George Washington University, predicts violent land and asset disputes, and violence from Moscow elites in reaction to secessionism. Similarly, an analysis by Janusz Bugajski, a senior fellow at the Jamestown Foundation, declares that “fracturing of the [Russian Federation] is likely to be chaotic, prolonged, sequential, conflictive and, increasingly, violent.”

So, there is certainly a case to advocate for the persistence of the Russian Federation, albeit in a different form.

Russia would need to undergo major reform to become a sustainable nation for its citizens, and a change in leadership at this time both seems

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wholly possible and impossible, nonetheless vital. With Putin's supreme command over the Ukraine invasion, the loss of the war could very well indicate the loss of his leadership. Perhaps this could lead to a collective demand for a different type of leader: one committed to the country's success but willing to play by the rules and respect human rights and post-Soviet state sovereignty. But there is reason to doubt this outcome.

**“Given that Putin’s expansionist rhetoric has been sufficiently diffused across the vast landscapes of Russia, the large collective outcry required to collapse the current system seems like a far reach.”**

An independent pollster, the Levada Center, indicates widespread support for the Russian Army and Government; as of February 2023, 77% of Russians surveyed approved of the war against Ukraine. Of course, there will certainly be issues with the validity of these surveys, given the heavy censorship in the country and Russia's trend of imprisoning those who criticise Putin, but it may indicate that a significant number of Russians bear positive views towards Russia's government and its warpath.

So, given that Putin's expansionist rhetoric has been sufficiently diffused across the vast landscapes of Russia, the large collective outcry required to collapse the current system and its leadership seems like a far reach.

**“What is important, is not the collapse of the Russian Federation**

**itself, but its foundation of aggressive imperialism.”**

What is then important, is not the collapse of the Russian Federation itself, but its foundation of aggressive imperialism. Whether a government upheaval occurs or not, domestic and international commitments to gear present Russia's post-war growth away from imperialist behaviour could be the most invaluable approach for long-term global security interests, using the momentum of a Russia in ruins to reform it for the better. Hopes would be to form a Russia without its imperial ideals, one that respects other states, restores political freedom, empowers civil rights, and cooperates in the global arena. Of course, it is much easier said than done and will be difficult to define, practice, and coordinate, but it seems to be the best aim to bet on in creating regional stability for decades to come.

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# MOVING BEYOND IDEAS OF EVIL: RUSSIA AS CONFLICTED NATION, NOT EMPIRE.

*by an anonymous contributor*

The collapse of the Russian Federation would not be “for the best”.

Such a collapse has the potential for an idealised society to form from the ashes of the corrupt, authoritarian regime in power. However, the future available from these ashes would likely still reflect the political-economic realities and precedents of the region, such as the wealth of Moscow being an object of desire for any prospective successive state or politician.

Engaging with these realities would offer real hope, instead of fantasising about somehow escaping the imperial histories that have shaped Russia and its surrounding region for hundreds of years.

**“The description as an “Evil Empire” absolves the Russian Federation of any real moral responsibility and instead resorts to the language of classic Western Russophobia based upon historic imperialism.”**

Before even thinking about whether it is for the best that such an “Evil Empire” should fall apart, I have to take issue with that description, as well as anybody who would agree with it. Currently the description of the Russian Federation as being “evil” is easy to accept. The Russian invasion has been accused of

perpetuating war crimes in Ukraine, as well as brutalising its own citizens in the poor preparation offered for men forced to mobilise and become soldiers.

Despite these events, the description of this state as an “Evil Empire” absolves the Russian Federation of any real moral responsibility and instead resorts to the language of classic Western Russophobia based upon historic imperialism. In doing so, Russia becomes a nation which, despite its reduced borders in comparison to these historic states, inherits the sins of the Soviet Union and empire in gaining territory and repressing its people when it has plenty of its own contemporary crimes to be judged upon. To use the term “evil” accepts the lazy designation of Russia, and the other nations that are tainted by bordering it, as a consistent enemy unless subservient to European or Western influences.

This description has been utilised by Western leadership in response to Russia’s current state since at least the turn of the 20th century, if not further back, with politicians as wide ranging as Churchill and Hilary Clinton all opting for moral language to describe diplomacy with Russia as a battle between “good and evil” where the other party, inevitably Putin, “by definition... doesn’t have a

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soul.”

“The ‘autonomous republics’ may once have been well-intentioned as communities designated to represent their respective regions fully, moving beyond the Russian imperialism of the 19th century. Instead, they have now become the havens for strongman figures like Ramzan Kadyrov.”

Instead of falling into the familiar traps that damage positive discourse on Russia, an assessment of the Federation’s current state should be undertaken. For such a large country, in terms of both population and landmass, there are inevitably a number of ethnic minorities who in the process towards federation are represented prominently in so-called ‘autonomous republics’.

These republics may once have been well-intentioned as communities designed to represent their respective region fully, moving beyond the Russian imperialism of the 19th century. Instead, they have now become the havens of strongman figures like Ramzan Kadyrov, who are state-sanctioned. This sanctioning has led to increased participation of such varied ethnicities in an increasing belief in a Eurasian, expansive, nationalist ideal.

And Russia’s neighbouring independent states are still regularly shown, to rely on Russian military assistance in supporting their corrupt governments.

Instead of looking at Russia as a slate that needs to be wiped clean and hoping to remove it for its evil properties and diverse if corrupt politics, the reality of Russia’s success in maintaining these strengths needs to be understood to ever find a change which would really be “for the best” of the people inhabiting the Federation.

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# “ZA VASHU I NASHU SVOBODU”\* – HOW THE INVASION OF UKRAINE BROUGHT RUSSIA CLOSER TO DECOLONIZATION

*by Maria Bunina, a Russian-Israeli social researcher at The Hannah Arendt Research Center*

Let's start with the concepts. The term “Evil Empire” was first coined by U.S. President Ronald Reagan during the Cold War. His sentiment was a part of American propaganda when he elaborated that the United States and the Soviet Union did not share equal responsibility for the Cold War and the continuous competition in nuclear arms development. I would suggest stepping back from aggressive rhetoric that contributes to conflict escalation. Instead, we should better seek how to create space for dialogue in an age of discord, and what could help us along the way is the concept of decentralisation.

“Russia is not a classic empire anymore. However, there is no escape from the imperial past.”

Modern Russia is not a classic empire anymore. The Russian Federation is composed of 32 ethnic minority regions (such as republics, autonomous districts, and autonomous regions) in addition to its 57 oblasts, which are dominated by ethnical Russians. However, there is no escape from the imperial past and ambitions which influence today's political decisions.

Therefore, today, the emphasis should be placed not on its imperial traits, but on its subaltern nature.

Do current circumstances justify the assertion that Russia's statehood is on the brink of collapse? From my perspective, the answer is no. The absence of any political organisations within the regions capable of pursuing independence is the primary factor. Although such groups existed in the 1990s, their efforts were unsuccessful. Moreover, during that time, Putin skilfully leveraged the collective action problems faced by regional leaders to gradually diminish much of the regions' de facto autonomy. This was achieved by the mutual abandonment of various bilateral agreements and the introduction of a new level of presidential oversight. The loyalty of the ethnic republics was bought through the virtually total provision of their budgets with subsidies from the center.

**“Two distinct catalysts spark considerable dissatisfaction in the Russian regions: language policy and conscription policy.”**

Certain members of the post-Soviet intellectual elite hold the belief that

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there are no groups of intellectuals who could form a conducive atmosphere in the mass consciousness, and, therefore, no prerequisite for the fight for independence exists. I cannot entirely agree with this notion, as there were two distinct catalysts that sparked considerable dissatisfaction in the regions: language policy and conscription policy.

Regarding the former, since the 2000s, several steps have been taken to diminish the status of minority languages in Russia's regions and implement a monolingual policy that affects all non-Russian ethnic groups and their language use. The most crucial one was a law passed in 2017 that allowed schools to get rid of obligatory studies of "native languages". As minority languages in Russia face mounting discrimination, there has been a rising surge of resistance from the grassroots level and efforts to revive cultural traditions.

The war with Ukraine in 2022 served as a potent trigger for the expansion of ethnopolitical demonstrations and separatist sentiments. The reason was that non-Russian ethnic groups were unjustly and severely mobilised, and were among the first to be deployed to the combat zone. The lists of casualties were full of non-Russian surnames; often the deceased soldiers originated from such regions as Buryatia, Yakutia, and Tuva. This resulted in their names not sounding familiar and being recognised as "our people" by those in Central Russia and, therefore, not evoking the common feeling of loss and huge protests.

"The exploitation of ethnic groups has undoubtedly spurred grassroots movements. Even if the outcome of the war fails to alter the political system, it is probable that it will provoke a reassessment of the relationship between the center and ethnic republics in Russia."

The exploitation of ethnic groups for state purposes has certainly contributed to the spread of grassroots initiatives in the regions, and even if the outcomes and consequences of the war do not lead to changes in the political order of the post-Soviet space, they are highly likely to contribute to a rethinking of the relationship between the Center and ethnic republics in Russia. The exploitation of ethnic groups for the benefit of the state has undoubtedly spurred grassroots movements in various regions. Even if the outcome of the war fails to alter the political system in the post-Soviet space, it is probable that it will provoke a reassessment of the relationship between the center and ethnic republics in Russia.

\* Transl. from Russian: "For our freedom and yours". This is an unofficial motto of Poland that originated in 1831 and gained popularity in Russia following the Soviet Union's invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. It recently resurfaced in the context of the Russo-Ukrainian war, symbolizing the Russian people's desire for Ukraine to achieve victory and for Russia to break free from the authoritarian regime.

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# THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY WON'T SUPPORT A COLLAPSE, FOR GOOD REASONS

*by Muhamedzhan Bazarov, Kazakh IR student at KIMEP University and graduate of Baurzhan Momyshuly Military School.*

Nobody expected to face the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse: Pestilence (COVID-19), Famine (problems with supply chains), War (Ukraine war), and Death almost at the same time. However, we are not here to talk about the most discussed topics which were mentioned above. Here, I will briefly give discourse and analysis on the risk and future of geopolitical instability around Russia.

First of all, let's go beyond this question. Is it actually possible that Russia could fall apart? One essay would not be enough for it, but let's look at it through briefly. Russia is notorious for its autocratic regime. Indeed, Putin, during his reign, consolidated the whole state power in his hands. All economic spheres and political institutions are full of Putin's adherents. At this point, we see that there are no vivid or best candidates who would run the state after the collapse of Putin's regime. In other words, there is no stepping stone for the opposition. Even if Navalny comes to power, there are no pieces of evidence or solid arguments which would prove that he will create a new regime in Russia. Because there are multiple pieces of evidence that Navalny actually supports the foreign policy of Putin, but not the domestic one.

For example, he supported the idea of bombing Georgia, the annexation of Crimea, and the exploitation of cheap labour from Tajikistan.

**“The international community won't support the idea of the collapse of Russia. In addition, Russian officials in any worst scenario would accept any humiliating agreements in order to stop political turmoil. Thus, the risk of Russia falling apart is low.”**

Moreover, some people think that many states want the collapse of Russia. It is a big misconception that should be changed. In reality, almost all European states and China want stability in that region. As history teaches us, big powers usually want to maintain the status quo. Indeed, for Europe, Russia is playing the role of the gate from the influence of China and the Middle East. Also, like in the case of China, Russia is a big supplier of valuable resources (oil, gas, and other raw materials). In addition, let's not forget that Russia possesses 6000 nuclear warheads. Maybe it would be much better to deal with one state which possesses all nuclear weapons than to deal with several nuclear states.

Also, don't forget that after the sudden collapse of the state, there will be a big wave of migration.

# De-colonising an Evil Empire: Is it for the best if the Russian Federation falls apart?

Following these factors, the international community won't support the idea of the collapse of Russia. On the opposite, they look forward to restoring economic cooperation with Russia. In addition, Russian officials in any worst scenario would accept any humiliating agreements in order to stop political turmoil. Thus, the risk of Russia falling apart is low.

**“Russia is playing an important role to keep the jihadists away from Central Asia. If Russia collapses, the foreign policy of Central Asia will be hugely dependent on Chinese interests.”**

On the other hand, let's move further, what if we have a scenario in which Russia has collapsed? What should Central Asia do? As mentioned before, even for Central Asia, it is not profitable to see Russia collapse. The reasons are the same. But also, Russia is playing an important role to keep the jihadist or any radical Islamist group away from Central Asia. Since Central Asian states are still weak in terms of the military sphere, they are not capable to defend their territory by themselves. Thus, for Central Asia, it is beneficial to have a Russia that would cooperate on border security. However, it would be fair cooperation if Russia would review the economic and foreign policy toward Central Asia. Otherwise, if Russia collapses, the foreign policy of Central Asia will be hugely dependent on Chinese interests.

Overall, we understand that there are no states who are willing to see a geopolitical crisis in Eurasia.

Especially Central Asia, which is the most integrated region with Russia. Central Asian states don't want to see “shock therapy” in terms of the economic situation (supply chain), security issues, and geopolitics. Therefore, many European states would rather maintain the status quo. And the post-Soviet community - they would rather reshape their relations with Russia and make relationships more mutually beneficial. For example, members of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) many times initiated the review of economic policies: they want to make relations with Russia more equal.

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## IT'S COLONIALISM. ISN'T IT?

*by a graduate in "Central and East European, Russian and Eurasian Studies", University of Glasgow*

It's baffling how a single day changes how we view the world: Berlin wall, Nine-Eleven - 24 February. "We woke up in a different world today", exclaimed Germany's Analena Baerbock when missiles started raining down on Ukraine and Putin's army dashed for Kyiv. And one wonders what kind of world Ms Baerbock herself had been living in when she went to bed the night before.

But, indeed, this war changed the views of many, including mine. I studied in a degree program that covers the space of the former USSR. In one of our introductory courses, we discussed the term 'colonialism' in the post-Soviet context. I belonged to those who firmly rejected the notion, though without holding any sympathy for the Russian Empire or its socialist successor. It just occurred unfit to me to apply the notion of slavery, Christianization, and overseas expansion to Russia. The Russian empire - like all empires in the past - expanded by conquest and 'colonialization', with the latter meaning settlers who left their home turf. A 'colony', however, is usually understood as a possession separated from the motherland by landmass and large swaths of water.

"I firmly rejected the notion of 'colonialism' in the post-Soviet context. It just occurred unfit to me to apply the notion of slavery,

Christianization, and overseas expansion to Russia.

But this view, I know now, is too simplistic."

This view, I know, is too simplistic. Colonial relationships are not defined by geography but by social relationships, hierarchical ones, in which a center rules over the periphery. This has clearly been the case. The best example is the Uzbek cotton fields that were artificially connected to the Aral Sea - leaving behind one of the biggest man-made ecological disasters - and served Moscow's textile industry. The Uzbeks simply provided their work and resources.

But this as well is too simplified. It wasn't that ethnic Russians ruled the rest - at least not completely. Balts and Caucasians, too, filled the oppressive state apparatus and judiciary in Moscow, the most notorious examples being Stalin and Lavrentiy Beria, the heads of the Soviet suppression machinery, both ethnic Georgians.

Yet elites live in their own cosmopolitan circles, leaving the general population unbothered.

"So it was nationalism, the striving of ethnic groups for sovereignty, that led to the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1980s. Mostly forgotten, Gorbachev let tanks roll into the

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## Baltics and Caucasus.”

So it was nationalism, the striving of ethnic groups for sovereignty, that led to the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1980s. Like Britain and France had experienced their bloody de-colonization after 1945, Moscow struggled to keep the “Union” together. Mostly forgotten, Gorbachev let tanks roll into the Baltics and Caucasus.

In the end, it became what some call a “civilized divorce”, while others feared “the Balkanization” of the Soviet Union, having in mind the bloody wars in former Yugoslavia. (Now, in Ukraine, we clearly see that a ‘civilized’ divorce does not necessarily remain civilized.)

Reading Peter Hopkirk’s marvelous account of the 19th century ‘Great Game’, which the British and Russian empires played in Central Asia, I learned that Central Asian Khans and their tribes raided Slavic farmers; kidnapped and enslaved them. Russians were sold on slave markets in Bukhara and Khiva in today’s Uzbekistan - a fact probably unknown to most of us.

“Yes, the Russian and Soviet Empire was a construct built on colonial relationships. But no, it wasn’t completely the same as West European colonialism. Yet I find it worth comparing and exploring.”

This brings me back to the ‘colonialism’ issue: Yes, the Russian and Soviet Empire was a construct built on colonial relationships. But no, it wasn’t completely the same as West

European colonialism. Yet I find it worth comparing and exploring - and that’s perhaps where this war and the revived discourse changed my views.



# FIRST, DE-COLONISE THE GLASS HOUSE YOU'RE SITTING IN

*by an anonymous contributor*

Ever more we are left wondering where the post-modernist approach is heading. Hadn't the progressive left held dear the concept of nations as mere "imagined communities", as imaginary constructs spun by human beings?

Now they tell us that multinational states with a strong power centre are bad - bad empires that need to be replaced with a newfound love for the nation-state? Let's put aside the obvious paradox that they scold sovereign countries that do not want to succumb to Brussels. Pardon me, but I can't help thinking that the collective West has reached a dead end and fallen back onto reactionary concepts from the 19th century to find its role in 21st-century multipolarity.

And, apart from that, what do you think other aspiring powers make of those leftist attempts to power by calling for the "decolonization" of their enemies? China, India, Turkiye - they are all multi-ethnic entities - again, some may throw the label "empire" on them - that see through such malign divide-and-rule tactics by the West.

Russophobia, double standards, contempt for different cultures. This permeates Western intellectual circles, tabloid media and academics alike.

**"Did we forget about Europe's persistent colonial relationships with its former colonies?"**

**Read Yash Tandon: Trade is War."**

Did we forget about Europe's persistent colonial relationships with its former colonies? Read Yash Tandon: Trade is War. Remarkably, Tandon, a former chief negotiator for several African countries, does not scold the Americans for their military and cultural imperialism. He takes aim at Europe's persistent trade imperialism: the European Union and its members still extract Africa's resources through phony "preferential trade agreements", nothing less than whitewashed colonial arrangements. Despite all politically correct talks about the 'Global South' and 'ownership', they do not think a second about giving a strong position to inferior states. If they did, they would not crush any attempt at a unified African position. If they did, they would protect the continent from being flooded with European and American agricultural products. Instead, they heavily subsidize these exports and violate the very essence of free trade. Europeans won't admit - but they divide and rule.

As those who criticize Russia so vocally know, Russia takes a civilizational approach to its foreign policy. And this entails tolerance.

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It entails respect for different cultures and peaceful coexistence.

“The pace of the Taliban taking power has shown the world how fragile, how unsustainable the colonial mission of the West has been. It is time that the liberal West de-colonises itself. It must stop lecturing the rest of the world, stop throwing stones through its already broken windows.”

Yes, the Taliban have taken power by force - but the pace of it has shown the world how fragile, how unsustainable the colonial mission of the West has been.

It has gone widely unnoticed what Sergey Lavrov said about humanitarian aid for Afghanistan: more financial assistance will be needed because schools need to facilitate the separation of boys and girls logistically. You see me plummet into cynicism here - but that's what the West with its liberal, colonial mission does not want to see. But others apprehend very well (even silly autocrats): that we simply cannot intervene in other cultures, however backwards or illegitimate they seem to us.

It is time that the liberal West de-colonises itself first. It must stop lecturing the rest of the world, stop throwing stones through its already broken windows. Otherwise, in the end, it will be China and Russia who will be sweeping up the mess left behind.

# TALKS ABOUT “DE-COLONISATION” ARE NOT HELPFUL. LET’S CELEBRATE RUSSIA’S DIVERSITY INSTEAD

*By ChatGPT*

Russia is often labeled as an empire by Western scholars and media, but this portrayal is not only misleading but also counterproductive. The notion of Russia as an empire suggests an aggressive and expansionist foreign policy, but the reality is far more nuanced.

Russia, like many other nations, has a complex history that cannot be reduced to a simplistic label. While it is true that Russia once had an empire, it is important to recognize that this was a historical phase that has long since passed. The Soviet Union, which was often described as a neo-imperialist power, collapsed over 30 years ago, and Russia has been struggling to rebuild itself ever since.

The de-colonization discourse on Russia is not helpful because it ignores the unique challenges that the country faces. While many former colonies have successfully transitioned to democratic governance, Russia is still struggling to find its footing in the post-Soviet era. Russia’s political and economic systems are vastly different from those of Western democracies, and the country faces numerous internal and external challenges.

“The country’s diverse population has been a source of strength for centuries, and it is important to recognize and celebrate this diversity.”

Furthermore, the label of empire ignores the fact that Russia has a diverse population with its own unique cultures and traditions. Russia is home to over 190 ethnic groups, each with its own language and customs. The country’s diverse population has been a source of strength for centuries, and it is important to recognize and celebrate this diversity.

In conclusion, Russia is not an empire, and the de-colonization discourse on Russia is not helpful. Russia is a complex nation with a rich history and diverse population, and it is time for the West to move beyond simplistic labels and engage with Russia on its own terms. We must work to build mutual understanding and respect between our nations, rather than perpetuating outdated and harmful stereotypes.

# IT IS TIME TO RECOGNIZE RUSSIA FOR WHAT IT IS: AN EMPIRE IN NEED OF DECOLONIZATION

*By ChatGPT*

Russia is often referred to as a nation-state, but in reality, it is much more than that. It is an empire, a vast and powerful entity that has exerted its influence over numerous regions and peoples throughout its history. And like any empire, it has left a legacy of colonization and oppression that still reverberates today.

The Russian Empire's expansion began in the 16th century and continued until the early 20th century. It annexed territories and subjugated peoples in Europe, Asia, and North America, including Ukraine, Belarus, the Caucasus, Central Asia, and Siberia. Russian colonization often involved forced migration, cultural assimilation, and exploitation of resources, leaving many regions impoverished and their populations disempowered.

**“Indigenous peoples in Siberia and the Far East face discrimination and marginalization, while ethnic minorities in the Caucasus and Central Asia struggle for autonomy and self-determination.”**

Today, the remnants of Russian colonization continue to shape the lives of millions of people. Indigenous peoples in Siberia and

the Far East face discrimination and marginalization, while ethnic minorities in the Caucasus and Central Asia struggle for autonomy and self-determination. The ongoing conflict in Ukraine is a clear example of the legacy of Russian imperialism and the desire of some populations to break free from Moscow's grip.

It is time to recognize Russia for what it is: an empire in need of decolonization. Decolonization requires acknowledging the harm that has been done and making amends. It means respecting the rights of all peoples within the empire's borders and recognizing their sovereignty. It means returning control of land and resources to the communities that have historically owned them.

Decolonization is not a new idea. It has been championed by Indigenous peoples around the world who have suffered under colonialism and imperialism for centuries. Russia must follow suit and begin the process of decolonization. It will not be easy, and it will require acknowledging uncomfortable truths about its past. But the alternative is to continue perpetuating systems of oppression and exploitation, to the detriment of millions of people.

“Russia’s history as an empire cannot be ignored. Its legacy of colonization and oppression continues to affect millions of people today.”

In conclusion, Russia’s history as an empire cannot be ignored. Its legacy of colonization and oppression continues to affect millions of people today. Decolonization is the only path forward, one that respects the rights and sovereignty of all peoples within Russia’s borders. It is time for Russia to take responsibility for its past and work towards a more just and equitable future.

# WE NEED MORE POLITICAL WILL!

*by Yixu Zhou, Department of Political Studies, Queen's University,  
Canada*

Feminist foreign policy has gained momentum in recent years. Several countries have adopted foreign policies that they characterize as explicitly feminist: Sweden, Canada, Luxembourg, France, Mexico, Spain, and Libya. These countries have made significant progress in promoting gender equality in their foreign policies.

For example, Sweden has included gender equality as a key priority in its development cooperation policies, and Canada has launched a Feminist International Assistance Policy that aims to address gender inequality in its development initiatives. During the first term of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, himself a self-proclaimed feminist, Canada modeled representation by appointing the most diverse cabinet in Canadian history at the time, ensuring gender parity within the body.

**“Canada is more enthusiastic about the economic side of development than it is about FFP. Sweden has also been criticized for its arms trade with Saudi Arabia, which has a notoriously poor record on human rights, particularly women’s rights.”**

However, it is worth noting that the Canadian focus on feminism was on poverty eradication rather than equality. Canada believes that women’s advancement and empowerment can be effectively

achieved by closing the gap between rich and poor. This may mean that Canada is more enthusiastic about the economic side of development than it is about FFP. The Canadian government’s delay in its FFP white paper makes it difficult not to suspect that it has a more specific and comprehensive plan for proceeding with its FFP.

Sweden has also been criticized for its arms trade with Saudi Arabia, which has a notoriously poor record on human rights, particularly women’s rights. Critics argue that Sweden’s arms trade with Saudi Arabia contradicts its feminist foreign policy and undermines its commitment to human rights. This highlights the challenge of balancing foreign policy priorities and the need for countries to ensure that all aspects of their foreign policy are consistent with their commitment to gender equality.

Additionally, adopting a feminist foreign policy has increased awareness about gender inequality in foreign policy, resulting in higher funding for women’s rights and gender equality initiatives. However, significant challenges remain. One of the main challenges is the lack of political will in some countries to adopt a feminist foreign policy, which leads to inadequate resources and funding for gender equality initiatives.

“Countries like Sweden and Canada should take a leadership role and avoid contradicting the FFP philosophy in practice.”

It is also essential to address opposition to feminist foreign policy by recognizing that gender inequality is a global issue that affects everyone. Promoting gender equality in foreign policy is not about prioritizing women’s rights over other issues but is about recognizing that gender equality is necessary for sustainable development and international peace and security.

Although feminist foreign policy has made significant progress in promoting gender equality in foreign policy, it still faces several challenges. To realize its full potential, feminist foreign policy requires more political will and funding to ensure that gender equality is fully integrated into foreign policy. Exemplary countries like Sweden and Canada should take a leadership role and avoid contradicting the FFP philosophy in practice, which could lead to a decline in support and confidence in FFP. It is undisputed that FFP is more than just a passing fad. As a global idea is on the rise, people are supporting it and taking actions, although not nearly enough.

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# THE BEST WAY TO REDUCE POVERTY AND INEQUALITY

*by an anonymous contributor*

A feminist foreign policy questions the traditional understanding of state security and calls for a people-centred approach to security and peace. In Canada, this approach recognizes that supporting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is the best way to build a more peaceful, more inclusive and more and more prosperous world. The essence of feminist foreign policy is essentially based on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. In fact, Canada's feminist international assistance helps protect and promote the human rights of all vulnerable and marginalized groups and increases their participation in decision-making.

That clearly isn't 'another fad' - it's substantial progress.

Feminism goes beyond the popular perspective on the subject. Meaning that a large number of people merely view feminism as a movement established to turn women against men or simply fight men. However, the core ideas and beliefs of feminism are to achieve equal, social, political, and economic rights for women. Considering the fact that almost all contemporary societies are constructed on patriarchal beliefs, it is necessary for feminist voices to be heard and understood in order to create a safer environment

for everyone because freeing those who are oppressed means freeing everyone. Discussions on gender equality within international organizations started to occur a long time ago.

However, it is important to know that there has been little employment of the notion of feminism within the work of states' foreign policy or the language of international institutions.

Gracefully, this is starting to change.

As an illustration, according to the millennium development goals report of 2015, over the past three decades, the world has made significant progress in reducing poverty which has led to higher income, broader access to public goods and services and a better standard of living for many of the world poorest citizens. Comparatively, millions of people are still suffering from the persistence of poverty and inequality, exacerbated by violent conflicts and the effects of climate change. That is the case in the Democratic Republic of Congo where women are being constantly abused and raped as a method of war.

Thus, investing in women and girls is the best way to reduce poverty and inequality.



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# A NEW DIMENSION FOR GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

*by Hannah Romkema, a Canadian student of Political Science and Global Development*

Some commentators argue that feminist foreign policy is simply a superficial trend that will soon fade away. They argue that it is a response to popular pressure and a desire to be seen as progressive, rather than a genuine commitment to gender equality. Moreover, they suggest that it is unlikely to have any meaningful impact on the lives of women, either nationally or internationally, and that it risks distracting from more pressing issues.

However, I suggest that this view fails to fully appreciate the potential of feminist foreign policy to bring about real and lasting change.

For one thing, it is worth noting that this approach is not merely symbolic, but is often backed up by concrete policy initiatives that aim to promote gender equality in a range of areas, from trade to diplomacy. Moreover, feminist foreign policy can help to raise awareness of the importance of women's rights and gender equality, both domestically and internationally, and encourage greater engagement with these issues across different sectors of society. Its main goal is to transform the practice of foreign policy to the greater benefit of women and girls everywhere. It has the potential to impact a country's diplomacy, defence and security cooperation,

aid, trade, climate security, and immigration policies.

**“A feminist foreign policy reenvision a country's national interests, moving them away from military security and global dominance to position equality as the basis of a healthy, peaceful world.”**

A feminist foreign policy reenvision a country's national interests, moving them away from military security and global dominance to position equality as the basis of a healthy, peaceful world. Implementing feminist foreign policies would deliver for women in practice, not only on paper, and would address entrenched gender norms, stereotypes, and gender-based violence.

Furthermore, feminist foreign policy has the potential to challenge some of the gendered power dynamics that underpin international relations. By highlighting the ways in which women are often marginalized in global politics and diplomacy, and by advocating for their inclusion and empowerment, this approach can help to promote more equal and just international governance. It can also help to shift the focus away from traditional modes of power and influence, towards a more inclusive and collaborative model of global leadership.

“A powerful and progressive approach to global governance that has the potential to challenge entrenched power structures.”

In conclusion, while feminist foreign policy may still be a relatively new and evolving concept, it is much more than a passing fad. Rather, it represents a powerful and progressive approach to global governance that has the potential to challenge entrenched power structures and promote greater gender equality and justice. As such, it is an approach that should be taken seriously and supported by policymakers and activists alike.

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# A NOVEL RENDITION OF IMPERIALISM

*by Oliver Moore*

Feminist Foreign Policy is most certainly another fad. It is, at the very least, a novel rendition of imperialism. An FFP supposes that states meddle in the business of third-world countries so as to promote Western values. This is done with little to no regard for the pre-existing belief systems or cultures that remain present within these developing states.

This respectful submission does not mean to suggest that the gender dynamics within such states are morally permissible. No, instead, this submission suggests that those who cantilever feminist foreign policy tread carefully in their never-dying support.

**“To gain gender equality to the extent that much of the West has achieved will require a significant overhaul of the values on which societies sit.”**

Perhaps the empirical example of Canada is emblematic of the point here. The political suffrage of women in Canada ended in 1918 when they received the right to vote. Since that time, the secularity of Canadian society has seen a significant decline. Hence, the point here, in large part, is that gender dynamics are tied to the social and cultural pillars of a given society. To gain gender equality to the extent that much of the West has achieved, therefore, will

unequivocally require a significant overhaul of the values on which the society sits.

Imperialism is defined as a policy of extending a country's power and influence through diplomacy or military force. Is this not what a feminist foreign policy is? Gender equality is perpetuated in the West, whilst such a policy goes so far as to recommend that such a moral standing ought to be perpetuated beyond the confines of the West. Furthermore, gender dynamics are not wholly societal zeitgeists. Indeed, there are ties to long-standing religious institutions. Again, what does the feminist foreign policy suppose ought to be done here?

**“Should the West seek to rip those roots out of the ground to perpetuate its agenda, so be it, but it should very know what it is doing.”**

Perhaps Western states ought to undermine the religious doctrine within a society, on the account that their views are of a higher moral order. Recall that the church and state only separated some centuries ago, at least in the West. Notwithstanding, the church presides with a firm grip on the social norms in non-western states. Thus, insofar as Western states seek to change the gender dynamics of their less developed counterparts, so too do they seek to change the fundamental societal pillars.

Again, gender equality is a morally praiseworthy objective - at least from the Western perspective I am privy to.

However, one ought not to forget the appendages that come with gender equality and a foreign agenda seeking to change the social regime of a given state, which is rooted in beliefs and culture. Should the West seek to rip those roots out of the ground to perpetuate its agenda, so be it, but it should very well know what it is doing.

# A WELL-MEANING PROMISE UNFULFILLED

*by Thanina Maouche*

It is with great sadness, imbued with a lingering, yet fading, optimism, that this essay contends that, in its current formulation, feminist foreign policy will only yield unfulfilled initiatives, despite its hopeful beginnings.

A number of democracies sought to implement this seemingly propitious program. Yet, governments' feminist foreign policy frameworks often fail to clearly and consistently define what exactly are their objectives, how they will achieve them, and what their long-term approach consists of. While Sweden identified foreign and national security policies, development cooperation, as well as trade as its three key objectives, other countries, like Canada, only presented an indeterminate, vague roadmap. Practically, in 2017, Canada vowed to dedicate 92% of its foreign assistance to gender equality and has implemented the Equality Fund, towards which \$300 million of its budget in the Official Development Assistance Accountability Act were sent.

Theoretically, though, Canada has failed to define what its feminist foreign policy means, as it simply broadly calls for more gender equality with the aim of reducing poverty and building women's economic agency.

**"If the two most acclaimed states leading the birth of feminist foreign**

**policy have such diverging approaches, other countries are doomed to misalign themselves with one of them, or produce even more unfocused plans."**

Unlike Sweden, Canada's approach is marked by a profound dearth in devotion, as it does not aim to "disrupt" the patriarchal power structures complicit in the subjugation of women. Canada's more traditional application of the FFP model fails to address the underlying, often persisting power dynamics, legal frameworks, and social inequalities embedded in the cultural, political, and economic fabric of the global south. If the system is left intact, with no retribution, then not only are there concerns that the funds allocated towards women and girls will not actually reach them and, instead, be squandered by elites. But there are also questions as to how effective or sustainable Canada's contributions will be in the long term. Thus, if the two most acclaimed states leading the birth of feminist foreign policy have such diverging approaches, other countries are doomed to misalign themselves with one of them, or produce even more unfocused plans.

This inadequacy was present in states' responses to the coronavirus pandemic. Though many increased, by millions, the amount of foreign aid and assistance to countries of the

global south and to non-governmental organizations, their approach was often gender-blind, rather than focused on helping women and girls specifically.

“The fight for women, girls’ rights and equality with men deserves more than a band-aid. Otherwise, not only will the wound of gender-based violence, discrimination and injustice never heal, but it may even enlarge if not properly attended to.”

Because the virus illuminated so many challenges, including food insecurity, inequitable access to water or vaccines, overpopulated shelters, and so forth, northern countries preferred to adopt an all-encompassing response, rather than one tailored to women and girls. As a result, they were unable to prevent rising rates of domestic violence, both domestically and internationally, nor were they able to ensure the consistent education of girls, who often had to prioritize domestic labor, over their educational attainment. As such, while FFP works towards subverting gender-blind policies and decision-making, aiding women living in low-income settings, promoting the sexual and reproductive health of women, and eliminating the gendered division of labor, its implementation suffers from its incongruous and incomplete execution.

After all, the fight for women, girls’ rights and equality with men deserves more than a band-aid. Otherwise, not only will the wound of gender-based violence, discrimination, and injustice never heal, but it may even enlarge if not properly attended to.

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# THE EXTINCTION OF FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY: CANADA VS. SWEDEN

*by Shay Raval, Queens University*

Throughout its tenure, the global FFP movement has created large strides in the positive direction of policies tailored to the advancement of women by creating linkages that enable women bureaucrats working in the state to connect with women's movement actors working outside the state. This is illustrated through the historical landscape of how Feminist Foreign Policy continues to trailblaze its inclusive policies into global and national institutions.

Though Feminist Foreign Policy continues to make waves across the globe with its inclusive political framework 'centered around the wellbeing of marginalized people and invoking processes of self-reflection regarding foreign policy's hierarchical global systems', certain societies continue to vilify the movement as an opposition to natural order.

And many states 'act' as if they are inclusive of the policies the FFP produces; however, they choose to go about how they implement these policies in different ways. This is illustrated by the difference between the Canadian and Swedish FFP.

**"Canada's FFP is not a progressive movement, rather it is simply yet another social movement waiting to be forgotten."**

Canada merely uses the FFP as a tool to advance other social factors within the nation. It has not produced true feminist policies as there is a linkage break between what is conceived as a policy and what is truly implemented in Canadian society. Continuously, Canada's FFP relies heavily on short-run fixes rather than creating holistic plans that allow for short, medium and long-run policy implementation; it does not allow for civil society actors to create change. Given these constraints within its feminist policies, Canada's FFP is not a progressive movement, rather it is simply yet another social movement waiting to be forgotten.

**"Sweden's FFP presents a liberal feminist outlook foreign policy, which can work within existing national and international structures to enact change."**

Sweden's FFP holds a more traditional approach than that of Canada. For Sweden, gender inequality is the central problem that feminist foreign policy must address. Sweden's feminist foreign policy is a continuation of domestic commitments, international agreements, and its membership in international and transnational bodies. Its policy works by systematically mainstreaming



feminist understandings into the workings of state bodies, human rights discourse, and political institutions. It presents a liberal feminist outlook on foreign policy, which can work within existing national and international structures to enact change.

Though Sweden's approach truly defines the Feminist Foreign Policy approach, its government has found that the mere FFP name has become more important than what it truly stands for, fundamental change in marginalized populations.

Ergo, is the FFP truly a global force or is it merely a driver towards a larger social objective?

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## ANOTHER EUROCENTRIC FAD

*by Cordelia Jamieson, Political Studies Department, Queen's University, Canada.*

FFP as a conceptual practice is symbolic and performative, lacking any solidified basis for tangible change. A state's adoption of a gender-sensitive foreign policy agenda allows that country to contribute to international and collective pressure, lead by honourable example, and constructively guide governmental and non-governmental champions of gendered policy implementation.

Ultimately, it makes that country look really good.

Unfortunately, this grandiose performance without sustaining a long-term agenda or intersectional approach blinds the state to its own superiority complex and its policy becomes synonymous with bellicosity, self-interest, and imperialism. This association voids any policy motive and renders progress selfish and ideational.

**“Intersectionality is a necessary pillar of gendered policy, which FFP is notably lacking.”**

Intersectionality, outlining simultaneous oppressions and providing an analysis of the compounding effects of race, gender, and class discrimination, is important in understanding FFP implementation. Intersectionality is a necessary pillar of gendered policy, which FFP is notably lacking.

Power is relational and inextricably tied to the societal construction of gender and identity.

Foreign policy is largely considered within the realm of hard power and hypermasculinity, emphasizing the use of strong-arm tactics and larger performative displays of power. Intersectionality is inextricably tied to empowerment discourse and ultimately empowerment should not be a short-term or superficial fix to inequality, but rather requires broader, long-term engagement with social, political, and economic inequalities.

Evidently, identifying and deconstructing structural inequalities that restrain the inclusion and equality of women in the political arena is a lengthy process. However, “foreign policies seldom survive changes in government”, making it intrinsically challenging for any foreign policy to have a lasting impact and sustain cross-party transitions considering varied party approaches and stances on the prioritization of a feminist foreign policy agenda.

Canada's lack of long-term and consistent engagement with non-Western states showcases the country's efforts as Eurocentric and void of intersectionality.

Canada ultimately needs to be more concerned about the Westernized overtones of their FFP implementation and develop strategies to mitigate those international concerns, which is something that has been strikingly absent.

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# IT'S NEOLIBERALISM, NOT FEMINISM

*by Giuliana Iacobucci, Department of Political Studies, Queen's University, Canada*

Canada's Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP) shows a markedly performative venture into equalizing the field of International Political Economy (IPE). Its performative nature is displayed in its neoliberal foundations related to economics and its essentializing nature, effectively minimizing the importance of feminism in the international arena by reducing this radical ideology to one that is palatable by working within current systems of power and privilege.

Feminist Foreign Policy is a framework that reflects on existing power structures within the global system by acknowledging the well-being of marginalized groups and provides an intersection approach to security, as well as aiming to dismantle the patriarchy, heteronormativity, capitalism, racism, imperialism, and militarism.

**"The emphasis on economic advantage echoes sentiments of neoliberal thought. FFP uses feminism as a way to further the neoliberal agenda, placing distinctly capitalist and masculinized notions on women."**

Canada's FFP does not exemplify FFP and feminism as a whole due to its imbued ideas of neoliberalism. Canada's FFP aims to include marginalized groups in political, economic, and social participation.

This emphasis on economic advantage echoes sentiments of neoliberal thought. For example, Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP) states that women and girls have transformative effects when allowed to participate economically, shown in increased economic output where women's participation increases GDP by as much as \$12 trillion within a decade.

FFP uses feminism as a way to further the neoliberal agenda, placing distinctly capitalist and masculinized notions on women. While aiming to dismantle systems of oppression, FFP uses neoliberalism as a function of capitalism to bring about liberation, despite the system in question being the current oppressor. FFP aims to include women in the international economy, without actually acknowledging the very real and structural processes that dictate women's economic participation like the gender pay gap or the double shift. Instead of changing the system, FFP aims to reform the very systems it aims to dismantle, effectively reducing its activist praxis to one that is performative instead of transformative.

By depoliticizing feminism through neoliberalism and turning it into a paradigm of market-based outputs, FFP removes the ability to solidarize women and essentializes their

experiences. Instead of grounding FFP in bottom-up, intersectional understandings which it claims to do, Canada's FFP shows its motivations of increased neoliberal participation, furthering an agenda aimed to reinforce capitalism instead of pursuing goals that would benefit women. This reduces FFP to another neoliberal policy. Without understanding differences in sites of power and privilege, FFP reinforces it by catering its policy in an essentializing way, which will only benefit the most privileged, widening the gap between them and the most marginalized serving to split women up.

**“The use of the state in its masculine form cannot dismantle systems, it instead reinforces the private and public distinction, furthering the divide between high and low politics to reduce the roles of men and women to traditional spheres of influence.”**

In academia, Feminist Policy Analysis (FPA) uses essentializing discourses regarding the state, showing its performative nature. FPA is confined to state-centrism and has only just begun to move away from North America and Europe to include non-state actors. The use of the state in its masculine form cannot dismantle systems, it instead reinforces divisions between women and men, effectively essentializing experiences. Focusing only on the state reinforces the private and public distinction, furthering the divide between high and low politics to reduce the roles of men and women to traditional spheres of influence.

FFP cannot dismantle structures while using current manifestations of the state. If women are seen as belonging to the private sphere because of the dominant understanding of the state, their liberation will never be achieved. FFP uses discourses of feminism to undermine the system, but does not do so because of the analytical tools it aims to add onto feminism; this reduces the saliency of feminism as a whole, using the façade of feminism as a way to further essentialist notions within the international system. It reduces feminism to a palatable ideology instead of one that radically breaks down systems of power and privilege.

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## FYI, FFP IS MORE THAN A HASHTAG

*By an anonymous contributor*

There have been observable milestones met in the prioritization of women's rights and gendered lenses when addressing global issues over the last decade. For instance, the combined donation of over \$10 billion in foreign aid for the purposes of gender equality and the United Nations resolution 1325, which solidifies the role of women in peace and conflict resolution, provide clear examples of this. However, these milestones are significantly undermined when influential countries claim to adopt feminist foreign policies that are more performative than effective.

**“A feminist foreign policy prioritizes the rights, treatment, health and security of women as indicators of the stability of a state.”**

The adoption of a feminist foreign policy includes several commitments and responsibilities. These commitments include approaches to international issues and aid that not only target gender inequality but also seek to acknowledge and transform the structures and gender norms that create these inequalities in the first place. A feminist foreign policy also prioritizes the rights, treatment, health, and security of women as indicators of the stability of a state and as focal points in domestic and foreign aid initiatives.

**“Justin Trudeau’s Liberal Party used women politicians as tokens of diversity and repackaged pre-existing foreign aid as their monetary commitment to a feminist foreign policy.”**

Although there are several countries which have claimed to have included these commitments in their foreign policy, few have genuinely adopted these key principles. Canada, for instance, under the leadership of Justin Trudeau and the Liberal Party, have considered themselves champions of progressiveness for women's rights, all the while neglecting critical components that constitute a true feminist foreign policy. A country which has the means to contribute to substantial progress in global feminism has instead made feminist foreign policy appear as a fad. In order to appeal to progressive voters, they have used women politicians as tokens of diversity and repackaged pre-existing foreign aid as their monetary commitment to a feminist foreign policy.

Simultaneously, Canada refuses to take instrumental steps to the restructuring of global gender dynamics by failing to address the role that neoliberalism has played in the subjugation of women and ignoring the perspectives of minority women who are often most affected by gender stereotypes.

A refusal to both acknowledge and commit to challenging traditional masculine foreign policy and global patriarchal structures makes countries like Canada complicit in upholding gender inequality across the globe.

“Alternatively, Sweden includes a commitment to disrupting the patriarchy both domestically and internationally. Sweden has solidified their belief that achieving gender equality is a goal in itself.”

Alternatively, countries like Sweden not only include the aforementioned cornerstones of feminist foreign policy, they also explicitly include a commitment to disrupting the patriarchy both domestically and internationally.

Sweden’s policy also includes a crucial distinction that transforms feminist foreign policy from a mere fad to the potential for substantial progress, and that is, the concept of feminism for its own sake. While Canada’s Prime Minister has suggested that a feminist foreign policy is the “smart thing to do” for the economic benefits of the country, Sweden has solidified their belief that achieving gender equality is a goal in itself. This distinction separates the idea of using women as a means to an end and pursuing gender equality for the betterment of women globally.

Overall, it is critical to acknowledge the subtle differences between what constitutes a country’s pursuit for genuine progress in global gender inequality and what can be considered as merely pandering to

oters as a campaign initiative. Comparing the attitudes and commitments of Canada and Sweden clearly demonstrates how these distinctions can be the difference between a comprehensive and intersectional feminist foreign policy and treating women’s rights as a trend.

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# THE INJUSTICE OF FEMINIST DIPLOMATIC POLITICS

Some scholars argue that feminist foreign policy is necessary to achieve lasting peace and to recognise the importance of gender in conflict and post-conflict situations. For example, the Heinrich Böll Foundation, a political think tank associated with the German greens, argues that feminist foreign policy is essential to building peaceful societies because it recognises the gendered impact of conflict and promotes gender equality in post-conflict reconstruction. It is also argued that feminist foreign policy has the potential to improve women's rights in countries with a history of gender discrimination.

It is undeniable that the process by which feminist foreign policy was proposed and promoted did increase funding for women's rights organisations and the inclusion of a gender perspective in peace negotiations, leading many to focus more attention on gender equality, human rights and the empowerment of women and girls, among other things.

However, its effectiveness and impact in practice is questionable.

**“Feminism itself is divided into many different schools of thought. The development of women's rights has also evolved differently from country to country. These different groups have different understandings, which should give rise to different types of feminist foreign policy.”**

The Royal Society of Canada raised concerns about the implementation of Canada's feminist foreign policy, arguing that it lacks clear goals and indicators to measure progress. There is also criticism that feminist foreign policy is a Western-centric approach that ignores the perspectives of women in the global South. Some critics argue that feminist foreign policy tends to prioritise the promotion of Western-style feminism over the lived experiences of women in other parts of the world.

Feminism itself is divided into many different schools of thought, such as liberal feminism, Marxist feminism, radical feminism, and postmodern feminism. The development of women's rights has also evolved differently from country to country. For example, women's rights in China came from women's participation in the violent revolution fought for as part of the proletariat in the last century. These different groups of women have different understandings of women's rights, which should give rise to different types of feminist foreign policy.

It can be seen that there are indeed countries where women are still clearly oppressed due to historical legacies or religious factors, so would they want the same feminist foreign policy as the one exported by the developed world? This is a very important question. Women's rights should grow and be fought for in

different ways in different regions, countries and cultures, and successful experiences cannot be directly copied and pasted for use. And if developed countries like Canada and Switzerland insist on using their own feminist foreign policy to influence the values of the rest of the national community, the results are not necessarily good and can even bring unimaginable unrest within other countries.

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# THE LACK OF FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY INTERNATIONALLY

*by Charles Lidsky, political studies student at Queens University*

Throughout history, men have dominated policy-making, especially in times of crisis.

This was most recently apparent in the administrative meetings between Ukraine and Russia, as the entire council was comprised of men. Society has grown to incorporate everyone's opinions on certain topics; however, this has not been noticeable on an international level. For instance, many believe that women should be included in resolving the dispute, as peace accords tend to last longer, on average, when women are involved.

The push for feminist foreign policies seeks to implement equality-based legislation which benefits women. Sweden was the first country to include a feminist foreign policy, the Swedish Foreign Service Action Plan for Feminist Foreign Policy, based on liberal feminist approaches to rights, representation, and resources. As with many policies historically, it has spawned from developed nations and inspired many within the G7 Summit to follow suit. While only a dozen countries have followed the example, there have been negative responses, which demonstrated that feminist policies might be hard to implement on an international scale. Those who oppose the implementation of feminist foreign policies have made substantial efforts to counteract the

incredible contributions of these developed nations.

**“Those who oppose feminist foreign policies have made substantial efforts to counteract the incredible contributions of these developed nations. Sweden has experienced the strongest backlash of any country.”**

Sweden has experienced the strongest backlash of any country that has installed feminist foreign policies. For instance, when the first IKEA location was supposed to open in Morocco in 2015, it was denied doing so. The north-African nation was not supportive of the policies which Sweden enacted, and subsequently acted in protest.

Sweden would not budge, and this threatened its economic relationships with Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE as well. Sweden previously had an especially strong relationship with Saudi Arabia, engaging in arms deals. After being denied from addressing the Arab League, Sweden severed this relationship in support of their policies. Canada, on the other hand, did not follow suit and provided about \$15 billion of armored vehicles to the country, with the knowledge that those vehicles might be used to internally repress certain citizens, contradicting the values of feminist foreign policy.

Unlike the US, Canada has been one of the leading contributors to equality-based policies, but they have oriented their missions towards reducing poverty. Immigrants have remained some of the poorest citizens. Many of these citizens have come from countries which entirely oppose these policies, effectively repressing female individuals. About 45% of Canada's average annual immigrants have been women; however, in areas which place specific legal barriers on emigration, the proportion of female citizens is 36%. This figure demonstrated that while Canada has promoted feminism, they are not targeting the countries where women are oppressed the most. Instead, these women are more likely to stay in countries which exploit them for the sole purpose of retaining power.

**“A substantial reason for the lack of substantial progress towards global feminist policies is that the current international hegemon, the United States, has enacted legislation that negatively affects women.”**

A substantial reason for the lack of substantial progress towards global feminist policies is that the current international hegemon, the United States, has enacted legislation that negatively affects women. Regions in the United States have criminalized abortions, and, in 2017, Trump cancelled the funding towards any clinic that performed the practice. Since the United States is currently the major global force, they have had the ability to set precedents for legislation. Instead, they have resorted to punishing women, and Canada and Sweden have had to fill this gap.

Feminist foreign policy has become a priority for many countries in the last decade. Substantial progress has been made in these developed countries. However, that has not been reflected in the majority of the world. As policies continue to develop in various countries, these values will become common around the world.

It is the responsibility of the global powers to ensure that every action is taken to implement these policies.

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