
THE EMERGENCE OF A DUTCH FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY

ON THE CO-CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW POLICY FRAMEWORK

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ABSTRACT

On the 5th of May, 2022, the Dutch ministers of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, Hoekstra and Schreinemacher announced that the Netherlands would adopt a Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP). This adoption of an FFP is part of an international trend that started with Sweden in 2014. This thesis contributes to the growing body of literature on FFPs by exploring the Dutch FFP as a case study. It analyses the contexts and factors that have driven the process of the adoption and development of the Dutch FFP and the risks involved in this process. It demonstrates how feminists inside of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have used their position to advocate for feminist approaches and have taken on a leading role in the development of the FFP. Additionally, it finds that these feminist insiders are part of and supported by a larger feminist cooperative constellation with feminist experts and actors in civil society. The push for the Dutch FFP was made possible by the international context of an FFP trend, in which the Netherlands takes part to maintain its status and be seen as a norm entrepreneur. If the FFP merely functions as a label for this status, however, it risks playing into problematic gendered global hierarchies. If not undertaken in a reflexive manner, the Dutch FFP could therefore contribute to power imbalances rather than restoring them, thereby defeating its own purpose.

Keywords: Feminist Foreign Policy; Dutch Foreign Policy; Feminist Insider Activism; Feminist Cooperative Constellations, Gender Cosmopolitanism, Norm Entrepreneurship, Gendered Global Hierarchies

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CFFP	Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DGIS	Directorate General for International Cooperation
EEAS	European External Action Service
EU	European Union
FCC	Feminist Cooperative Constellation
FFP	Feminist Foreign Policy
FIA	Feminist Insider Activism
FPA	Foreign Policy Analysis
IOB	International Research and Policy Evaluation
IR	International Relations
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NAP	National Action Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
SDG	Social Development Goal
SDG-5	Social Development Goal for Gender Equality
TFVG	Task Force Vrouwenrechten en Gendergelijkheid (Women's rights and gender equality)
UN	United Nations
WECF	Women Engage for a Common Future
WILPF	Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
WO=MEN	Women equals men
WPS	Women, Peace and Security
1325	The United Nations Security Council Resolution – better known as the Women, Peace and Security Agenda

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INTRODUCTION

On the 5th of May, 2022, the Dutch ministers of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, Hoekstra and Schreinemacher announced that they had decided to adopt a Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP) (Kamerbrief 2022b). With this announcement, the Netherlands has joined a growing group of states with an FFP. This emerging FFP trend has gained traction from feminist scholars, as they started debating the definition, ethics and transformative capacity of this new policy framework. Through the FFP, the question whether state feminism can truly contribute to (gender) equality has been revisited (Achilleos-Sarll et al 2023, 4). At the same time, however, scholars have raised concerns about the context from which FFPs have emerged (Thomson 2022), and existing FFPs have been widely critiqued for not being radically feminist enough (Papagiotti 2023). Currently, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) is working on the design of the new policy framework in the form of a handbook that aims contain practical guidance for its employees. This thesis aims to analyse the emergence of the Dutch FFP, specifically focussing on the process of its development. Exploring this particular FFP case helps to better understand the dynamics of this international trend and how it plays out in practice.

FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY

The first FFP was introduced in 2014 in Sweden, by Wallström, the Swedish Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time (Bergman-Rosamond 2020, 217). This adoption of the FFP by the Swedish Social-Democrat-Green coalition government was an extension of the self-identification as the world's first ever feminist government. The FFP was predicated on the idea that many women still lacked full rights, representation and resources across policy and societal fields (Bergman-Rosamond 2020, 2018). It took a few years, but then more states started to follow suit, among which Luxembourg, Mexico, Spain, Libya¹, Chile, Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands (Thompson, Ahmed, and Khokhar 2021, 1). All states have implemented the FFP according to their own interpretations and Sweden has already become the first to retract theirs (The Guardian 2022).

There is no official definition or agreement over the meaning and content of an FFP. Neither state leaders nor academics have agreed on a particular definition (Thomson 2022). Some academics, like Thompson, Ahmed, and Khokhar (2023) have attempted to fill this gap. Simultaneously, however, there have been debates about whether or not the FFP, as a form of institutionalised feminism, would be able to truly bring change to a world of gender inequality (Achilleos-Sarll et al. 2023, 4). This work builds on earlier scholarship from feminist international relations (IR) that tends to question the capacity of the state to bring change, as these state institutions themselves harbour power and ability to oppress (Enloe 2004, chap 2). FFPs are therefore studied to see under which circumstances they might be able to offer more radical change (Robinson 2021; Thompson, Ahmed, and Khokhar 2021). In the meantime, critics argue that the FFPs up to date have not been able to foster this necessary change to surpass a liberal interpretation of the FFP that reduces feminism to gender mainstreaming and gender to women (Aggestam and Bergman-Rosamond 2018, 44). They are especially alert to the emergence of FFP as an

¹ In 2021, the first female foreign minister of Libya announced her intention of pursuing a feminist foreign policy at the Generation Equality Forum in 2021, but this was not followed up by any steps or institutional commitments (UN Women 2022).

international trend that risks neo-colonial forms of feminist norm implementation in the Global South (Thomson 2022, 177).

SIGNIFICANCE

In 2021, member of Senate Stienen asked a Parliamentary question about the possibility of an FFP for the Netherlands (Vice Versa 2022). This question was taken up by the government and the MFA ordered an inquiry into the “added value of an FFP for the Netherlands” (Rijksoverheid 2022b²). This inquiry took place in 2021 by Ivens and Paassen of Ecorys Consortium, for which they analysed FFPs from other states and consulted Dutch civil society organisations (CSOs). Ivens and Paassen (2021, 37) made an official recommendation to adopt an FFP, which ministers Hoekstra and Schreinemacher took on. Following the official announcement of the Dutch FFP in May 2022 and a first round of consultations with CSOs, a second announcement in November 2022 followed about the further process (Kamerbrief 2022a). Since then, the MFA has been working on an FFP handbook, which will provide practical guidance for employees of the Dutch MFA (Kamerbrief 2022a). This handbook process is also subject to feedback rounds with CSOs and its publication has been postponed until summer 2023. In reference to future FFP activities, the Netherlands has announced a high-level international conference on FFP in the fall of 2023 as well.

To the announcement of the FFP, CSOs largely responded by welcoming it, provided that the Netherlands would truly transform its foreign policy practices (Oxfam Novib 2023, WO=MEN 2022; Plan International 2022; Mama Cash 2022; ActionAid 2022). The Netherlands has a relatively strong history of policies supporting gender equality in the international realm (Muehlenhof 2022). For example, it was among the first states to prioritise spending for gender equality and direct funding of women’s rights organisations as part of international assistance policy (Thompson, Ahmed, and Khokhar 2021, 1). Additionally, it has been one of the front runners of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda (WILPF 2023), and produced multiple national action plans (NAP) for it (Muehlenhof 2022, 745). Even so, Dutch gender platform WO=MEN (2021, 1) indicated their concern about the credibility of the FFP, given the political climate at the time of its adoption. The coalition government responsible for adopting the FFP in the Netherlands was led by VVD, the liberal party of the Netherlands that has been the majority party in government since 2010 (PDC 2023b). This coalition was formed with progressive liberal party D66, the more conservative Christian party CDA and additional Christian party CU that has a track record of supporting human rights but also conservative views on gender policies (PDC 2023a). Before the introduction of the FFP, feminism had not necessarily been high on the agenda of this government (Eerste Kamer der Staten Generaal 2022a).

In this thesis, I aim to answer the question of how the emergence of the Dutch FFP can be understood. Because the official handbook is not out yet, this research focuses on the process rather than the contents of the FFP. This process is relevant to the policy framework outcome that will be highly influential for all foreign policy that is conducted by the Dutch government. The ambition of an FFP is to transform foreign policy practice, not only regarding international development cooperation in for example conflict-affected countries, but also to take a feminist approach to issues of peace and security as a whole. To understand the emergence of the Dutch FFP, I explore several sub-questions. First of all, I am interested in the role of feminists inside the government in the adoption and implementation of the FFP. Secondly, I ask how feminist networks, both in- and outside of the institutions have come together

² All quotes from letters to Parliament are translated from Dutch, as there are no official translations available.

in the establishment of the Dutch FFP. Lastly, I aim to explore the role of the international context in which the Netherlands has adopted the FFP. Lastly, I seek to explore the risks of these particular dynamics for the future of the Dutch FFP. These questions allow me to study the Dutch FFP before its contents are known, and build the analytical backdrop for future studies on the content of the Dutch FFP by flagging important factors and potential risks.

METHODOLOGY

This thesis embraces a qualitative research project, focusing on the emergence of the Dutch FFP as a case study. In this research, I take a constructivist-interpretivist approach to the practice of policy development. This means that I am interested in finding out how the emergence of the Dutch FFP can be understood within its *particular context*. Case study analysis seeks to understand the complexities of social phenomena within their contexts (Baxter and Jack 2008, 545). This research does therefore not necessarily aim to produce generalisable claims. Rather, I argue that the contextualised findings can offer insights into the social world of policy emergence and development (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2011, 48). As a researcher, I believe I am myself part of this meaning-making process and therefore cannot be a ‘neutral outsider.’ This research was conducted during an internship at the Gender Unit of Dutch peace organisation PAX. During this time, I was actively involved in the development of the Dutch FFP by taking part in the consultation process for the handbook. My immersion in this internship has made me an ‘insider’ to this process, particularly to the CSO side. As Schwartz-Shea and Yanow (2011, 33) emphasise, this field immersion forms my research in significant ways, and is part of my interpretivist approach.

Acknowledging the situatedness of this knowledge production, as Haraway (1988, 591) named it, does not invalidate its findings. Rather, it can contribute to an appropriate understanding of its meaning, by being transparent about its contextualised production. It is therefore important to recognise that this research is conducted from a feminist perspective. As such, the method I employ is a feminist case study analysis. Feminist, in this sense, does not refer to a new method. Rather, it is defined by the intention to study a phenomenon in its potential to contribute to work on (gender) equality (Reinharz and Davidman 1992, 167). As this thesis grapples with different types of feminism, it is important to convey that as an intersectional feminist, I believe in the importance of breaking down all modes of oppression that might intersect with that of gender inequality. Additionally, I recognise the importance of emphasis on postcolonialism, because of the oppressive history of ‘white feminism’ and the ways this has contributed to global power structures reminiscent of colonialism (Mohanty 1984, 42). Although this research is not necessarily produced on the basis of postcolonial analysis, I do consider it in assessing the debate on the transformative capacity of the FFP, as I recognise (neo-)coloniality as a power structure limiting FFPs (Achilleos-Sarll 2018, 45).

For the interpretation of my case study, I did both close readings and participant-observation, which are geared towards gaining a deeper understanding and interpretation of my case study. The data collected for this thesis is sourced from both publicly available government documents and CSO reports, and from participant observation conducted during my internship. In some instances, the meetings I attended were held under Chatham house (2023) rules, which means that I can reveal the content of what was said, but not the speakers or their affiliations. My data is demarcated by the year before and the first year of the Dutch FFP, because this allows me analyse both the pre-existing context in which the FFP was implemented and its developments in the first year. For the analysis of my data, I take an inductive

approach. This means that I collected data before formulating a precise research question or analytical framework (Ragin and Amoroso 2011, 57). After the data collection phase, I took the time to start analysing my data to identify patterns. These patterns then guided me to identify sub-questions and an analytical framework. Although this is a mostly inductive approach, I did bring analytical concepts in from theory, which means this is more so an interaction between data and theory, than purely inductive theory forming (Ragin and Amoroso 2011, 72). As such, I used fluid frames as commonly used in qualitative research (Ragin and Amoroso 2011, 75) to analyse the Dutch FFP in order to see what concepts fit my findings best. This approach has enabled me to compose my own analysis on the basis of different concepts and to adjust these to my findings.

OUTLINE

Following this introduction, I discuss the theoretical framework that combines knowledge on foreign policy and feminist international relations to discuss the growing body of literature on FFP. In this chapter, I also introduce the concepts from feminist literature that I use in the subsequent chapters to analyse my data. As such, I discuss the concept of Feminist Insider Activism (FIA) as proposed by Mazur and McBride (2023), the term Feminist Cooperative Constellation (FCC) as an adjustment to the concept “women’s cooperative constellations” as proposed by Holli (2008), and the terms “gender cosmopolitanism” coined by Bergman-Rosamond (2013) and “norm entrepreneur” as proposed to be used for FFPs by Sundström and Elgström (2020). In chapter 2, I argue that the Taskforce Women’s Rights and Gender Equality (TFVG) is largely responsible for grappling with the internal dynamics of the Dutch MFA and the development of its FFP. Although their efforts as FIA actors have resulted in the adoption of the FFP, they might not be insufficient for the implementation of a truly transformative new policy framework. In chapter 3, I use the concept FCC to make sense of the roles of the varying feminist actors and allies that were involved in the adoption and development of the Dutch FFP. I argue that the combined efforts of the FIA actors, Dutch CSOs organised through the network of Dutch gender platform WO=MEN, gender consultants and ministers have resulted in the emergence of the Dutch FFP. Chapter 4 goes into the international dynamics of the FFP and the role of this new trend in the establishment of the Dutch FFP. Using the concepts of ‘gender cosmopolitanism’ and ‘norm entrepreneur,’ I explore the dual function that the FFP fulfils for the Dutch government in the international realm. The Dutch FFP functions both as an extension of its own values, and as a label to maintain relevancy in the international realm. This thesis concludes that the interactions between the FCCs and the international context have driven the adoption and development of the FFP in the Netherlands. However, by playing into potentially problematic international dynamics, the FCC runs the risk of being co-opted by a neo-liberal state agenda, enforcing the very power imbalances they hope to address.

CHAPTER 1: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.1 FOREIGN POLICY

Foreign policy is the set of general objectives guiding external policies executed by the state, including all activities and relationships of one state in its interactions with other states and international institutions. Foreign policy analysis (FPA) aims to understand and explain foreign policy, or foreign policy behaviour and can be approached and interpreted from various theoretical perspectives (Hudson 2016, 14). As the foundational approach to IR theory, realist approaches to FPA assume that states are driven by self-interest and the pursuit of power (Wohlforth 2016, 52). They argue that states prioritize national security, survival and material gains and emphasise the importance of military capabilities, balance of power and deterrence strategies (Wohlforth 2016). Although a realist approach can in some cases still be relevant, there have been different theories built in response to realism (Wohlforth 2016, 51). Liberal approaches to foreign policy perceive states as actors embedded in a global system, shaped by norms, institutions and interdependence. They advocate for international cooperation, multilateralism, and the promotion of human rights and democracy as key elements of foreign policy (Doyle 2016, 77). The constructivist approach to foreign policy is relatively new, and emphasises the role of ideas, norms, and shared beliefs in shaping foreign policy. It assumes that foreign policy is influenced by social interactions, identities, and cultural factors (Flockhart 2016, 84). Constructivist theorists highlight the significance of diplomacy, socialization, and norm diffusion in understanding how states perceive their national interests and engage with other actors on the global stage (Flockhart 2016, 93).

Gender and feminist approaches to foreign policy fall within the constructivist tradition and put specific emphasis on (gendered) power imbalances (Locher and Prügl 2001, 111). Although there has been scholarship produced on feminist IR, up until recently, there have not been many attempts to build the bridge toward FPA (Aggestam and True 2020, 146). As one of the earlier feminist IR theorists, Enloe (2004, chap 2) explored gendered power structures in both the field of IR. Asking the simple question: “where are the women?” resulted in new perspectives (Enloe 2014, chap 1). In early feminist IR scholarship, however, the state and its power were seen as an inherently masculine realm that enforces power imbalances. Therefore, it took some time for feminist scholars to start interacting with FPA and take state entities seriously for establishing gender equality (Aggestam and True 2020, 147). In the meantime, however, the women’s and feminist movement have caused states to start adopting gendered approaches in policy development. The most popular strategy is gender mainstreaming, which entails the inclusion of a gender perspective into the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies. Critics sceptically call many attempts to mainstream gender the “add women and stir” approach (Aggestam and True 2020, 147), because it often fails to recognise that gender equality cannot be established by doing ‘something with women’, but rather needs to address power imbalances (Bergman-Rosamond 2020, 219).

1.2 FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY

Although gender mainstreaming was gaining popularity, the jump to feminism with the new FFP trend is new. Because there had been a lack of interaction of feminist IR scholars with FPA, there was no real precedent to what a feminist approach to foreign policy would even look like (Thomson 2020, 176). This has caused states to define their FFPs themselves, often without a definition. However, the

increased popularity of the FFP has led academics and civil society actors alike to start developing their own views on what feminist approaches to foreign policy, and as such FFPs, could look like. This scholarship builds on feminist IR theory that has increasingly been involved with feminist governance because of the Women, Peace, Security (WPS) agenda.

Although there is no consensus on a definition, feminist academics and civil society actors agree that an FFP should entail more than the “add women and stir” approach, and should be more radical than gender mainstreaming (Thompson, Ahmed, and Khokhar 2021, 8). Feminist thought goes beyond women’s empowerment and has a rich history of engaging topics which are important in foreign policy. The Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom for example has played an important role in the peace movement (Ballantyne 2004), supported by feminist academics working on peace and security. Proposed definitions by for example the Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy therefore challenge not only traditional FPA, but also liberal approaches to feminism in the conduct of the FFP. Most states with an FFP, however, follow a liberal approach with a focus on international cooperation, multilateralism, and the promotion of human rights and democracy (Doyle 2016, 77). As such, they have also taken a liberal approach to gender in foreign policy, for example through the practice of gender mainstreaming. Many feminist academics (Thompson, Ahmed, and Khokhar 2021; Thomson 2022; Bouka 2021; Aggestam and Bergman-Rosamond 2018; Achilleos-Sarll et al. 2023; Robinson 2021) and CSOs (Concord 2023; Cheung, Scheyer, Gürsel, and Kirchner 2021; Papagiotti 2023; Kvinna till Kvinna 2023) have challenged this liberal approach. A feminist approach to foreign policy requires critical self-reflection about global power imbalances that marginalise different groups of people, not just women and girls. Feminist scholars and CSOs engaging with current FFPs have therefore criticised states for not being radical enough (Zhukova, Sundstöm, and Elgström 2022; Achilleos-Sarll et al 2023; Thomson 2022). Additionally, intersectional and postcolonial scholars have long challenged the contention that feminism is only about gender equality and women’s rights. Achilleos-Sarll (2018, 37) has for example argued that for an FFP to be effective, an acknowledgement of the gendered, racialised and sexualised nature of FPA is needed.

In light of these interventions into the realm of FFPs, the question and a debate emerge about whether the FFP as a practice of state feminism actually carries transformative potential. This debate goes back to the lack of engagement of early feminist IR scholars with FPA (Thompson, Ahmed, and Khokhar 2021, 1), for example with the contention that the state is an inherently masculine phenomenon and space built on power and therefore unable to be an actor in the establishment of gender equality (Enloe 2004, chap 2). This logic was later followed by critics of the WPS agenda such as Parashar (2019, 835) who argued that the adoption of this new agenda merely signalled the neo-liberal co-optation of feminism. Some scholars follow this logic for their work on FFP, arguing that because of the lack of definition, the FFP acts as a strategic narrative to gain relevancy (Thomson 2022, 185) and ‘soft power abroad’ (Zhukova, Sundstöm, and Elgström 2022, 196), without necessarily having an actual impact. However, there have also been scholars who have based themselves on feminist IR thought to argue for the legitimacy of FFPs. Aggestam and Bergman-Rosamond (2016, 323) for example argue that despite some issues and difficulties with the FFP, the adoption of the word ‘feminist’ signals a challenge to power hierarchies and gendered institutions, by moving towards more controversial politics. Robinson (2021, 34) argues that an ethics of care approach to FFP shows that it has the capacity to provide a groundedness in the locality of the people at the receiving end of the policies. Bouka (2021, 131) similarly contends that foreign policy has a potential to be transformative, although she is more critical about the importance of implementing a true feminist participatory approach that enables states to reflect on their own position and power, and how they value knowledge.

This debate reflects the way in which recent ideas about state feminism have moved towards a more complex understanding of the state that does not reduce it to a unified and monolithic body (Mazur and McBride 2023, 65). However, even if the state is considered complex and multi-layered and state feminism is considered to be relevant for achieving real change, no FFP to date has managed to reach this potential (Achilleos-Sarll et al. 2023, 3). Moreover, efforts to gain insight into the factors that might aid or hinder have only started recently and no particular framework for the ‘right’ and more radical implementation of the FFP have been developed (Thomson 2022, 177). Therefore, on the future of the FFP, Achilleos-Sarll et al (2023, 23-24) write that it remains a question whether and how more alternative and radical interpretations of feminism can be pushed into the domain of FFP.

1.3 FEMINIST INSIDER ACTIVISM

Strong leadership is viewed as an important ingredient to the success of FFPs. However, experience from the Swedish case has shown that the implementation of an FFP cannot be ascribed to one leader only, as its implementation was a collective effort of feminists inside the Swedish MFA (Kvinna till Kvinna 2023, 4). Tiessen and Okoli (2023, 615) also found that feminist insiders were largely responsible for the Feminist Assistance Policy in Canada. Aggestam and True (2023, 212) conclude that insider feminist leaders are essential for the development of FFPs, especially in policy areas that have traditionally not included gender perspectives, such as security or trade.

Mazur and McBride (2023, 67) have taken the concept of the ‘insider feminist’ to produce a new framework for analysing their work and efficacy. At the heart of studying feminist governance, they state, lies the effort to understand what happens when feminist movements actors and ideas become institutionalised through the efforts of agencies and individual actors who advocate for explicitly feminist agendas (Mazur and McBride 2023, 63). They combine research of multiple concepts like ‘feminist insider and ‘femocrats,’ to come up with the following operational definition of feminist insider activism (FIA) that is designed to travel across national contexts so that researchers can use it and this scholarship can work towards building a comparative theory of FIA:

“Feminist insider activism comprises individuals and/or structures that formally operate within state arena at any level and that have links to feminist movement actors and/or their ideas outside the state in order to advance those ideas in policy practice and/or policy instruments to enhance gender equality in policy outcomes and empower feminist movements.” (Mazur and McBride 2023, 67)

The means the actors use to advocate for gender equality are called the “tools of the trade” and are specific to the position of the actor (Mazur and McBride 2023, 69). Actors can either have non-gender specific roles or be official gender advisors or teams. These categories both face their own challenges and may encounter different opportunities. Whereas insiders in non-gender specific areas might struggle to find the time and opportunity to incorporate gender in their work, official gender advisors might face the silo effect. Chappel and Guerrina (2020, 274) for example found that within the diplomatic service of the EU (EEAS), the appointment of an official gender advisor was ineffective in the effort for gender mainstreaming throughout the entire service. The locality in a particular department caused a gender silo and prevented them from being able to make gender mainstreaming a reality throughout the whole of the EEAS Chappel and Guerrina 2020, 276).

1.4 FEMINIST CO-OPERATIVE CONSTELLATIONS

In addition to FIA actors, FFP implementation can be supported by ‘strategic alliances’ between women in office, women’s policy agencies and women’s movements (Mazur and McBride 2023, 66). Although the FFP was first introduced from within official institutions, there is a broad involvement of CSOs and scholars. Woodward (2004, 64) theorised the ways in which feminist movements, bureaucrats within the European Union and academic experts cooperated on progressive gender policy. She coined the term ‘velvet triangle’, which signifies the role female players had in a male-dominated environment and the ways they established change through loyalties. The triangle consists of (1) feminist actors within institutions, (2) feminist CSOs, and (3) feminist experts in the form of academics or consultants, which all tended to operate on several levels in cooperation and moved between positions in the triangle (Woodward 2004, 70).

Holli (2008) has taken this concept and others concerning women’s cooperation such as ‘strategic partnerships’ and ‘triangles of empowerment’ to propose a new and more encompassing term ‘women’s co-operative constellations.’ The triangle, she argues, is too static to capture the ways in which these constellations work, because they exclude any actors that do not fit in the categories (Holli 2008, 171). The term women’s co-operative constellation, Holli (2008, 174) argues, can fulfil its intended purpose to travel across context. Moreover, it is able to encompass the roles that both feminists and allies – the ones who cannot be identified as feminists, but do assist in furthering gender equality policies – play in the establishment of feminist policies. However, using the term ‘women’ instead of ‘feminist’ also bears a significant limitation, as it excludes the feminist actors and allies that do not fit into this category (Mazur and McBride 2023, 66). I therefore argue that the term should be expanded to ‘feminist cooperative constellations’ (FCC), as to capture all the actors involved as feminists.

Ahrens (2023, 336) addresses a risk of velvet triangles that is also relevant to this conceptualisation of the FCC. She argues that CSOs can come to be used and exploited for the purpose of legitimisation of certain policies such as the FFP. This happens when there are entry points to institutions such as invitations to expert groups, hearings and consultations. CSOs need to be mindful of the time and effort they put into this process, as it might go to waste if institutions merely use it for legitimacy. Ahrens (2023) also follows the critique issued by Lang (2014, 280) on the assumption of stability of the velvet triangle, highlighting the risk of co-optation of feminist claims by neoliberal governance. I argue that applying the lens of the FCC as an adaptation of the velvet triangle can be applied to the implementation of the Dutch FFP. This lens allows for an analysis of the ways in which feminist networks mobilise to influence policy making, and of the risks they entail.

1.5 GENDER COSMOPOLITANISM AND NORM ENTREPRENEURS

Even before the adoption of the first ever FFP in Sweden, Bergman-Rosamond (2013) had theorised on the practice of gender cosmopolitanism from the Swedish state, which refers to the “co-constitutive relationship between Sweden’s promotion of women’s rights, security, bodily integrity at home and abroad” and a commitment to the protection of all women’s entitlement to civil liberties” (Bergman-Rosamond 2013, 328). Bergman-Rosamond (2020, 2023) later went on to argue that this history of gender cosmopolitanism created the “fertile ground” on which the FFP could be adopted. Although she argues for the legitimacy of this cosmopolitanism, she also notes that it displays pitfalls and inconsistencies that hinder it from being a structural and transformative policy practice.

Additionally, Sundström and Elgström (2020, 419) argue that the Swedish FFP can be understood as an establishment of a role as a norm entrepreneur in the international community. The role as norm entrepreneur was found to raise Sweden's status and although leaders in the EU were sceptical of the FFP becoming a real norm, it has now become an international trend that should be reflected on (Thomson 2022). Zhukova, Sundström, and Elgström (2022, 215) found that states adopt an FFP in a way that fits their own strategic interests, which is made possible by the lack of official definition, as Thompson, Ahmed, and Khokhar (2021) addressed. This issue, Thomson (2022, 182) argues, results in the FFP becoming an international signal that the state is committed to international liberal norms and institutions. By the continuous de- and re-politicisation of the WPS agenda and the term feminism in FFP, Aggestam and Bergman-Rosamond (2018, 33) argue that FFPs can cause contradictions and ambiguities that play into changing power configurations in the global order. To the backdrop of a gender backlash, Thomson (2022, 179) that states use the FFP to signal adherence to a liberal international order and especially middle powers use their norm entrepreneurship to maintain relevancy. Within these conditions, she argues, the deployment of an FFP contributes to a gendered global hierarchy, which prevents it from having transformative capacity. As such, FFPs become subject to the same postcolonial critique that Parashar (2019, 835) has expressed over the WPS agenda as one that enforces the idea that gendered issues can be found 'out there,' reiterating longstanding critiques about feminism perpetuating the image of the helpless 'third world woman' (Mohanty 1986, 17) or the idea of "saving brown women from brown men" (Spivak 1988, 93). As Achilleos-Sarll et al (2023, 5) indicated, not looking inward will hinder this new policy framework of FFP from living up to its transformative potential.

In the following chapters, I use the theoretical and analytical framework introduced in this chapter to analyse the emergence of the Dutch FFP.

CHAPTER 2: FEMINIST INSIDERS IN THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

2.1 INTERNAL DYNAMICS

In conducting an FFP, it is important that the government and MFA reflect internally what they advocate for externally. This ‘practice what you preach’ is emphasised in lessons from the Swedish FFP (Kvinna till Kvinna 2023, 4). Contrary to the adoption of the FFP in Sweden in 2014, the Dutch FFP did not come from an explicitly feminist government. It is therefore important to analyse the internal dynamics and practices of the MFA prior to the FFP to see to what extent they were in line with this new policy framework.

A few months before the adoption of the FFP, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hoekstra, replaced a pre-approved female director by a male one (NOS 2022). The Minister is allowed to make this decision, but this is usually considered a formality. Following this incident, 600 employees from the MFA signed a letter, not only addressing this particular case, but also the general gender disparity of and inequality in management positions within the MFA (NOS 2022). While the MFA has a Diversity and Inclusion Policy in which it commits itself to 50% women in management by 2025, Ivens and Paassen (2021, 25) found that there is currently insufficient effort to reach this goal. Hoekstra responded to the letter by publicly calling himself a feminist. A few months after this, the FFP was announced (Kamerbrief 2022). The question “where are the women?” (Enloe 2014, chap 1) as introduced in the theoretical chapter, serves here to expose the internal dynamics of gender inequality of the Dutch MFA. Although the introduction of an FFP can help accomplish better internal practices (Kvinna till Kvinna 2023, 4), an FFP can be highly problematic when it fails to be reflexive (Achilleos-Sarll et al. 2023, 6).

Another opportunity for reflexivity and simultaneous potential pitfall for the Dutch FFP, is the newly exposed issue of institutional racism at the MFA (Rijksoverheid 2022a). Independent researchers found that racism was a structural issue at the Dutch MFA, in terms of workplace, employment and in foreign policy conduct (Omlo et al. 2022, 92-93). This report was followed up by the MFA in a message about how they are addressing this issue (Rijksoverheid 2023c). In this message they state that they are building on “recognition, awareness and culture change,” and contend that there will be “periodic evaluation.” Addressing this issue of racism fits within feminist practices and is needed for reaching a transformative foreign policy (Bouka 2021, 131), but both this and the gender disparity issue show that the internal dynamics of the MFA were not in a sufficiently feminist state before the adoption of the FFP in order to fit into the “practice what you preach” frame (Elgershuizen 2023).

2.2 GENDER MAINSTREAMING

Before the adoption of the FFP, the Netherlands already prided itself for being at the forefront of the battle against gender inequality (Kamerbrief 2022a; 2022b). Since 2014, the MFA has had a Taskforce Women’s Rights and Gender Equality (TFVG), located in the Social Development Department of the Directorate-General for International Cooperation (DGIS) that was put in place to support employees of the DGIS with gender mainstreaming efforts. The TFVG has additionally set up the SDG-5 fund (focused on sustainable development goal 5: gender equality) which the government proudly presents as the largest one in the world (Kamerbrief 2022a; 2022b, Rijksoverheid 2022b). However, this official policy was not always reflected in practice. An evaluation by the IOB – the independent Directorate of

International Research and Policy Evaluation – that was executed one year prior to the announcement of the FFP, pointed out that gender mainstreaming practices were not sufficiently implemented in Dutch foreign policy (IOB 2021, 6).

Similar to a previous study in 2015, the IOB noted again that “the ministry had not shown sufficient leadership and had lacked the knowledge, skills and means to really put the Dutch gender mainstreaming policy into practice” (IOB 2021, 6). Although some recommendations from 2015 had been taken up, the evaluation generally concluded that the MFA still lacked an adequate implementation of gender mainstreaming (IOB 2021, 35). Moreover, there was a lack of reach of gender mainstreaming efforts throughout the entire MFA, and a focus on policies specifically dealing with women or sexual reproductive health and rights (IOB 2021, 46). The subtitle of this report was “beyond ‘add women and stir’?” and not without reason. Often, the policies only contained an effort to get more women into certain spaces, without follow-up to ensure true gender equality. The issues they identified were a lack of understanding of gender mainstreaming, the interchanged use of ‘gender’ and ‘women’ and the lack of implementation beyond the department of development cooperation (IOB 2021, 35; 46). This relates to the critiques of liberal approaches to gender and feminism in foreign policy as discussed in the theoretical framework. The lack of gender mainstreaming implementation raises concerns regarding the Dutch FFP, as this should aim to be even more radical than gender mainstreaming policies.

2.3 FEMINIST INSIDERS

The adoption of an FFP within this particular context – a liberal government, internal tumult about inequality at the ministry and the state of the policies dealing with gender – was surprising. The Netherlands is, however, not the only country to adopt a feminist policy framework in an unexpected time. As indicated in the theoretical framework, feminist leaders and insiders have been very important for the adoption and implementation of FFPs (Aggestam and True 2023, 212). This does not only pertain to visible leaders, but to all the insiders that follow a feminist agenda and try to implement that in their work as well as the work of others around them. In a closed meeting in April 2023 about lessons learned from the Swedish FFP, participants who were involved in it attested to the pivotal role of feminist insiders for the Swedish FFP. Although the government of Sweden was explicitly feminist at that time, participants expressed there were similar issues at the Swedish MFA at the time of the adoption of the FFP as discussed for the Dutch MFA in the previous section. Especially because the adoption in Sweden was announced before a framework had been set up, the aftermath of this announcement and design and implementation of the FFP largely relied on feminist insiders.

In their framework of feminist insider activism (FIA), Mazur and McBride (2023) provide some requirements in order to call someone a FIA actor. Firstly, they need to be an individual and/or structure that formally operates within the state arena at any level. Secondly, they need to have links to women’s – preferably feminist – movement actors and/or their ideas outside the state in order to advance the ideas into policy practice and/or instruments to enhance gender equality in policy outcomes. Lastly, they need to be explicitly and/or explicitly state gender equality and women’s rights as one of their goals in their work (Mazur and McBride 2023, 67). There are a number of individuals, I argue here, that can be defined as FIA actors in the case of the Dutch FFP.

Firstly, there is the TFVG, which consists of 13 people that can be identified as FIA actors, both as individuals and as a structure. This is the most clear and undebatable group of feminist insiders in this case. They formally operate within the state arena on the level of the ministry and explicitly identify

themselves as feminists and work with the goal of advancing women's rights and gender equality. They have a strong connection to the outside women's and feminist movement, both in actual connections with people in the movement and by taking and exchanging ideas from and with it. Connected to the TFVG additionally, is a network of gender focal points throughout the different departments of the Directorate-General for Development Cooperation of the MFA (IOB 2021). Although the IOB identified many issues with these gender focal points, including the lack of clear instructions or format of what it means to be one (IOB 2021, 39), these can often be defined as feminist insiders as well. Explicitly taking the role of gender focal point on a voluntary basis means that there is an affinity with women's rights and gender equality and they are actively part of a feminist network within the ministry. Although researching these gender focal points specifically about their role in the FFP goes beyond the scope of this research, it is important to recognise that there are more feminist insiders present at the MFA than only the TFVG. For the adoption but mainly the implementation of the FFP, the TFVG and its connected gender focal point network have been instrumental. During a symposium about the Dutch FFP on February 27 of 2023, ambassador for gender equality, Pascalle Grotenhuis, spoke about the role of the TFVG in the establishment of the FFP. According to her, the TFVG had been doing a lot of "groundwork" for the FFP before there was even mention of the possibility of adopting one. She contended that since its establishment, the TFVG had been working hard to advance both gender mainstreaming and to encourage internal discussions on gender and feminist approaches to foreign policy. After the official announcement of the FFP, the TFVG has also been facilitating conversations internally, as well as identifying supporters by handing out and using "this is what a feminist looks like" keychains. Currently, she addressed, the TFVG was facilitating the production of an FFP handbook by communicating with actors both inside and outside of the state. During my own involvement in the FFP handbook process, I have witnessed the work of the TFVG to establish this handbook by connecting it to the feminist movement through consultations with feminist CSOs. As such, the influence of the TFVG in the adoption and implementation of the FFP can be identified as a result of FIA.

Mazur and McBride (2023, 68) state that all actors in state institutions, including parliament, can be identified as feminist insiders. Petra Stienen, politician in the Senate for D66 (Democrats 66) and former diplomat, was the first individual in the Netherlands to start the inquiry into FFP (ViceVersa 2022). She posed the Parliamentary question about the usefulness of an FFP in March 2021, which led to the inquiry by Ecorys consortium on behalf of the MFA (Kamerbrief 2022b). Stienen is known to speak out about women's issues and rights in the public and political domain (Vice Versa 2022), and can therefore be identified as an explicit feminist insider in the realm of the Senate. As such, Stienen has been particularly instrumental in setting up the adoption of the FFP. The parliamentary question was her "tool of the trade" (Mazur and McBride 2023, 69) for feminist purposes, which led to the official inquiry by Ecorys consortium.

As ministers of foreign affairs and international trade and development cooperation respectively, Wopke Hoekstra en Liesje Schreinemacher also had an important role to play in the adoption and implementation of the FFP. Although their role as FIA actors might be a bit more questionable, it is worth to also take them into account. As ministers embedded officially in state institutions and individuals who have explicitly called themselves feminist and announced their goal of advancing gender equality, they are potential FIA actors. The tricky part is their relationship to the women's or feminist movement, either in connections or ideas. While neither of them seems to have clear connections to the movement itself, the question remains if you could consider their ideas to be coming from the movement. As Achilleos-Sarll et al (2023, 10) address in their assessment of the FFP, contrary to the WPS agenda, the FFP comes from government institutions themselves, rather than directly from the feminist movement. Therefore, I argue that unless the actors involved explicitly express the ideas of

the feminist movement, they are not necessarily FIA actors. In the letter to parliament in which the ministers endorse the results of the Ecorys inquiry, their motivations for doing so are described in a subsection called “policy response” which mainly points to instrumental interpretations of feminism and the FFP, such as advancing the economy, providing stability and strategically countering the anti-gender movement (Kamerbrief 2022b). This means I exclude the ministers from my analysis of the effect of FIA actors, although I do acknowledge the importance of their contribution and therefore the limitation of FIA as a concept to understand their effect. In chapter 3, I come back to these actors in my assessment of the FCC.

2.4 TASKFORCE WORKING IN A SILO

The role of feminist insiders in the establishment of feminist approaches to foreign policy have been noted (Aggestam and True 2023, 206; Tiessen and Okoli 2023; Kvinna till Kvinna 2023). However, all FFPs have been criticised for not being able to implement a feminist perspective in all policy areas. This is for example noted by CSOs criticising ambiguities and policy incoherence (Concord 2023; Cheung, Scheyer, Gürsel, and Kirchner 2021; Papagiotti 2023). While feminist or gender perspectives are often applied to development cooperation, there is a lack of them in other policy areas such as peace and security, (arms) trade and the environment (Cheung, Scheyer, Gürsel, and Kirchner 2021; Achilleos-Sarll et al. 2023), which are needed for the FFP to be deemed transformative (Concord 2023; Kvinna till Kvinna 2023; Achilleos-Sarll et al. 2023). Here, I take a look at the risk of the establishment of an FFP through FIA.

Getting the FFP adopted might have been a big effort, however, implementing a truly feminist approach in foreign policy is a far greater one. In their inquiry for the Dutch MFA, Ivens and Paassen (2021, 5) state that an FFP could “greatly boost efforts to advance gender equality and make gender mainstreaming more systematic,” but also that “more still needs to be done to make gender mainstreaming a structural component of all foreign policy.” This relates strongly to the IOB (2021, 14) evaluation that stated “if gender mainstreaming aims to be transformative, a more comprehensive approach is needed.” The responsibility of the implementation of the FFP now mainly rests on the same TFVG that was responsible for gender mainstreaming in development cooperation. The TFVG, however, still only consists of 10 full time and 2 part time staff and additionally 1 intern on more than 6.000 employees in the Hague and an additional 3.000 on embassies worldwide. The employees of the TFVG do have extensive knowledge of gender and feminist approaches, which is reflected by for example the use of terms like “intersectionality” in communication (Kamerbrief 2022a and 2022b). Moreover, it was showcased in the engagement of Pascale Grotenhuis in discussions about policy coherence, decoloniality and transformability with academics and experts during the symposium on the Dutch FFP (ISS 2023). However, The IOB (2021, 10) evaluation concluded that even before the implementation of the FFP, “the TFVG has remained small, especially in comparison to the increased portfolio it has to manage”, and additionally that “the level of institutional embedding of the TFVG within the ministry has not been conducive for ministry-wide gender mainstreaming.” Even if the TFVG manages to implement gender mainstreaming in the entire MFA, the theoretical framework has pointed out that a feminist approach should go beyond gender mainstreaming. This means that the TFVGs “portfolio” has again grown enormously. This shows that the knowledge and capacity of this TFVG is greatly restricted by its size and position within the MFA, which causes what Chappel and Guerrina (2020, 274) call a “gender silo.”

Because of this silo, the Dutch FFP will largely be reliant on top-down implementation. Lessons from the Swedish FFP, however, have shown the importance of simultaneous culture change within the MFA (Kvinna till Kvinna 2023, 4). To establish this, a lot more capacity is needed from gender experts within the MFA. Moreover, as the IOB (2021, 72) report indicated, mandatory inclusion of gender in evaluations is needed to truly implement this perspective in all foreign policy. Currently, the MFA is still working on an FFP handbook that will serve as a guide and instruction for employees of the entire MFA. The Netherlands is not the first country to produce such a handbook, although not all states with an FFP have produced one. The approach to this handbook also differs among countries. While some use it as an external communication tool, others use it as a set of mandatory practices truly geared towards employees (Thompson, Ahmed, and Khokhar 2021, 24). The Dutch MFA has set out to produce a “practical handbook for employees about the application of the FFP” (Rijksoverheid 2023b). As this handbook is not yet published, it is still unclear to what extent there will be mandatory monitoring and evaluation involved. For now, at least, it remains an issue that the TFVG is responsible for facilitating the production of the handbook, while being constrained by their lack of “authority” within the MFA (IOB 2021, 39). As Mazur and McBride (2023, 69) state, FIA actors can only use their “tools of the trade”, which in this case risks not being enough to create substantial change.

CHAPTER 3: FEMINIST CIVIL SOCIETY IN A COOPERATIVE CONSTELLATION

3.1 CONSULTING ORGANISATIONS

The FIA actors working on the Dutch FFP are strongly connected to the outside feminist movement. Feminist CSOs have been involved with the Dutch FFP throughout the entire process. In this chapter, I explore the role of feminist civil society organisations in the Netherlands in the adoption and implementation of the FFP through the lens of feminist cooperative constellations (FCC).

The Swedish FFP was implemented with assistance from Swedish CSOs. Participants of a closed meeting in April 2023 about lessons learned from the Swedish FFP indicated that this was largely due to a history of flourishing civil society and of good relationships between CSOs and the state. Constructive and continuous consultations with feminist CSOs are generally regarded as a prerequisite for a successful FFP, both because of the expertise that lies within these organisations and as a method of including the voices that have been marginalised in the past (Concord 2023; Kvinna till Kvinna 2023; WO=MEN 2022d). Similar to Sweden, the Netherlands has a large and active civil society, with many (international) organisations with good connections to the state (Habraken et al. 2013, 743). However, Habraken et al. (2013, 744) also show that an increasing dependence on government funds have created risks for many Dutch NGOs, like losing contact with civil society. The most prominent organisation in the establishment and development of the Dutch FFP is WO=MEN. This is “the Dutch gender platform”, which connects many organisations working for women’s rights and gender equality (WO=MEN 2023). It was started in 2006 to create more space for gender in policies, mainly focusing on development cooperation. Since then, it has developed into a large platform with 50 member-organisations and 125 individual members. In addition to providing a platform for networking among NGOs, WO=MEN also has very strong ties to several sections of government, including the MFA (WO=MEN 2023). WO=MEN organises spaces for discussion and debate between civil servants, diplomats and NGOs to establish and maintain these relationships. Moreover, WO=MEN is actually a partner of the MFA in coordinating the NAP 1325 and also has the role of coordinator of the SDG 5 fund together with the TFVG (WO=MEN 2023). Through this partnership, WO=MEN is directly tied to the feminist insiders in the TFVG that they connect to their member organisations during events and discussions. Therefore, WO=MEN functions as an intermediary between the feminist movement in the Netherlands, embodied in CSOs and the MFA. This role has further solidified through the FFP development process.

WO=MEN has been promoting feminist perspectives, and the use of the word feminist for foreign policy behind closed doors for a long time (Vice Versa 2022, 5). As such, WO=MEN was making a conscious effort to promote the adoption of an FFP. When Ivens and Paassen were conducting their exploratory research for the MFA, they asked WO=MEN to organise a consultation on FFP with CSO partners and experts (Canon van Nederland 2022). This consultation was held on the 8th of July 2021 through an online meeting, where WO=MEN (2021, 1) expressed the “urge to continue to be engaged in further dialogues and processes related to FFP” and suggested to “also consult other actors, including civil society in Low- and Middle- income countries.” This emphasis on meaningful consultation, both with CSO’s in the Netherlands and abroad, relates to the debate on the transformative capacity of FFPs as introduced in the theoretical framework. As Robinson (2021, 34) notes, an FFP can be ethical if it centres the experience of the receivers and actively consults them, and develop its potential to be transformative (Achilleos-Sarll et al. 2023, 10). This type of consultation was expressed by WO=MEN (2021, 3) through the notion “nothing about us without us.”

After Hoekstra and Schreinemacher officially announced the Dutch FFP in May 2022, CSOs became more involved, mainly through an FFP working group organised by WO=MEN. In October 2022, the MFA asked CSOs to provide input for the FFP through filling out a survey (WO=MEN 2022c). This included a range of questions, regarding the current “weaknesses” and “strengths” of the Netherlands with regards to FFP, what the “ambition” and “key elements” should be, and how they can encourage “collaboration” throughout ministries and with CSOs (WO=MEN 2022c). It was only after the second letter to parliament in November 2022 (Kamerbrief 2022a), however, that there was more clarity about the direction of the Dutch FFP. In this letter, Hoekstra and Schreinemacher announced the development of an FFP handbook, in which practical instructions for employees of the MFA would be included (Kamerbrief 2022a, 5). Further consultations for this handbook were mainly organised through the WO=MEN led FFP working group. Through my internship position, I temporarily participated in this feedback process of multiple draft versions of the handbook.

3.2 FEMINIST COOPERATIVE CONSTELLATION

Efforts towards feminist perspectives in policy are often realised through feminist networks. In this section I analyse the role of CSOs and other actors in the adoption and development of the Dutch FFP. I argue that in addition to the FIA actors that have pushed for the implementation of the FFP, CSOs organised through WO=MEN have assisted this work. Together with gender experts and allies, they form an FCC which has made the adoption and development of the FFP possible. As discussed in my theoretical framework, I adopt the reconstruction of varying terms like the ‘velvet triangle’ and ‘strategic partnerships’ under the umbrella term that Holli (2008, 169) calls women’s cooperative constellations, in which I replace women’s for feminist, adopting the contention that not all women are necessarily feminist and not all feminists or allies are necessarily women (Mazur and McBride 2023).

The Dutch case generally can fit the somewhat constricting concept of the ‘velvet triangle’ as proposed by Woodward (2004). This triangle consists of ‘femocrats’ (in this thesis called FIA actors), gender experts in academia and/or consultancy, and the organised (feminist) women’s movement. These three types of actors can be identified in the Dutch FFP case. The first category are the FIA actors as identified in chapter 2. The second type of actor are gender experts, in this case embodied by consultants Ivens and Paassen that were hired to conduct research into the added value of an FFP in the Netherlands (Vice Versa 2022). Making use of academic literature as well as reports from civil society in other countries with an FFP and directly consulting Dutch feminist civil society actors, Ivens and Paassen (2021) have shown to be important actors in the feminist cooperation that led to the adoption of the FFP. The third group in the ‘velvet triangle’ are the CSOs that I have identified in the previous sections as the organisations that were involved in the consultation process of the Dutch FFP.

Holli (2008, 179-180) addresses three reasons relevant to this research for adopting a broader term, identified in this research as FCC. Firstly, she contends that the ‘velvet triangle’ poses an issue because feminist actors in parliament and civil service need to be taken together in a category to fit into the triangle. This does not necessarily pose a problem for my analysis, as I have identified both Stienen and the TFVG as FIA actors in chapter 2. As such, they do fit together in the triangle. However, I do contend that a different framework might better capture the role that different FIA actors have played in this process. The second point of criticism about the triangle construction is the limitation of included actors. Holli (2008, 170) particularly emphasises the role of media in feminist networks working toward policy change. Although I do not identify the media as an important factor in the establishment of the Dutch

FFP (as I will discuss further in chapter 4), I do argue that ministers Hoekstra and Schreinemacher should have a place in the framework, because their pivotal role cannot be neglected. As discussed in chapter 2, these ministers do not fit the somewhat limited framework of FIA actor, because they are not ‘feminist enough’ from their position in the cabinet. With their explicitly feminist stance and the commitment to an FFP, however, they are important actors in the adoption of the FFP, and can be identified as allies. Therefore, they should and can be better captured by the term FCC. Lastly, Holli (2008, 177) addresses the lack of capacity of the triangle to encompass different types of relationships between the actors involved. The way Woodward (2004) introduced the term was to signify the ways that people concerned with marginalised topics in the EU had to rely on personal relationships with people insiders and build networks of clientelism which provided a ‘way in.’ In order to make this concept travel across time and space, however, adjustments are needed for contexts where the topic of gender might be more or less marginalised (Holli 2008, 173). With a relatively strong history of women’s rights and gender equality advancement, the Dutch context resembles one where gender is less marginalised as a topic. Therefore, the actors involved in advocating for and implementing the FFP were not dependent on patron-client relationships. Neither was the FFP established through explicit combined strategy. Rather, it emerged through the combined effort and interlinkages of ideas and knowledge that connect feminist insiders to gender experts and CSOs.

The willingness to co-create the FFP through a feminist network is shown through the actions and words of all actors involved in the FCC. The MFA has shown this through consulting CSOs throughout the entire process. In their letter to parliament, Hoekstra and Schreinemacher state that “in order to make the feminist foreign policy meaningful, broad consultations will be set up” (Kamerbrief 2022b). This importance of consulting is reiterated by many Dutch civil society organisations in their public response to the FFP (Oxfam Novib 2023, WO=MEN 2022; Plan International 2022; Mama Cash 2022; ActionAid 2022), all producing similar points the statement of WO=MEN (2021) that reads “the key advice is to ensure that the development of a FFP for the Netherlands is a co-creation process between government, civil society (including in-country civil society), academia and private sector.” This statement implicates the willingness and desire to be involved in the process. This quote came from the consultation with Ivens and Paassen (WO=MEN 2021) which also demonstrates the clear link between the feminist expert consultants and feminist CSOs in this process. During the first year of the FFP, there were also multiple occasions on which different actors in the FCC interacted to exchange information and knowledge to strengthen the FFP effort. An important example was the symposium that was held on February 27, 2023 about the Dutch FFP (ISS 2023). Here, Elgershuizen from WO=MEN, Ivens from the Ecorys consortium, Grotenhuis from the MFA and professor Icaza came together in a panel to discuss the Dutch FFP. Open dialogue about the FFP allowed for an exchange of ideas, but also concerns within the FCC. A different example is the FFP pub quiz that was hosted as a side event during the Commission on the Status of Women in New York a few months later by a coalition of Dutch CSOs (Hivos 2023). This was an informal event organised to “build connections” and “exchange knowledge” between “a diverse group of activists, decision makers, advocates and representatives of international organizations, all feminists.” During this year, WO=MEN (2022b) on behalf of a few members also directly addressed Hoekstra in a letter on International Women’s day, calling on him stating that he “as a feminist, of course reflects on this day,” making use of his expressed position as an ally to do advocacy work. These examples show the complex network of feminists and allies that together have established and developed the Dutch FFP through an FCC.

3.3 DIFFERENT VISIONS

Although the FCC has been successful in establishing the adoption and influencing the development of the FFP, there is the risk of exploitation of CSOs and of co-optation of the feminist organisations and movement in neo-liberal governance (Ahrens 2023, 336). In this section, I discuss the issues CSOs encounter in the development and assistance of the FFP in the Netherlands.

As discussed in the theoretical framework, FFPs have been criticised for their lack of transformative capacity, because of the liberal interpretation of feminism that is seen as insufficiently radical. Given the political climate and history of gender implementations in policy in the Netherlands, critics expect the Dutch FFP to adopt a similar liberal approach to the FFP (WO=MEN 2021). As Deneer (2023) found, the expectation of a liberal FFP does not match the vision of Dutch CSOs, who voice the importance of an intersectional and decolonial approach. This is also seen in public statements by NGOs who are welcoming the FFP while remaining cautious. For example, WECF international has issued a statement in which they content that the Dutch FFP should address “power relations, systemic inequality and the historical responsibility of the Global North” (Lenders and Dornow 2023). Oxfam Novib (2023) also calls for a “critical review of the position of power of the Global North” and addressing “new colonialism of emerging economies.” Similar expectations come from different organisations who call for the FFP to “address international trade and tax evasion” (ActionAid 2022), “change patterns and structures of power that maintain inequality” (Plan International 2022), “expand the focus from women and LGBTqi+ to other marginalised groups” (Dorcus 2023), “expand political influence of women in peacebuilding and address systematic power imbalances” (PAX 2023), and “commit to substantial financial investment to support the feminist movement” (Mama Cash 2022). These statements relate to more radical interpretations of feminism that reflect principles of intersectionality and decolonising practices.

These different visions on the future Dutch FFP, creates a tension in the FCC. While CSOs are pushing for transformative interpretations of the FFP, the FIA actors also need to ensure buy-in from colleagues. As Grotenhuis from the MFA expressed during the symposium on the Dutch FFP, the TFVG needs to balance their relationships with both CSOs and departments within the MFA that are less prone to take on a feminist perspective. In her assessment of feminist networks, Ahrens (2023, 336) expresses a concern that the investment of time and resources from CSOs to institutionalise feminism can pose a risk for those organisations. In the Dutch FFP process, CSOs are putting a lot of time and effort into the consultations and feedback process of the FFP handbook. Unfortunately, the outcome of the FFP handbook and its implementation lie beyond the scope of this thesis, and only time will tell to what extent the consultations will have shaped the handbook and the FFP outcomes. However, there is a possibility that their recommendations are not included. When this happens, Aggestam and True (2023, 243) argue, the CSOs participation can also come to serve as a legitimation for the policy, even if the CSOs do not agree with the outcome. As the MFA has emphasised the co-production of the handbook (Kamerbrief 2022a, Kamerbrief 2022b, Rijksoverheid 2022b, Rijksoverheid 2023b), this is a real concern.

Through serving as legitimation, the FCC risks being co-opted in neoliberal governance (Ahrens 2023, 336). Lang (2014, 280) notes that within the EU, NGOs have come to serve as the connection to civil society. Simultaneously, the (feminist) women’s movement has increased their work in coalitions. This cooperation between CSOs can contribute to change, but it can also cause a false perception of homogeneity. For the Dutch FFP process, WO=MEN, and its FFP working group, function in a coalition. This is convenient, as WO=MEN manages the consultation process in a time- and resources-

efficient way for the MFA and CSOs can make joint claims. However, this structure can also come to imply that all organisations have the exact same ideas and visions. Moreover, coalitions like this one can exclude others from the consultation process. In this sense, WO=MEN can become a gatekeeper, deciding what information and feedback is passed on to the MFA. WO=MEN therefore needs to be careful to balance its role as both coordinator of CSOs, watchdog and partner of the MFA, especially because it is also in direct partnership with the MFA and sourcing most of its funds from them (WO=MEN 2022a). Habraken et al. (2013, 744) addressed this issue of Dutch CSOs increasingly relying on government, rather than public funds. They expressed the concern that this caused CSOs to lose their connection to civil society and be taken into the government agenda. If, in their effort to establish institutionalisation of feminism, the CSOs in the FCC lose their connection to the feminist movement, because they come to serve as legitimation for the FFP, they risk being co-opted in neo-liberal governance of the Dutch state. This could happen if, despite the involvement of CSOs, the MFA ends up implementing an FFP without transformative interpretations of feminism. Moreover, they might even contribute to problematic global power structures. This risk is further explored in chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4: THE DUTCH FFP IN AN INTERNATIONAL TREND

4.1 THE QUIET ADOPTION OF THE DUTCH FFP

Because the first ever FFP in Sweden was part of the self-proclaimed feminist conduct of the government, it was not introduced as a separate concept. In further developing the FFP, however, it developed into a phenomenon and an international trend. Similar to many countries who currently have an FFP, the Dutch government does not necessarily claim to be feminist. As Hoekstra has himself indicated in the Senate: “‘feminist’ remains to have a negative connotation in the Netherlands” (Eerste Kamer der Staten Generaal 2022a). Despite this, the Netherlands does have a strong history of supporting gender equality internationally (WO=MEN 2021). In this chapter, I explore the international context in which the Dutch government has decided to adopt an FFP. In doing so, I problematise this new international norm of FFP as a risk for the transformative capacity of this new policy framework in the Netherlands.

Although the Netherlands is a relatively gender-equal country, for example scoring third on the EU gender equality index (2022), the word feminism as pronounced by the state or state institutions is not a regular occurrence. Moreover, CSOs indicated they had “doubts and concerns about how realistic FFP is in the Netherlands, considering the political climate” (WO=MEN 2021, 1). In this context of, albeit a gender equality friendly, but not explicitly feminist state, it is interesting to note that the announcement and adoption of the FFP was done without many issues. Moreover, there was not a great uproar of disagreeing parties in the house of representatives or the senate, as the FFP only came up a few times in debate (e.g. Eerste Kamer der Staten Generaal 2022a; 2022b). Moreover, the adoption of the FFP in the Netherlands did not receive much attention in the media. Although the MFA has released official public statements about the FFP on the government website (Rijksoverheid 2022a; 2022b; 2023), it was not picked up by other media. Exceptions to this were a column in NRC (Brouwers 2022) and opinion pieces in Trouw (Haeringen 2022), and on the website of BNN Vara (Elgershuizen 2023) and some articles from small or regional papers. It did not appear as a news article in any (large) papers or attract more attention from the media in other forms. As such, it was adopted quietly. From my experience in the consultation process, I noticed that there were different opinions on this among the consulted CSOs. On the one hand, many were happy that the FFP could be adopted without attracting negative attention. On the other hand, some noted, similarly to what scholarship on FFP also indicate (Aggestam and True 2023, 212), that for an FFP to be effective, it is important to ensure buy-in from employees in institutions, but also from different political parties and the general public. This quiet adoption and lack of public statement by for example the prime minister, prevents this early buy-in, which indicates a risk for the future of the Dutch FFP.

AN INTERNATIONAL NORM

Rather than from a national, or intrinsic feminist motivation, the FFP came from an international trend. This is marked by the stark contrast between the presentation of the Dutch FFP in the domestic and the international sphere. Despite not causing great debate within the Netherlands, the Dutch MFA has profiled itself strongly and quickly when it comes to the FFP in the international sphere. This is illustrated by the high-level international conference on FFP that will be held in the Netherlands in the fall of 2023, which was announced only shortly after the adoption of the FFP (Kamerbrief 2022a).

There are two (interrelated) trends in the international realm that have influenced the adoption of the FFP in the Netherlands. First, and most obvious, is the FFP as a new international trend (Thomson 2022). As Hoekstra and Schreinemacher (Kamerbrief 2022b) announced in their first letter to parliament, by adopting an FFP, the Netherlands could “strengthen their position as international leader” in the realm of women’s rights and gender equality. This point is reiterated in external communication, where the government announces that with the FFP, it “joins a group of leaders of countries that strive for gender equality internationally” (Rijksoverheid 2022a; 2023b). These statements show the importance of this international development in FFPs. The second type of international trend of importance are the growing nationalist and populist movements (Sundström and Elgström 2020, 419) and the accompanying anti-gender or anti-feminist movement (Thomson 2022, 182). Hoekstra and Schreinemacher also acknowledge this as an important reason for adopting the FFP, as they state that they “recognise the urgency in increasing efforts toward gender equality, especially now that gender inequality increases globally [...]. The position of women and girls is increasingly under pressure, there is an increase in conservatism and a remaining trend of resistance against initiatives on women’s rights and gender equality (‘pushback’).” By stating this, they identify the pushback or anti-gender movement and trends explicitly as a reason for adopting the FFP. In her analysis of this new international trend of FFP, Thomson (2022, 182) has found that it is inherently related to the gender pushback, as the FFP serves as a signal against this development. Just like Hoekstra and Schreinemacher state, an FFP is an important “global signal on the importance of women’s rights and gender equality” (Kamerbrief 2022b).

4.3 GENDER COSMOPOLITANISM AND NORM ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Similar to Sweden, the Netherlands prides itself in having a long-standing tradition of promoting women’s rights and gender equality in the international sphere (Rijksoverheid 2022a). The installation of the TFVG in 2014 attests to this. And, even before this time, the MFA had started producing NAPs 1325. Although 54 countries have produced at least one NAP 1325, the Netherlands is one of only six countries that are currently on their fourth one (WILPF 2023). In this section, I explore the concepts of gender cosmopolitanism (Bergman-Rosamond 2013; 2020) and norm entrepreneurship (Sundström and Elgström 2020) in relation to the Dutch FFP.

Bergman-Rosamond (2013) theorised the practice of gender cosmopolitanism of the Swedish state as the co-constitutive relationship between Sweden’s promotion of women’s rights and gender equality in the domestic and international sphere. As such, gender cosmopolitanism constitutes the claim to the belief in universal human rights and gender equality, and an obligation to pursue this beyond national borders (Bergman-Rosamond 2013, 336; 2020, 220). Although the Dutch FFP was adopted in a different context, gender cosmopolitanism does play a role. This is showcased by the argument that is presented by the Hoekstra and Schreinemacher (Kamerbrief 2022a), basing the FFP on Article 1 of the Dutch Constitution which states that “all persons in the Netherlands shall be treated equally in equal circumstances. Discrimination on the grounds of religion, belief, political opinion, race or sex, disability, sexual orientation or on any other grounds whatsoever shall not be permitted.” (Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations 2023, 5). In the letter to parliament, Hoekstra and Schreinemacher state that the Dutch government is “convinced that this principle has universal value, as captured in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights” (Kamerbrief 2022a). By taking a Dutch-specific amendment article, connecting it to a universal declaration and additionally endorsing the belief that this is of universal

value, they showcase clear cosmopolitan thought. This is then linked to the “global need to address human rights, especially for women and girls” (Kamerbrief 2022a) constituting a similar gender cosmopolitanism as identified in Sweden by Bergman-Rosamond (2013; 2020).

Although this motivation of gender cosmopolitanism is thus definitely present, there are other ways in which the trend of adopting FFPs works. As addressed in the previous section, the FFP is a way of continuing the work of the Dutch MFA while also getting credit for being “already part of a group of leaders of international treaties and agreements about equal opportunities for women and girls, gender equality, and anti-discrimination” (Kamerbrief 2022a). Therefore, an additional important factor in the international trend was the narrative that the Netherlands was already doing many of the things that an FFP is supposed to do, and officially adopting an FFP would help get credit for this. Hoekstra and Schreinemacher for example state that “the Netherlands is already part of a group of leaders of international treaties and agreements about equal opportunities for women and girls, gender equality, and anti-discrimination” (Kamerbrief 2022b). Furthermore, all of the communication, both externally and to parliament, have extensive sections titled “What is the Netherlands already doing?” creating a legitimization frame of the continuation of these practices in the name of the FFP. Moreover, this frame was also used by organisations such as WO=MEN (2021) to encourage the government to adopt an FFP, as well as by Ivens and Paassen (2021) in their inquiry into FFP for the Dutch MFA. In their report, they for example state that for the Netherlands, “it would be a strategic choice to adopt and FFP” and important to “maintain the reputation as a leader on gender equality and human rights” (Ivens and Paassen 2022, 5).

This narrative relates to the conception of norm entrepreneurship that Sundström and Elgström (2020) applied to the Swedish FFP case. By introducing the FFP, they found that Sweden was able to raise in status and viewed more positively within state institutions of other European states, even though the participants did not really believe that this norm would catch on (Sundström and Elgström 2020, 425). However, now that it has developed into a trend, states, among which the Netherlands, are adopting one to also “join this group of leaders” (Rijksoverheid 2022a). Although not the first entrepreneur of the FFP, the Netherlands in this way joins a group of norm entrepreneurs, an act that allows middle powers to gain and maintain relevancy in the international community (Thomson 2022, 185) and “soft power abroad” (Zhukova, Sundstöm, and Elgström 2022, 215). That the Netherlands is taking on this role as norm entrepreneur is also illustrated by the ambition to organise the second FFP conference after Germany last year, with which they “want to contribute to broadening the knowledge and further the conversation on feminist foreign policy” (Rijksoverheid 2023b). Additionally, the Netherlands states it “is committed to further the equality of men, women and LGBTQi+ people” (Rijksoverheid 2022a; 2022b) and that it “has special attention for the position of LGBTQi+ people” (Kamerbrief 2022a) in the formulation of the FFP. When introducing an FFP, Zhukova, Sundstöm, and Elgström (2022, 202) found that many states have different interpretations and focusses in their FFPs to stand out. For the Netherlands, focusing on LGBTQi+ allows them to profile their FFP in an innovative way, which plays into their role as norm entrepreneur as well.

4.4 GENDERED GLOBAL HIERARCHIES

Gender cosmopolitanism and norm entrepreneurship can serve the purpose of getting new types of policies such as the FFP in place (Zhukova, Sundstöm, and Elgström 2020, 196). However, they can become problematic if they exhibit the conception that gendered issues can be found ‘elsewhere’ while

there is a simultaneous lack of self-reflection about the ways in which these states themselves contribute to (gender) inequality. If not intended and executed on the basis of self-reflection, Thomson (2022, 179) argues that FFPs can contribute to gendered global hierarchies, enforcing the power structures they are supposed to work against.

As Zhukova, Sundstöm, and Elgström (2022, 202) found, states who have developed an FFP adjust international norms to their own benefit by choosing to interpret it in a way that fits their own strategic narratives. By doing this, they instrumentalise gender in foreign policy to create and maintain “soft power abroad” (Zhukova, Sundstöm, and Elgström 2022, 215). The reason states can do this is quite simply because there are no particular guidelines or rules on how to conduct an FFP (Thompson, Ahmed, and Khokhar 2021). Thomson (2022, 174) argues that adopting an FFP therefore serves as a signifier rather than constitute an actual policy practice. By “joining the group of leaders” (Rijksoverheid 2022a), the FFP can come to signify this norm entrepreneurship and moral status. For the Netherlands, it is clear that there is a strong urge to present itself as an entrepreneur, regardless of the current status of the policy. For example, the high-level international conference was already announced in the November 2022, while the consultation process on the handbook that I took part in did not start yet. Moreover, in May 2023, an article on the achievements of the “first year of the feminist foreign policy” (Rijksoverheid 2023b) was published, even though the FFP handbook had not been published yet. Especially in the context of the anti-gender movement as discussed in a previous section, Thomson (2022, 182) argues that the FFP acts to signify adherence to the international liberal order. Combined with the lack of direction and requirements, the FFP runs the risk of employing a depoliticising understanding of feminism (Aggestam and Bergman-Rosamond 2018, 35-37). When the FFP is merely used as a signifier, it contributes to and reinforces gendered hierarchies of power by placing the issue of gender ‘out there,’ reinforcing the idea that there is a hierarchy in which the norm entrepreneurs gain the right of imposing their norms elsewhere (Thomson 2022, 175). As such, FFPs can reiterate the same patterns which warranted postcolonial critiques of the WPS agenda and the corresponding NAPs 1325 (Parashar 2019, 835).

An FFP can thus be highly problematic when preached but not practiced. This is why many feminist academics; CSOs and activists are emphasising the importance of an FFP that takes critical self-reflection as its main focus rather than gendered issues elsewhere (e.g. Cheung, Scheyer, Gürsel, and Kirchner 2021; Concord 2023; Zhukova, Sundstöm, and Elgström 2022; Achilleos-Sarll et al. 2023). An FFP in the Netherlands should therefore be based on decolonial practices that actively strive to take down power imbalances, not only between men and women, but also between countries, in order to be truly transformative (WO=MEN 2021; Thomson 2022). There are, in fact, countries like Chile who are considering to adopt an FFP with a post- or de-colonial focus. For the Netherlands, however, self-reflection remains a risk, especially regarding the type of neo-liberal government which has adopted the policy. Except for vague commitments to “investigate the causes of power imbalances and inequality” (Kamerbrief 2022a), there is no emphasis on self-reflection in announcements around the FFP. And, although in the recent year, there have – after a very long time – apologies been made by both the prime minister (Rijksoverheid 2022a) and the king of the Netherlands (NOS 2023) for the role the Netherlands played in slavery and colonialism, none of the messaging around the Dutch FFP signal post- or decoloniality as a factor. As for the power relations in the WPS agenda that Parashar (2019, 835) issued a postcolonial critique on, the most recent Dutch NAP 1325 finally also addressed domestic affairs in addition to international commitments, but is still critiqued for reiterating neo-colonial structures (Muehlenhoff 2022, 757). Looking back at chapter 2 of this thesis that addressed the issues of gender disparity and racism at the Dutch MFA and the judgement that the MFA is currently not even sufficiently capable of implementing proper gender mainstreaming, self-reflection in the Dutch FFP is warranted.

Although both the CSOs and Ivens and Paassen (2021) have emphasised the importance of this transformative approach, they have also used the frame that the Netherlands is already doing a lot in their efforts to establish an FFP. Therefore, they have played into this potentially problematic framing of the Dutch FFP.

CONCLUSION

FINDINGS

This research has sought to understand the emergence of an FFP in the Netherlands. In chapter 1, I explored the role of feminist insiders in the government and civil service in the adoption and implementation of the FFP. The TFVG have managed to establish an FFP at the Dutch MFA, despite internal issues that would indicate a lack of adherence to feminist principles, both in internal dynamics and in the gender mainstreaming policy effort. As FIA actors they have pushed for the FFP from the inside of the MFA and have taken charge of the development of the FFP. With clear connections to the feminist movement and extensive knowledge on gender issues, they form the core of the development and implementation of the Dutch FFP. However, their location in a specific department has caused them to be in a gender silo, meaning that the TFVG does not have equal access to all the departments and directorates which are involved in foreign policy. Because past evaluations have already pointed out that this position hinders the TFVG in implementing gender mainstreaming, an FFP can only be implemented successfully if this is addressed. Therefore, the insider feminists who have made the adoption and development of the FFP possible might not be able to see to its implementation and transformative capacity, especially in the context of feminist issues in the internal dynamics of the MFA.

In chapter 2 I analysed the role of feminist CSOs and other actors that have been involved in the establishment of the Dutch FFP. Feminist insiders have not been acting alone in the establishment of the Dutch FFP. Rather, it is developed through a network of feminists and allies. Feminist CSOs have played an important role in the lobby for the FFP, as well as the development of the FFP handbook. Through consultations with the MFA, led by the TFVG, they have contributed to the handbook. Additionally, feminist experts have played an important role in this scheme, as they were the ones to conduct the inquiry into the possibility of an FFP for the MFA. My analysis has found that both in- and outsider feminists and allies have been important in this process, together forming a feminist cooperative constellation (FCC). In this process of co-creation through consultation, however, CSOs run the risk of being used as legitimisation for the policy. While Dutch CSOs are hoping for an FFP that can yield transformative change, they are also expecting the Dutch FFP to contain a liberal interpretation of feminism. Other (liberal) FFPs have been critiqued for not being radical enough and for being insufficient for a truly transformative policy. As such, these FCCs might risk co-optation into neo-liberal governmentality of the Dutch government, through the use of the consultations as a legitimisation framework.

This risk can be understood better in the context of chapter 4, in which I explored the international context as a driving factor for the implementation of the FFP in the Netherlands. Firstly, I have identified ‘gender cosmopolitanism’ as a factor for the adoption of the Dutch FFP, which is reflected in the history of the Netherlands supporting gender equality efforts in the international realm. Even though the FFP has not gained a lot of traction in the Netherlands, the Dutch MFA is profiling itself strongly in the international realm, because of the FFP as a trend. The concept of ‘norm entrepreneur’ helps to understand the ways in which middle powers maintain their relevancy and reputation in the internationally. Although the Netherlands is not the first to adopt this policy, it does so by joining a group of norm entrepreneurs that each find their own way to fit the FFP into their framing and strategy. The Netherlands forms its own position as norm entrepreneur by focusing on the marginalisation of LGBTqi+ groups in addition to women and girls. As such, however, the FFP becomes a label for a particular status and to signal to the international community an adherence to the liberal world order in a time of gender backlash. By doing this, the Dutch FFP risks contributing to a gendered global order,

in which gender norms are imposed elsewhere. When not exercised as a norm led by self-reflection, the FFP might reiterate neo-colonial dynamics, thereby enforcing power imbalances that feminism seeks to address.

It is exactly this type of policy that neither CSOs nor feminist insiders want to endorse. A transformative approach to FFP which goes beyond a mere signifier requires a broader buy-in. The quiet adoption of the FFP in the Netherlands allowed for an easy instalment of the FFP, but might prevent it from being transformative. Lessons from the Swedish FFP have shown that it is important for the FFP to be broadly carried, not just by the government in place, but also by other political parties and the general public. As WO=MEN (2021) stated in the consultation with Ivens and Paassen, “A statement at the highest level (Prime-Minister) is needed to show the Netherlands is truly committed to implementing FFP.” Moreover, “for continuity and for legitimacy” it is important that there is policy coherence, both in the domestic and international sphere (WO=MEN 2021). This would require the government to restrain from treating gendered issues as being ‘out there’ and also work on domestic issues, preventing the legitimization of a neo-colonial framework for FFP.

DISCUSSION

An interpretive and inductive approach of this case has led me to connect different bodies of literature to each other. Through my analysis, I have used fluid frames to assess what the emergence of the Dutch FFP is a case of. First of all, I have proposed that there were actors involved that can be identified through the concept of feminist insider activist. Both Stienen and the TFVG fit well into this framework. However, this concept fails to capture all the actors involved, as there are some, like ministers, that cannot be considered FIA actors through the proposed definition. Moreover, it was not only insiders that have worked on the establishment of the Dutch FFP. Bringing the concept FIA together with literature on feminist networks strengthens the analysis by showing how these actors are connected to a network of feminist outsiders as well as allies that assist in establishing policy change. This case has shown that the concept of the ‘velvet triangle’ is still relevant when applied to the national rather than EU context. However, through this case, I do comply with Holli’s (2008) contention that a triangle constrains the analysis to a particular and rigid scheme. I have therefore proposed to adopt her notion of the ‘cooperative constellation’ that can capture better the feminists and allies that are left behind by both conceptions of FIA and the triangle. However, this case also attests to the limitations of the framework of ‘women’s cooperative constellations’ as proposed by Holli (2008). Both feminist actors and allies in the Dutch FFP case show this should be replaced by *feminist*, as not all actors involved were necessarily women. Lastly, I have shown how the international context that has shaped the Dutch FFP can be understood through a combination of ‘gender cosmopolitanism’ and ‘norm entrepreneurship’, as the reasoning and argumentation used by the Dutch government reflects the characteristics of both. This is shown through the double framing of the FFP as an extension of equality as a value with a universalist interpretation and as a means to maintain a position as frontrunner in the international realm. This research has shown how FIA actors and the FCC have worked with the international context in this case by explicitly using it in their lobby for this FFP framework. Together, this has shown to be a driving force for the adoption and implementation of the FFP in the Netherlands.

By highlighting the ways these forces have come together to establish the Dutch FFP, this research has also exposed potential risks for its future, such as the co-optation of the feminist cooperative constellation into neo-liberal governance and the possibility that it might play into gendered global

hierarchies. However, the outcome of the FFP handbook and its implementation lie beyond the scope of this thesis. Moreover, the development process of the handbook is currently ongoing and this thesis therefore cannot claim to encompass the whole process. This thesis has therefore built the base on which future research on the Dutch FFP can build. Future research could connect the process to the actual policy outcome and implementation of the FFP in order to show how these are connected, specifically with an emphasis on the risks that this research project flags. This could yield further knowledge about the relationship between process and outcome in feminist policy practice. It could be interesting to build a comparative framework of this relationship between process and outcome in FFPs throughout different FFP cases, in order to find out which factors and contexts in the development process of the policy might influence the transformative capacity of the FFP. As such, this could contribute to the debate on the capacity of FFPs to be transformative and of state feminism to further gender equality. And, more specifically, it contributes to knowledge on the particular factors and contexts that might enable or hinder it from doing so. Lastly, I want to note that my positionality as an insider in this process has provided this thesis with contextually specific knowledge that I believe to be valuable for this research. However, I would therefore also value and encourage further research into the Dutch FFP process with different positionalities that might highlight other dynamics at play.

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