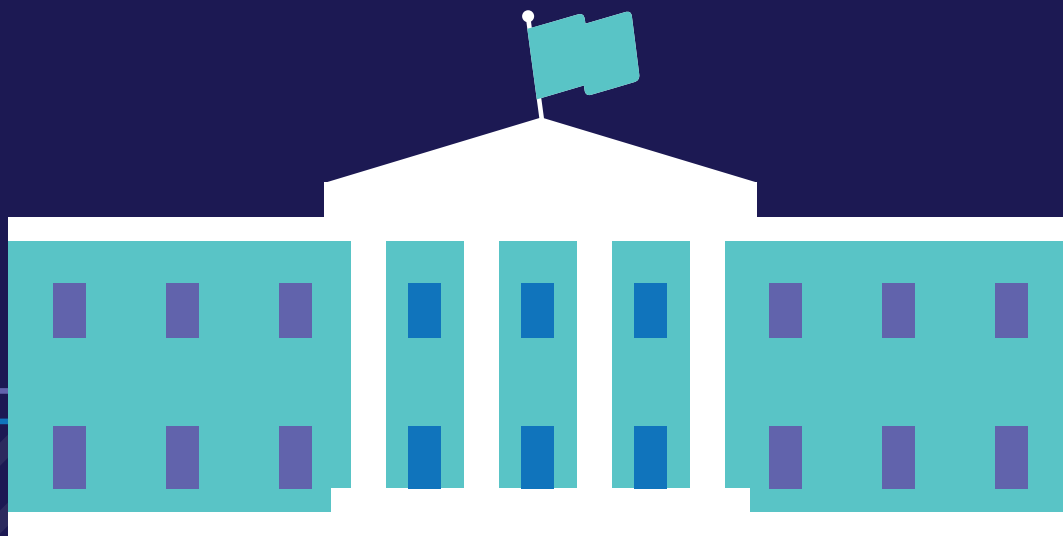


A FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY FOR THE UNITED STATES:

A MEMO TO THE NEXT ADMINISTRATION



The COVID-19 global pandemic, recession and racial justice movements around the United States have reinforced the need to move away from a “business as usual” approach to policymaking.

This is especially true regarding policies that have entrenched and exacerbated systemic inequalities at home and abroad on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity, national origin and other demographic characteristics. A feminist foreign policy offers a blueprint for the next U.S. Administration to depart from “business as usual” and assert leadership in tackling global inequality.

As defined in our [working paper](#), a U.S. feminist foreign policy would ensure that the United States’ interactions with other states, as well as social movements and other non-state actors, prioritize peace, gender equality and environmental integrity; enshrine, promote and protect the human rights of all; seek to disrupt colonial, racist, patriarchal and male-dominated power structures; and allocate significant resources, including research, to achieve that vision.

Feminist foreign policy is coherent in its approach across all levers of influence, anchored by the exercise of those values at home and co-created with feminist activists, groups, and movements at home and abroad. It must also prioritize multilateralism and intersectionality – meaning that women are not one monolithic group but have many intersecting identities that differentially impact their experiences, challenges, needs and power dynamics.¹

To achieve a feminist foreign policy that creates a safer, more equal and prosperous world that respects the rights of all, the United States should pursue executive action focusing on four core areas:



Policy articulation



Leadership/structure



Funding



Accountability

¹This includes identities rooted in race, age, language, socioeconomic status, physical or mental ability, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, Indigenous identity, religion, ethnicity, citizenship, nationality or migrant status. Crenshaw, K. (2005). Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color (1994).

WE PROPOSE THE FOLLOWING EXECUTIVE ACTION:

1. ISSUE AN EXECUTIVE ORDER THAT:

- Declares the intention to execute a U.S. feminist foreign policy and directs relevant executive branch agencies² to jointly develop an overarching strategy to articulate key principles, goals and actions for this policy (called the **U.S. Strategy for a Feminist Foreign Policy**);
- Creates a **White House Feminist Policy Council** comprised of Secretaries of all Executive Branch agencies to develop the mandated U.S. Strategy for Feminist Foreign Policy, as well as its domestic-facing counterparts. The Council should be co-created with diverse and representative civil society actors and led by a newly created and appointed “Director of the Council on Feminist Policy.” This Council will design and lead cross-governmental initiatives, coordinate agency-level implementation, develop accountability standards, regularly report to Administration and Congressional stakeholders on progress and oversee a designated budget to carry out this work;
- Commits to **robustly resourcing the Strategy**, including through direct support for local women’s rights organizations in low- and middle-income countries, ensuring that gender equality and social inclusion are considered and integrated into 100 percent of programs and that gender equality is the primary objective of at least 20 percent of programs; and
- Mandates **annual, public reporting** on progress regarding the implementation of the U.S. Strategy for a Feminist Foreign Policy.

2. APPOINT LEADERSHIP:

A new Cabinet-level position of **Director of the Council on Feminist Policy** to lead the White House Council on Feminist Policy as described above and drive effective action to implement the U.S. Strategy for a Feminist Foreign Policy and its domestic-facing counterparts; and

3. COMMIT TO ACHIEVING:

Gender parity, diversity and intersectional representation in political appointments at the Cabinet level and throughout all agencies and ranks of government, as well as carrying out government-wide consultations with civil society and feminist movements outside of government, including representation from Indigenous Peoples, individuals and organizations in low- and middle-income countries.

²Departments of State, Defense, Homeland Security, Health and Human Services, Labor, Commerce, Treasury, and Justice; African Development Foundation, Peace Corps, USAID, U.S. Development Finance Corporation, Millennium Challenge Corporation, U.S. Trade Representative.



CORE AREAS THE U.S. SHOULD FOCUS ON TO PURSUE EXECUTIVE ACTION TO ACHIEVE THIS VISION:



1. POLICY ARTICULATION

U.S. foreign policy – as implemented through foreign assistance and humanitarian response, trade, diplomacy, defense and immigration – should advance gender equality and broader diversity, intersectionality and representation through an intersectional feminist approach. The next Administration should develop and launch an overarching **U.S. Strategy for a Feminist Foreign Policy** to promote this vision and ensure effective integration within executive branch agencies. This should include actions that transform the internal structures and external policy priorities of each of the responsible U.S. agencies to align with feminist approaches. Credibly advancing gender equality, combatting the climate crisis, promoting human rights and advancing peace requires more visible, actionable and sustained leadership from the next Administration (See Key Elements of the U.S. Strategy for Feminist Foreign Policy.)



2. LEADERSHIP AND STRUCTURES

Effective implementation of U.S. feminist foreign policy requires leadership and structures that are empowered to galvanize action and be held accountable for progress. The President should assemble a White House Feminist Policy Council, led by a newly appointed Director, reporting to the President, with a clear mandate and resources to drive the development and implementation of the U.S. Strategy for a Feminist Foreign Policy. This high-level structure should be supported by executive agency-level gender focal points and action plans to

ensure effective action throughout the U.S. Government. It should also be guided by a civil society advisory committee comprised of leaders from outside of the government with a clear co-creation mandate and mechanisms for accountability, two-way communication and ongoing feedback loops. At least one half of the advisory committee should be comprised of representatives from impacted communities.



3. FUNDING

To live beyond words on paper and ensure meaningful impact, a U.S. feminist foreign policy must be backed by significant resources. Because all levers of foreign policy have the capacity to either widen or narrow gender gaps and other forms of inequality, whether in access to health and education, trade channels, migration pathways, or safety and security, 100 percent of U.S. international programs should consider and incorporate intersectional gender analysis in their design, implementation and evaluation (i.e., be “gender mainstreamed”). Given gender equality’s central importance to global sustainable development, environmental integrity, justice, security and economic prosperity, no less than 20 percent of U.S. foreign assistance funding should be dedicated to promoting gender equality as a primary goal across various sectors and appropriations funding mandates.³ Women’s rights organizations (WRO) and feminist movements play a significant role in advancing diverse and equitable policymaking. These WROs, however, consistently lack funding and other support to maximize their potential, and should be invested in.



4. ACCOUNTABILITY

U.S. Government agencies should be transparent and held accountable for progress in implementing the U.S. feminist foreign policy. The goals set under this policy framework should be “SMARTIE” (specific, measurable, answerable, relevant, time-bound, inclusive and equitable) objectives, making it possible for those charged with implementation, Congress, and civil society to have a clear shared understanding of precisely what the U.S. Strategy for Feminist Foreign Policy seeks to accomplish and through what means.

³This would ensure that, within a particular sector, 20 percent of allocated funds are used to target gender equality issues relevant to that sector. For example, funds could be aimed at removing barriers for girls’ (or boys’) access to and completion of quality education, or at increasing women’s access to energy and reducing care burdens through the provision of gender-responsive energy infrastructure.

KEY ELEMENTS OF THE U.S. STRATEGY FOR FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY

1. Emphasis on core feminist principles of gender equality; diversity, intersectionality, equity, and representation; peace; diplomacy; bodily autonomy; environmental integrity; and human rights.
2. Agency-specific, costed action plans to implement the Strategy, including necessary policy, staffing, training, budget (including additional programmatic funding needed), legislative affairs and communications needs.
3. Agency-specific focal points or ombudspeople to coordinate the implementation of the Strategy and agency action plans; review and update or institute new gender and diversity, equity, and inclusion policies; and articulate other measures to effectively build the capacity of agencies to integrate a feminist approach into internal practices and external work. Focal points and other appointees and new hires should be full-time and have expertise in global gender equality issues as part of core competencies for their selection.
4. Agency-specific gender policies that are derived from the agency action plans and are both internally and externally facing, from personnel decisions to agency programs and interventions.
5. The requirement to ground all foreign policy decision-making – including the design, implementation, and evaluation of programs – in intersectional gender analysis,⁴ tailored to each agency.
6. The requirement to consult and co-create with civil society, including diverse representation of women leaders, feminist organizations and movements outside of government, as well as Indigenous Peoples and representative institutions, including and especially those from low- and middle-income countries, on the development and implementation of the Strategy.

In our [working paper](#), endorsed by 71 organizations, we outline a more detailed vision for a U.S. feminist foreign policy, including proposed policy changes related to international development assistance, diplomacy, defense, migration, trade and humanitarian assistance policy. We recognize that the next Administration will face an immense task in addressing the current domestic health crisis and its broader economic, political and social repercussions. However, the unique opportunity to renew U.S. global leadership in tackling systemic inequality overseas cannot be squandered; it will require swift and assertive leadership and is inseparable from our own domestic recovery and resurgence.

⁴The [Women's Entrepreneurship and Economic Empowerment Act](#), P.L. 115-428 (2019), defines gender analysis as the: "(1) socioeconomic analysis of available or gathered quantitative and qualitative information to identify, understand, and explain gaps between men and women which typically involves examining— (A) differences in the status of women and men and their differential access to and control over assets, resources, education, opportunities, and services;(B) the influence of gender roles, structural barriers, and norms on the division of time between paid employment, unpaid work (including the subsistence production and care for family members), and volunteer activities;(C) the influence of gender roles, structural barriers, and norms on leadership roles and decision-making; constraints, opportunities, and entry points for narrowing gender gaps and empowering women; and (D) potential differential impacts of development policies and programs on men and women, including unintended or negative consequences; and (2) includes conclusions and recommendations to enable development policies and programs to narrow gender gaps and improve the lives of women and girls."

PROPOSED TIMELINE FOR ACTION

DAY ONE

- Commit to Cabinet nominations that reflect gender parity, diversity, and inclusive representation.
- Re-engagement in the Paris Agreement.
- Repeal the expanded Mexico City Policy.
- Reverse harmful Executive Order on Combating Race and Sex Stereotyping.

FIRST 100 DAYS

- Issue an executive order announcing the Administration's plan to develop and launch a feminist foreign policy, mandating a U.S. Strategy for a Feminist Foreign Policy, establishing the White House Feminist Policy Council, committing resources to implement this initiative, and requiring an annual progress report.
- To adequately do this work, there will need to be additional staffing and operating/administrative expense requests.
- Appoint a Director of the White House Feminist Policy Council and task that person with development and oversight of a U.S. Strategy for a Feminist Foreign Policy as well as relevant domestic-facing policy formulation, including working with legislative counterparts to advance U.S. ratification of CEDAW.
- Send a high-level delegation to United Nations Commission on Status on Women and the Mexico City kickoff of the Generation Equality Forum.

FIRST YEAR

- Launch the White House Feminist Policy Council and civil society advisory council and host the first joint meeting of both.
- Develop U.S. Strategy for a Feminist Foreign Policy.
- Send a high-level delegation to the June Generation Equality Forum to announce a commitment on feminist foreign policy.

Suggested citation:

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