Canada’s feminist foreign policy and human security compared

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Abstract
Canadian federal governments regularly try to craft a unique image of Canada in the world; however, the Trudeau government’s embrace of feminist foreign policy feels strikingly similar to the late 1990s when human security was embraced. There seems to be a “sameness” in the promotion of a progressive values-based discourse that has transformative potential for Canadian foreign policy. The question is, does this sense of sameness bear out when we dig into the comparison? Drawing on speeches given by government ministers; policy documents, such as the Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP); media; and scholarship, we compare and contrast analyses of the sources of the human security and feminist foreign policy discourses and then identify common critiques. We also examine two significant differences. We find there is consistent Liberal articulation of values-based discourses and policies that have unmet transformative potential. In both cases, style and rhetoric are privileged over transformative change.

Keywords
Human security, feminist, Canadian foreign policy, feminist foreign policy, gender

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In 1996, Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lloyd Axworthy, stated that “changing times have set for us a new broad agenda, which includes focusing on the security needs of individuals—in other words, on sustainable human security.”

On 6 June 2017, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Chrystia Freeland, declared, “we are safer and more prosperous . . . when more of the world shares Canadian values. Those values include feminism, and the promotion of the rights of women and girls.” While over 20 years apart, these two Liberal ministerial declarations, and the broader discourses of human security and feminist foreign policy of which they are part, are examples of the federal government’s articulation of the mantras which are designed to capture our attention and foster a unique image of Canada in the world.

Canadian federal governments regularly try to craft a unique image of Canada in the world; however, the Trudeau government’s embrace of feminist foreign policy feels strikingly similar to the late 1990s, when human security was embraced. There seems to be a “sameness” in the promotion of a progressive values-based discourse that has transformative potential for Canadian foreign policy. The question is, does this sense of sameness bear out when we dig into the comparison? Drawing on speeches government ministers, policy documents, such as the Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP), media and scholarship, we compare and contrast the human security and feminist foreign policy discourses. We find there is consistent Liberal articulation of values-based discourses and policies that have unmet transformative potential. In both cases, style and rhetoric are privileged over transformative change.

The following section provides brief synopses of the human security and feminist foreign policy discourses, in which we draw on ministerial and federal government statements and texts. Here we assume government speeches and documents are also inherently political and function to shape and articulate identities, set policy parameters, and define boundaries of legitimacy. For more information on discourse analysis please see Senem Aydın-Düçgit and Bahar Rumelili “Discourse analysis: Strengths and shortcomings,” All Azimuth 8, no. 2 (2019): 285–305, available at: http://www.allazimuth.com.

1. United Nations General Assembly, “Statement by Minister of Foreign Affairs, 7th Plenary Meeting,” A/51/PV.7, New York, 24 September 1996, https://undocs.org/en/A/51/PV.7 (accessed 15 October 2019).

2. Global Affairs, “Address by Minister Freeland on Canada’s Foreign Policy Priorities” (speech, Ottawa, 6 June 2017), Government of Canada, https://www.canada.ca/en/global-affairs/news/2017/06/address_by_ministerfreelandoncanadasforeignpolicypriorities.html (accessed 15 October 2019).

3. Discussions of transformative change in critical and feminist scholarship can be found in Rebecca Tiessen and Emma Swan, “Canada’s feminist foreign policy promises: An ambitious agenda for gender equality, human rights, peace, and security,” in Norman Hillmer and Philippe Lagasse, eds., Justin Trudeau and Canadian Foreign Policy: Canada Among Nations 2017 (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 950–1042 (digital edition); Karin Aggestam and Jacquie True, “Gendering foreign policy: A comparative framework for analysis,” Foreign Policy Analysis 16, no. 2 (2020): 1–20; Miguel de Larrinaga and Claire Turenne Sjolander, “(Re)presenting landmines from protector to enemy: The discursive framing of a new multilateralism,” Canadian Foreign Policy Journal 5, no. 3 (1998): 125–146; J. Marshall Beier and Ann Denholm Crosby, “Harnessing change for continuity: The play of political and economic forces behind the Ottawa process,” Canadian Foreign Policy Journal, 5, no. 3 (1998): 85–103.
highlight five broad similarities of the sources of foreign policy and identify five similar critiques. The critiques are important because they provide insights into the limits of values-based foreign policy discourses and highlight obstacles to transformative change. We also compare two apparent differences in context and discourse. In our conclusion, we reflect on the obstacles to transformative ideas, pose questions for further investigation, and end with a hopeful reminder to embrace agency.

Parameters of human security and feminist foreign policy

The human security discourse, in the Canadian federal government context, is often associated with the tenure of Minister of Foreign Affairs Lloyd Axworthy, between 1996 and 2000. As a term associated with Canadian foreign policy, human security pre-dated Axworthy's appointment and can be found four times in the 1995 statement on Canadian foreign policy, *Canada in the World*, as well as in a statement by Minister of Foreign Affairs André Ouelett to the UN in 1995. 5

Axworthy started with a broadly conceived vision of human security, “which included multiple referent threats and the elevation of the individual in the conception of human security.” 6 Over time, the definition promoted had increasingly more narrow terms of reference. In a 1999 concept paper titled *Human Security: Safety for People in a Changing World*, human security was defined as “safety for people from both violent and non-violent threats.” 7 In 2000, another statement on human security was released. In *Freedom From Fear: Canada’s Foreign Policy for Human Security*, human security was defined as “freedom from pervasive threats to people’s rights, safety or lives,” 8 and five priorities were identified. The five priorities were protection of civilians, peace support operations, conflict prevention, governance and accountability, and public safety. 9

After the departure of Axworthy in 2000, another version of *Freedom From Fear: Canada’s Foreign Policy for Human Security* 10 was published in 2002 under

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5. Government of Canada, *Canada in the World* (Ottawa: Government of Canada, 1995), 25, http://gac.canadiana.ca/view/ooo.b2644952E/1?r=0&s=1 (accessed 15 October 2019) and United Nations General Assembly, “Statement by Minister of Foreign Affairs, André Ouellet, 7th Plenary Meeting,” A/50/PV.7, New York, 26 September 1995, 5, 9, https://undocs.org/en/A/50/PV.7 (accessed 15 October 2019).
6. Heather A. Smith, “Diminishing human security: The Canadian case,” in Sandra J. MacLean, David R. Black, Timothy M. Shaw, eds., *A Decade of Human Security: Global Governance and New Multilateralisms* (Aldershot: Palgrave, 2006), 74; see also David R. Black, “Mapping the interplay of human security practice and debates: The Canadian experience,” in Sandra J. MacLean, David R. Black, Timothy M. Shaw, eds., *A Decade of Human Security: Global Governance and New Multilateralisms* (Aldershot: Palgrave, 2006), 53–62.
7. Foreign Affairs and International Trade, *Human Security: Safety for People in a Changing World* (Ottawa: Government of Canada, 1999), 5.
8. Foreign Affairs and International Trade, *Freedom From Fear: Canada’s Foreign Policy for Human Security* (Ottawa: Government of Canada, 2000), 3.
9. Ibid.
10. Foreign Affairs and International Trade, *Freedom From Fear: Canada’s Foreign Policy for Human Security* (Ottawa: Government of Canada, 2002), http://gac.canadiana.ca/view/ooe.b3688185E/1? r=0&s=1 (accessed 15 October 2019).
the leadership of Minister of Foreign Affairs Bill Graham, and there were some minor funding commitments to areas such as the Foreign Affairs Human Security Programme. However, with the departure of Axworthy, the human security mantra lost its most enthusiastic supporter, and “once the Conservatives were elected in 2006, the terminology was shelved, the funding slashed and Canada dropped out of sight internationally as a promoter of the concept.”

Unlike the case of human security, there has thus far been no concept paper produced by Global Affairs under the aegis of “feminist foreign policy.” Former Minister of Foreign Affairs Chrystia Freeland, however, has been quoted as saying that “Canada’s feminist foreign policy is founded on a simple objective: we seek to enable women and men, girls and boys around the world to have an equal voice and equal rights; to benefit from equal opportunities; and to live in equal safety and security.” Moreover, and consistent with a whole-of-government feminist foreign policy, Freeland has also noted a feminist objective in her 2017 speech on Canadian foreign policy to the House of Commons:

As minister of foreign affairs and as a committed feminist, I know that all of our efforts to advance our diplomatic, trade, security and development priorities must fully take into account the needs of women and girls. I will always promote equal representation and respect for the rights of women and girls, as well as access to leadership positions and equal opportunities at home and abroad.

The glimmer of a whole-of-government feminist foreign policy is supported by the inclusion of a reference to feminist foreign policy in the opening statement of the defence review released 7 June 2017, two days before the release of the FIAP. Efforts to include gender in the renegotiations of the North American Free Trade Agreement, the release of Canada’s National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2017–2022 in November 2017, and creation of the Elsie Initiative in November 2017 further support the possibility of a whole-of-government approach. Coupled with efforts to make gender a priority at G7 meetings in 2018 and the appointment of Jacqueline O’Neill as Ambassador for

11. Black, “Mapping the interplay,” 56.
12. Michael Small, Should Canada Revisit the Human Security Agenda? (Calgary, AB: Canadian Global Affairs Institute, 2016), 1, https://www.cgai.ca/should_canada_revisit_the_human_security_agenda (accessed 10 January 2020). See also Mary Martin and Taylor Owen, “The second generation of human security: Lessons from the UN and EU experience,” *International Affairs* 86, no. 1 (2010): 211–224.
13. Global Affairs, “Address by Foreign Affairs Minister at the Top 25 Women of Influence Luncheon,” (speech, Ottawa, 10 December 2018), Government of Canada, https://www.canada.ca/en/global-affairs/news/2018/12/address-by-foreign-affairs-minister-at-the-top-25-women-of-influence-luncheon.html (accessed 15 October 2019).
14. Global Affairs, “Address by Minister Freeland to Open the Women Foreign Ministers’ Meeting” (speech, Ottawa, 25 September 2018), Government of Canada. https://www.canada.ca/en/global-affairs/news/2018/09/address-by-minister-freeland-to-open-the-women-foreign-ministers-meeting.html (accessed 15 October 2019).
Women, Peace and Security in June 2019, there is evidence to suggest some broad commitment to a liberal feminist foreign policy applied across issue areas. Freeland’s statements seem to provide a broad, liberal feminist version of foreign policy. This stands in contrast to the potential of a more progressive critical feminism that feminist scholars have noted, with hope, in statements by the Prime Minister related to LBGTQ rights, the promotion of human rights more broadly, and the inclusion of intersectionality in the FIAP. The FIAP states that

Canada is adopting a Feminist International Assistance Policy that seeks to eradicate poverty and build a more peaceful, more inclusive and more prosperous world. Canada firmly believes that promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls is the most effective approach to achieving this goal.

It is a policy that is grounded in a human rights approach, “one that takes into account all forms of discrimination based on sex, race, ethnicity, place of birth, colour, religion, language, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, ability or migrant or refugee status.”

Discussions of feminist foreign policy have been robust since the government announcements in 2017, although feminist engagement with foreign policy has a long scholarly and activist history. There has not yet been time for a narrowing of policy, as with human security, but given the election of a minority government, the move of Chrystia Freeland out of Foreign Affairs, and a global pandemic, the future of Canada’s feminist foreign policy is uncertain.

15. On gender and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), see: Laura Macdonald and Nadia Ibrahim, “The new NAFTA is a missed opportunity for gender equality,” Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Ottawa, 2019, http://behindthenumbers.ca/2019/01/23/the-new-nafta-is-a-missed-opportunity-for-gender-equality/ (accessed 15 October 2019); Global Affairs, Canada’s National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2017–2022: The Implementation Plans (Ottawa: Government of Canada, 6 November 2017), https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_development-enjeux_developpement/gender_equality-egalite_des_genres/cnap_ip_pi_pnac-17-22.aspx?lang=eng.(accessed 15 October 2019); Office of the Prime Minister, Backgrounder: The Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations (Ottawa: Government of Canada, 15 November 2017), https://pm.gc.ca/eng/news/2017/11/15/elsie-initiative-women-peace-operations (accessed 15 October 2019); “G7 summit fell short on gender equality promises, advocates say,” Global News, 12 June 2018, https://globalnews.ca/news/4269841/g7-meeting-gender-equality-trudeau/ (accessed 15 October 2019); Office of the Prime Minister, 2019, Prime Minister Names First Ambassador for Women, Peace and Security (Ottawa: Government of Canada, 12, June 2019), https://pm.gc.ca/en/news/news-releases/2019/06/12/prime-minister-names-first-ambassador-women-peace-and-security (accessed 15 October 2019).

16. See Corinne L. Mason, “Buzzwords and fuzzwords: Flattening intersectionality in Canadian aid,” Canadian Foreign Policy Journal 25, no. 2 (2019); Tiessen and Swan, “Canada’s feminist foreign policy promises,” 950–1042 (digital edition).

17. Global Affairs, Announcement of the FIAP (Ottawa: Government of Canada, 2017).

18. Ibid. The language from this quote calls back to Section 15.1 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and, in doing so, they hearken back to a quintessentially Canadian (and Liberal-initiated) document.

19. See Tiessen and Swan, “Canada’s feminist foreign policy”; Claire Turenne Sjolander, Heather A. Smith, and Deborah Stienstra, eds., Feminist Perspectives on Canadian Foreign Policy (Toronto: Oxford, 2003).
Similarity of sources

In this section we identify five similar sources of human security and Canada’s feminist foreign policy. First, both human security and elements of Canada’s feminist foreign policy can be linked to an external normative evolution that is often associated with the UN. In the case of human security, a key source for the broad definition of human security is the UN Development Programme 1994 Report. In the case of feminist foreign policy and the FIAP, Rebecca Tiessen and Emma Swan identified a normative evolution within the UN, pointing in particular to UNSCR 1325 as one possible ideational source for the FIAP. However, external normative evolution is not sufficient to ensure the embrace of particular discourses or policy positions because otherwise the Harper government would not have erased human security and gender equality from Canadian foreign policy. The UN discourse could provide some external leverage for internal actors to promote “new” ideas. The UN discourse could also be linked to Canada’s foreign policy discourses and thus serve an external legitimizing function. Finally, such discourse could appeal to the nostalgia of Canada as a leader in the UN.

A second common source is peer effect. In the context of human security, Lloyd Axworthy highlighted the role of peers when he wrote in 1997,

Canada and a small number of like-minded countries such as Norway and the Netherlands began to reassess the traditional concept of security in order to identify those variables beyond arms control/disarmament which effect peace and stability. From this reconsideration emerged the concept of “human security.”

One can also point to the creation of the Human Security Network in 1999 that brought together like-minded states to promote human security. In the case of feminist foreign policy, it is common to point to Sweden and the development of its feminist foreign policy as an influence on the creation of Canada’s feminist foreign policy. Sweden’s influence was acknowledged by Minister Freeland in September 2018 when, at the first meeting of Women Foreign Ministers, she stated, “I am so

20. United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Report (New York: United Nations, 1994), http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/reports/255/hdr_1994_en_complete_nostats. pdf (accessed 15 October 2019).
21. Tiessen and Swan, “Canada’s feminist foreign policy,” 725–733.
22. See Rebecca Tiessen and Krystal Carrier, “The erasure of “gender” in Canadian foreign policy under the Harper conservatives: The significance of the discursive shift from ‘gender equality’ to ‘equality between women and men,” Canadian Foreign Policy Journal 21, no. 2 (2015): 1–14; Krystel Carrier and Rebecca Tiessen, “Women and children first: Maternal health and the silencing of gender in Canadian foreign policy” in Heather A. Smith and Claire Turenne Sjolander, eds., Canada in the World: Internationalism Canadian Foreign Policy (Toronto, Oxford: 2013), 183–199.
23. Ann Denholm Crosby, “Myths of Canada’s human security pursuits: Tales of tool boxes, toy chests and tickle trunks” in Claire Turenne Sjolander, Heather A. Smith and Deborah Stienstra, eds. Feminist Perspectives on Canadian Foreign Policy (Toronto: Oxford, 2003), 101.
24. Lloyd Axworthy, “Canada and human security: The need for leadership,” International Journal, LII, (Spring 1997), 184.
glad that Margot Wallström, Sweden’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, is here with us, as she pioneered the notion that you can have a feminist foreign policy.”

A third common source of the discourses, which also functions to support the maintenance of the discourses (or at least some variation thereof), is civil society. In the context of human security, Axworthy, “joined a civil society bandwagon” and embraced the “new” way of government working with non-governmental organizations based on the premises of democratization of foreign policy. In particular, Axworthy held up the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction (or Mine Ban Convention) as an example of what could be created by new, more democratic avenues of diplomacy. Similarly, the creation of the FIAP was based on broad consultations with feminist non-governmental organizations.

Inclusion of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in policy creation may not have been as new as Axworthy suggested given that he engaged in similar work prior to his appointment as Minister of Foreign Affairs. The degree to which the human security processes were driven by democratization is also questionable, given that the embrace of NGOs was a reflection of a decline of in-house expertise and budget cuts that required an externalization of expertise. Similarly, in both cases, we cannot assume that inclusion necessarily translated into impact. In the case of the Ottawa Process, leading up to the Mine Ban Convention, Claire Turenne Sjolander and Miguel de Larrinaga make a compelling argument that regardless of claims of “newness” the process remained fundamentally state-based. On the FIAP, Mason’s work shows that civil society activists acknowledge the shift in policy that the FIAP could potentially mark, but they also express concern about the potential operationalization of intersectionality. In both cases,

25. Global Affairs, “Address by Minister Freeland to Open the Women Foreign Ministers’ Meeting” (speech, 25 September 2018) Government of Canada, https://www.canada.ca/en/global-affairs/news/2018/09/address-by-minister-freeland-to-open-the-women-foreign-ministers-meeting.html (accessed 15, October 2019).

26. Alison Van Rooy, “Civil society and the Axworthy touch,” in Fen Osler Hampson, Norman Hiomer, and Maureen Appel Molot, eds., Canada Among Nations 2001: The Axworthy Legacy (Toronto: Oxford, 2001), 254. In contrast to Van Rooy, other scholars see Axworthy as more revolutionary. See Norman Hillmer and Adam Chapnick, “The Axworthy revolution” in Fen Osler Hampson, Norman Hillmer, and Maureen Appel Molot, eds., Canada Among Nations 2001: The Axworthy Legacy (Toronto: Oxford, 2001), 67–88.

27. Greg Donaghy, “All God’s children: Lloyd Axworthy, human security and Canadian foreign policy, 1996–2000,” Canadian Foreign Policy Journal 10, no 2 (2003): 43.

28. See Global Affairs, “Announcement of the FIAP”; Mason, “Buzzwords and fuzzwords”; and Adam Chapnick, “The origins of Canada’s feminist foreign policy,” International Journal 74, no. 2 (2019):191–205.

29. Donaghy, “All God’s children,” 42.

30. Nik Hynek and David Bosold, “A history and genealogy of the freedom-from-fear doctrine,” International Journal 64, no. 3 (2009): 735–750. See also Van Rooy, “Civil society and the Axworthy touch.”

31. Miguel de Larrinaga and Claire Turenne Sjolander, “(Re)presenting landmines from protector to enemy: The discursive framing of a new multilateralism,” Canadian Foreign Policy Journal 5, no. 3 (1998): 125–146.
however, the inclusion of civil society is significant because, at the very least, spaces for dialogue are built, openings for cross-sector alliances are created, and spaces for critique are generated.

Fourth, ministers and bureaucrats acting as a source of human security and feminist foreign policy appear to be common. Axworthy was the central advocate of human security. As noted above, work on human security had begun prior to Axworthy’s arrival to Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada, but his embrace of the idea resulted in his becoming a vital norm entrepreneur. Prime Minister Chrétien did not take an active role in the promotion of human security and, after Axworthy departed, the appointment of John Manley as Minister of Foreign Affairs signalled a move away from human security and toward economic issues, which were central to Chrétien’s agenda.32

Observers of the inner workings of Canadian foreign policy have also identified an “in-house and organic” source of feminist foreign policy and the FIAP. Kim Richard Nossal, eschewing arguments of this policy development being about electoral gain, suggests that ministers and the Prime Minister are committed feminists and thus the policy is organic in nature.33 Adam Chapnick, seeking to show that the creation of the feminist foreign policy was not a top-down initiative led by the prime minister, highlights that the 2017 speech by Chrystia Freeland was penned by Freeland herself.34 While Freeland may have written her own speech and while she does embrace feminist principles, as will be shown below, feminist foreign policy was promoted selectively in her ministerial speeches, thus raising questions as to whether she was a norm entrepreneur to the same degree as Axworthy. Nonetheless, consistent with the work of Karin Aggestam and Jacquie True, we believe that having female and feminist leadership matters in the promotion of a feminist foreign policy.35

A fifth common source is a moral impulse embedded in liberal internationalism. The discourses imply that Canada must actively engage the world as a good international citizen and adopt policies that serve the well-being of others. As Ann Denholm Crosby noted of human security, “aiding the destitute, diseased, displaced, and disoriented people of the world fits the image Canadians hold of themselves as ‘helpful fixers’ and a morally conscientious people.”36 In the case of feminist foreign policy, by way of example, the Prime Minister proclaimed at the Women Deliver Conference,

32. Smith, “Diminishing human security,” 74.
33. Kim Richard Nossal, “The organic nature of Trudeau’s feminist foreign policy,” 31 January 2019, https://nossalk.org/2019/01/31/the-organic-nature-of-trudeaus-feminist-foreign-policy/ (accessed 15 September 2019).
34. Chapnick, “The origins of Canada’s feminist foreign policy,” 201.
35. Karin Aggestam and Jacquie True, “Gendering foreign policy,” 15. Ministerial leadership matters in these two cases, but we do not assume that ministers always matter or that their innovations are sustained. See Kim Richard Nossal, Stéphane Roussel, and Stéphane Paquin, The Politics of Canadian Foreign Policy, 4th ed, (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2015), 183–258.
36. Denholm Crosby, “Myths of Canada’s human security pursuits: Tales of tool boxes, toy chests and tickle trunks,” 100; See also Denis Stairs, “Myths, morals and and reality in Canadian foreign policy,” International Journal 58, no. 2 (2003), 239–256 and David R. Black, Canada and Africa in the New Millennium: The Politics of Consistent Inconsistency (Waterloo, ON: Wilfred Laurier Press, 2015).
the rights we enjoy in Canada, and the rights so many have enjoyed around the world, are not guaranteed. Progress can backslide... We’re seeing it happen. Gender equality is under attack, and I can only imagine how hard it is to be a feminist on the front lines.37

There are many elements of this moral impulse that require unpacking. We address these issues below in the common critiques.

**Commonalities of critiques**

In this section we identify five common critiques. As noted above, the critiques are important because they offer insights into the limits of a values-based foreign policy discourse and highlight obstacles to transformative change. The first of five common critiques is that both discourses have been accused of being hypocritical and selectively applied. Claims of being feminist and adopting a feminist foreign policy have been viewed as contradictory to the sale of light armoured vehicles to Saudi Arabia.38 We can also point to the current Liberal government’s failure to meet international climate change targets as undermining claims to sustainability—a link to gender equality initiatives they made themselves in the FIAP. Failure to adequately address climate change was also an example of the rhetorical nature of human security given that the Chrétien government pursued a self-interested climate change policy, thus contributing to the current climate crisis that undermines the security of so many humans.39 Human security was also critiqued for being used to justify Canadian participation in bombings in Kosovo, thus militarizing the concept.40

Second, policy coherence and lack of clear definitions is a critique levelled at both feminist foreign policy and human security. Stephen Brown and Liam Swiss,41 for example, raise concerns about whether non-aid policies will comply with broadly stated development policy goals of gender equality as articulated within the FIAP. Will and can the federal government adopt a whole-of-government approach? Can we have a broad feminist foreign policy? As noted

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37. Laura Kane, “Hatred of women creeping into public debate, Trudeau tells equality conference,” *Globe and Mail*, 3 June 2019, https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-hatred-of-women-creeping-into-public-debate-trudeau-tells-equality-2/ (accessed 15 October 2019).
38. See Srdjan Vucetic, “The uneasy co-existence of arms exports and feminist foreign policy,” *National Post*, 9 April 2018, https://nationalpost.com/pmn/news-pmn/the-uneasy-co-existence-of-arms-exports-and-feminist-foreign-policy (accessed 19 February 2019).
39. See Heather A. Smith, “Human (in)security and Canadian climate change policy,” *Environment and Security* 4 (2000): 89–99; Wilfred Greaves, “For whom, from what? Canada’s Arctic policy and the narrowing of human security,” *International Journal*, 67, no. 1 (2011–12): 219–240.
40. Matthew Brett, “Canada’s ‘human security’ agenda in Kosovo,” *Canadian Dimension*, 23 May 2008, https://canadiandimension.com/blog/view/canadas-human-security-agenda-in-kozovo (accessed 15 January 2020).
41. Stephen Brown and Liam Swiss, “Canada’s feminist international assistance policy: Game changer or fig leaf?” in Katherine Graham and A. Maslove, eds., *How Ottawa Spends: Canada@150* (Ottawa: Carleton University, School of Public Policy and Administration, 2018), 126, http://stephenbrown.xyz/wp-content/uploads/Brown-and-Swiss-2017-Canadas-Feminist-International-Assistance-Policy.pdf (accessed 15 January 15 2020).
above, there are hints that the government is seeking a broad application of feminist principles, but the degree to which this is achieved remains to be seen.

Similar concerns can be raised about human security and a lack of definitional clarity, particularly concerning the evolution of the concept from broad and holistic to narrow and focused on freedom from fear. Over time, the dimension that would have focused on freedom from want was removed from the policy. Kyle Grayson, who observed the increasing marginalization of economics and freedom from want from the human security discourse, notes that this discursive shift functioned to blinker assessment of and responsibility for behaviours of Canadian corporations such as Talisman Energy, which contributed to human insecurities. This narrowing undermines the transformative potential of human security.

Brown and Swiss observe a similar marginalization of international assistance and development in the 2017 speech by Minister Freeland:

The fact that Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland barely mentioned aid or development in her major foreign policy speech to Parliament a few days before the release of the aid policy suggests that development assistance is an add-on and not central to Canadian foreign policy.

Brown and Swiss’s observation can be amplified by a review of speeches by ministers associated with Global Affairs, which show that feminist foreign policy, feminism, and gender equality are evoked in the speeches delivered to some audiences but not others. Most notably, Canada’s feminist credentials are on show when the audiences seem to be women but not present in speeches related to trade or where the promotion of a particular brand of feminism may cause offence, or be somehow beyond the remit of the issue area. It would appear that celebrating Canada’s feminist foreign policy is selective.

42. A classic article is Roland Paris, “Human security: Paradigm shift or hot air?” *International Security* 26, no. 2 (2001): 87–102.
43. Kyle Grayson, “Branding ‘transformation’ in Canadian foreign policy: human security,” *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 11, no. 2 (2004): 57.
44. Brown and Swiss, “Canada’s feminist international assistance policy,” 126. One could also note that the Canadian International Development Agency, disbanded under Stephen Harper, was not re-established by the Trudeau government. This could also be a signal of the marginalization of development assistance to the foreign policy agenda. Thanks to one of our reviewers for this insight.
45. It appears that when the audience is specifically women, feminism, feminist foreign policy and gender are included in Minister Freeland’s speeches. See, for example, Global Affairs, “Address by Foreign Affairs Minister at the Top 25 Women of Influence Luncheon”; however, feminist foreign policy is not invoked in all speeches by the Minister. See, for example, Global Affairs, “Address by Minister of Foreign Affairs at Global Conference for Media Freedom” (speech, London, UK, 11 July 2019) Government of Canada, https://www.canada.ca/en/global-affairs/news/2019/07/address-by-minister-of-foreign-affairs-at-global-conference-for-media-freedom.html (accessed 15 October 2019) and Global Affairs, “Opening Remarks by the Honourable Chrystia Freeland, Minister of Foreign Affairs, for an Appearance Before the Standing Committee on International Trade” (speech, Ottawa, 19 June 2018) Government of Canada, https://www.canada.ca/en/global-affairs/news/2018/06/opening-remarks-by-the-honourable-chrystia-freeland-minister-of-foreign-affairs-for-an-appearance-before-the-standing-committee-on-international-trade.html (accessed 15 October 2019).
Third, lack of funding and resources was a criticism levelled at both initiatives, and transformation does not happen on the cheap. Denis Stairs, in a classic article in which he tells Canadians to “get a grip” with their use of a values discourse promoted during the Chrétien era—when there were clawbacks to international assistance—argues that, to see where our values really lie, we just need to follow the money. Stairs concludes, “when push comes to shove, they still care far less about helping the impoverished, the diseased, and the oppressed abroad than about ensuring the delivery of their more cherished public services at home.”46 When financial commitments to human security, compared with defence, were compared, human security always came up short.47

Similarly, while acknowledging the funding allocated to non-governmental agencies, critiques of the FIAP have regularly raised the issue of funding, with authors such as Liam Swiss referring to “miserly feminism.”48 Just like the case of human security, comparisons of financial commitments to the FIAP—which included no new money—fell incredibly short of the commitments made within the defence policy released 7 June, 2017.49

Fourth, not only is the moral imperative a source of human security and feminist foreign policy, both discourses are notable for, and maintained by, strategic amnesia that facilitates images of sanitized pasts. In the articulation of both the human security discourse and the framing of feminist foreign policy discourse, Canada’s legacy of human rights promotion and history as a supporter of a rules-based international order is invoked by ministers in acts of legacy building and branding.50 However, internationalism (and in turn human security and feminist foreign policy) is about Canada’s face to the world and presents a homogenized view of the state. What happens if we open up the Canadian state and look inside?

If we open up the state and expose domestic politics, we find a history of oppression of Canada’s Indigenous peoples. It is a history of residential schools, reserves, and relocation of Inuit peoples to suit the state while our current government, rhetorically engaged in reconciliation, denies the experiences of First Nations children in care and ignores the work of the National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls—hardly feminist. If we open up the black box, we don’t find nationwide human security—we find the

46. Stairs, “Myths, morals and reality,” 250–251. Kim Richard Nossal refers to this era as one of pinchpenny diplomacy in “Pinchpenny diplomacy: The decline of ‘good international citizenship’ in Canadian foreign policy,” International Journal 54, no. 1 (1998–1999): 88–105.
47. See Grayson, “Branding ‘transformation’” and Smith, “Diminishing human security.”
48. Liam Swiss, “Feminism on the cheap: Can Canada achieve its ambitious gender equality aid targets with no new money?” GrOW Research Bulletin no. 5 (February 2018): 6, http://grow.research.mcgill.ca/publications/research-bulletins/grow-research-bulletin-05.pdf (accessed 15 October 2018).
49. Brown and Swiss, “Canada’s feminist international assistance policy,” 127.
50. See, for example, Government of Canada, “Address by Minister Freeland on Canada’s Foreign Policy Priorities” and United Nations General Assembly, “Statement by Minister of Foreign Affairs”; See also Grayson, “Branding ‘transformation,” Crosby, “Myths of Canada’s,” and Richard Nimijean and David Carment, eds., Canada, Nation Branding and Domestic Politics (New York: Routledge, 2019).
razing and expropriation of Africville, the practice of indefinite immigration detention that disproportionately affects people of African descent, and the proliferation of street checks and racial profiling in Canada’s major cities as three of many examples.51 Through the outward projection discourses of human security and feminist foreign policy there is an invisibilization of people and peoples which discursively provides many Canadians with the opportunity to distance themselves from their own histories and feel good about themselves.

Fifth, the values discourse is deeply colonial and imperial.52 In both cases, there are embedded assumptions about the export of Canadian values abroad to others who would presumably benefit from Canadian values. This values promotion is also about the management of the world outside of Canada. Drawing on critical geography, Heather Smith shows how the human security discourse creates wild zones and the construction of wild zones “plays to the foreign policy establishment’s fears about mounting disorder in the politically turbulent and economically polarised second and third worlds.”53

At first glance, the feminist foreign policy discourse may not appear to construct wild zones. Recall, however, the statement referred to earlier in the article from Minister Freeland that suggests Canadians, and the world, are safer when Canadian values are shared. Add to this statement, the image of the world she regularly included in speeches, one that invokes racialized Heart of Darkness-esque rhetoric to describe the world in which we live as a jungle. In July 2019, Minister Freeland stated,

As Robert Kagan argues in his recent book [The Jungle Grows Back], “If the liberal order is like a garden, artificial and forever threatened by the forces of nature, preserving it requires a persistent unending struggle against the vines and weeds that are constantly working to undermine it from within and overwhelm it from without.” Today there are signs all around us that the jungle is growing back.54

Taken together, these statements reveal the construction of a world of danger, where Canadian values can help tame the jungle. Canadian values can make the world safer. Canadian values, as bound to the discourses of both human security and feminist foreign policy, adopt a security logic to keep others out, away, and maybe tamed.

51. Robyn Maynard, Policing Black Lives: State Violence in Canada from Slavery to the Present (Blackpoint: Fernwood Publishing, 2017), 77, 89, 165.
52. See Alison Howell, “Peaceful, tolerant and orderly? A feminist analysis of discourses of ‘Canadian values’ in Canadian foreign policy,” Canadian Foreign Policy Journal 12, no. 1 (2005): 49–69, and Stairs, “Myths, morals and reality.”
53. Ken Conca, “The Environment-security trap,” Dissent, Summer (1998), cited in Smith, “Diminishing Human Security,” 80.
54. Global Affairs, “Address by Minister of Foreign Affairs at Global Conference for Media Freedom” (speech, London, 11 July 2019), Government of Canada, https://www.canada.ca/en/global-affairs/news/2019/07/address-by-minister-of-foreign-affairs-at-global-conference-for-media-freedom.html (accessed 15 October 2019).
Differences: Substantive or superficial?

In this section we touch on two apparent differences between human security and feminist foreign policy. There are a variety of differences that could be analyzed, including the role of technology and social media, the rise of populism, and the evolution of Canadian political parties, but to include more categories of difference is beyond the scope of this work. Below we focus on the role of the US and the apparent embrace of feminism.

Canada–US relations are the first area of difference. In both cases of human security and feminist foreign policy, the discourses are used strategically to distinguish Canada from the US. As Grayson observes, “The Canadian human security agenda is remarkably seductive, at least in part because other existing paradigms, such as the American national security brand, are perceived as being too extreme for an interdependent world.” The articulations of human security may have also been part of a broader project aimed at a domestic audience to distinguish Canadian foreign policy under Jean Chrétien from foreign policy under Brian Mulroney.

The adoption of feminist foreign policy by Trudeau may be aimed at a niche domestic audience, serving to distinguish Trudeau’s foreign policy from Harper and play to the Liberal pro-feminist base. While the question of electoral strategy might be unclear in the case of the adoption of a feminist foreign policy, Canada’s distancing from the US is readily apparent in ministerial statements.

The fundamental difference in Canada–US relations between the era of human security and the more recent feminist foreign policy time period is how the US played within, rather than disrupted, the rules-based order. The US may not have signed the Mine Ban Convention, but Canada and the US worked in concert in a number of areas, including climate change negotiations, the NATO intervention in the former Yugoslavia, and the creation of NAFTA. There were differences in some policy areas, but there were also many points of convergence. Moreover, President Clinton and Prime Minister Chrétien had a warm working relationship.

In the current environment, we are faced with an American President who has violated traditional norms of diplomacy and who walked out of international meetings. The US has also criticized Canada’s levels of defence spending. The apparent American disdain for traditional norms of the rule-based international

55. Grayson, “Branding ‘transformation,’” 47.
56. Nossal, “Pinchpenny diplomacy,” 94.
57. Mason, “Buzzwords and fuzzwords,” 211.
58. Government of Canada, “Address by Minister Freeland on Canada’s Foreign Policy Priorities.”
59. This despite Canada ratifying Kyoto and the US not doing so. Canada, of course, has since withdrawn.
60. Gordon Giffin, “Bill Clinton, Jean Chrétien and the Canada-U.S. relationship,” Montreal Gazette, 4, October 2017, https://montrealgazette.com/opinion/opinion-bill-clinton-jean-chretien-and-the-canada-u-s-relationship (accessed 15 January 2020).
61. Mercedes Stephenson and Kerri Breen, “U.S. sent ‘blunt’ letter to Canada criticizing defence spending: sources,” Global News, 24 November 2019, https://globalnews.ca/news/6210623/canada-defence-spending-nato/ (accessed 15 January 2020).
order was acknowledged by Minister Freeland when she envisioned a world of “great powers governed solely by the narrow, short-term and mercantilist pursuit of self-interest,” and while such a world might be tempting to the US, she advocated for ongoing support of a rules-based international order.

Second, the movement from human to feminist appears significant at first glance. In the FIAP and feminist foreign policy discourse, feminist, gender, gender equality, and intersectionality are recurring words. In contrast, human security focuses on a homogenized gender neutral, race-neutral, heteronormative individual human. In *Human Security: Safety for People in a Changing World* there is one reference to gender-based violence, but women do not show up at all in the document. In *Freedom from Fear*, there is one reference to gender and peacekeeping. The terms women and gender do not show up in one of the key articles written by Lloyd Axworthy. In contrast, feminism, feminist foreign policy, gender, gender equality, and intersectionality show up in a host of the current Liberal government speeches and statements (or at least they did until the last election). However, Mason observes that intersectionality only appears twice in the FIAP.

Is this a case of normative evolution? Have feminist principles infiltrated Global Affairs from within and without? Maybe the work of activists, academics, and insider feminists have finally made a difference?

The problem is that, once we move beyond our celebratory moment (or maybe relief) that feminism has somehow influenced the creation of current government discourses and, in particular the FIAP, we are given reason to pause. The movement from human to feminist and the inclusion of intersectionality initially appears significant. However, both human security and intersectionality have been labelled buzzwords. Mason reminds us, in her analysis of the FIAP and intersectionality, that “buzzwords and fuzzwords provide new and shiny concepts that can communicate a promise of social justice, but can also be filled with meaning by other users, inside and outside government.”

Human security, at the time of adoption by the Canadian government, did provide many critical scholars and feminists a sense of hope. Similarly, after decades of feminist work and advocacy by activists and scholars, the refrain of a feminist foreign policy, in an era of “it’s 2015,” may have given us hope. In both cases, critical and feminist critiques ultimately bemoaned the narrowing, flattening, and vacuumation of the transformative potential.

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62. Global Affairs, “Address by Minister Freeland When Receiving Foreign Policy’s Diplomat of the Year Award” (speech, Washington, 13 June 2018), Government of Canada, https://www.canada.ca/en/global-affairs/news/2018/06/address-by-minister-freeland-when-receiving-foreign-policies-diplomat-of-the-year-award.html (accessed 15 October 2019).
63. Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada, *Human Security: Safety for People*, 5.
64. Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada, *Freedom from Fear*, 7.
65. Mason, “Buzzwords and fuzzwords,” 206.
66. Human security is called a buzzword by Kim Richard Nossal in “Pinchpenny diplomacy,” 93. Intersectionality is called a buzzword by Corinne Mason in “Buzzwords and fuzzwords.” For more on intersectionality see Sumi Cho, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, and Leslie McCall, “Toward a field of intersectionality studies: Theory, applications, and praxis,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 38, no. 4 (2013): 785–810, https://doi.org/10.1086/669608.
67. Mason, “Buzzwords and fuzzwords,” 213.
of human security, intersectionality, and feminism. In both cases, there are critiques that highlight the neoliberal and hegemonic “conditioning frameworks” in which these ideas are created and ultimately practised and which undermine and limit the transformative potential of the ideas.

**Concluding reflections**

Our examination of human security and feminist foreign policy shows that, with both, Liberal articulation of values-based discourses and policies have unmet transformative potential because style and rhetoric are privileged over transformative change. The inclusion of five critiques highlights the limits of a values-based foreign policy and suggests that transformative ideas are undermined when they are applied selectively and when there are inadequate resources to implement the ideas. Moreover, the transformative potential of the ideas becomes limited when discourses narrow to become tools of instrumentalist and neoliberal agendas. In other words, transformations are contained by the status quo norms and practices of the state. Transformative change is further undermined when values-based discourses are projected to the world and not matched by action domestically. This contrast creates a rather paternalistic “do as I say, not as I do” scenario.

Beyond the conclusions above, this work raises many questions for further investigation. For example, given the assumption that all foreign policies promote values and particular images of the state, what happens if we added the Harper government or the government of Pierre Trudeau to the equation? What happens if we look more closely at the abandonment of human security or marginalization of feminist foreign policy? What would a focus on abandonment tell us about bureaucratic inertia, inter-party politics, or the depth of societal and international resistance to potentially transformative ideas? How do the Canadian cases compare to those of our peers, such as Sweden and Norway?

Finally, we understand that our conclusions may seem rather dismal, but we cannot deny the role of agency. If choices were made to include feminism, gender equality, and intersectionality in our current foreign policy discourse, then choices can be made to ban, limit, or exorcise these ideas from Canadian foreign policy discourse. If the case of human security is of any value, we have evidence of how ideas too closely linked to a particular minister or lacking diffusion across the government can result in the rapid denigration of potentially progressive discourses. However, we believe that there are foreign policy bureaucrats, activists at home and abroad, scholars, students, and Canadians for whom transformative ideas matter. To see these ideas move from rhetorical flourishes to systemic change requires vigilance. The dynamics of the past do not have to be the practices of the future.

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68. Denholm Crosby, 96.
69. See the discussion in Aggestam and True, “Gendering foreign policy,” 15, on the question of leadership and norm promotion.
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