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# The Demise of Nuclear Emasculation: A Feminist Analysis of Iran's Nuclear Discourse and Current EU Policy

Hussein Faour

## Abstract

On issues of nuclear power and international security, the role of women is limited by the patriarchal structures of powerful nuclear states and by the patriarchal nature of international foreign policy. Women are marginalized in politics and are underrepresented in positions with decision-making power. Additionally, nuclear discourse is misogynistic, and revolves around a masculine-militarized understandings of nuclear power and policy. Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP) is an important corrective to the masculine nature of nuclear power and policy. FFP has introduced new ways of understanding nuclear power discourse and politics, which can be especially helpful when analyzing nuclear policy at the global level. Using Iran as a case study, this paper assesses current nuclear discourse through FFP. It draws on feminist theory to analyze and understand the gendered and militarized frameworks governing current nuclear policy in Iran. Furthermore, it discusses feminist nuclear activism, denuclearization, and arms control.

## Introduction

Mainstreaming gender in foreign policy and security has been a critical part of international security since the adoption of the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Agenda by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in 2000 (Hushcha, 2020). The revolutionary agenda, also known as UNSC Resolution 1325, acknowledged the unbalanced effects of armed conflict on women, and their underrepresentation in peace negotiations and conflict prevention. International consensus on the benefits of women's inclusion in security policy decision-making mainly stems from evidence highlighting their contribution to diversity, innovation, and sustainable peace and

security (Hushcha, 2020). Unanimous efforts aiming at amplifying women's political participation pervade the implementation of global initiatives, such as the European Union's Gender Action Plan in 2010 and the African Union's policy on gender equity in 2018 (Hushcha, 2020). Yet, the most trailblazing efforts was the Swedish government's enshrinement of a feminist foreign policy in 2014 (The Centre for Female Foreign Policy [CFFP], 2020). A feminist foreign policy (FFP) is a policy framework that delegates decision-making through a gendered lens (Adebahr & Mittelhammer, 2020; CFFP, 2019). It unravels how systemic power dynamics and social classifications such as gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, class, etc. are used to grant or deny people access to power and decision-making. Any reasonable FFP should strive to redress these unequal social hierarchies.

This paper aims to assess current nuclear discourse within the applications of FFP. It draws from feminist theory to illustrate the militarized mentality behind nuclear proliferation and the gendered frameworks governing the current nuclear policy in Iran. Furthermore, it discusses the gendered views on feminist nuclear activism, denuclearization, and arms control, along with the Feminist European Union (EU) policy with Iran.

### **Feminist Foreign Policy and Nuclear Proliferation**

A feminist foreign policy (FFP) is a human-centered, multifaceted policy framework that modernizes the established groundworks of international political discourse (CFFP, 2019). FFP criticizes conventional foreign policy's primary focus on military power, violence, and destruction (CFFP, 2019; Conway & Herten-Crabb, 2019). FFP centers the voices of women and marginalized communities by dismantling the highly masculinized notions of diplomacy, foreign aid, immigration, global trade, and military defense (Lal & Graham, 2021). It challenges the barriers that ignore or downplay the embodied experiences of minorities "at the receiving end of policymaking" (CFFP, 2020, p. 3). The main goal of FFP is the resolution of war and conflict and the expansion of socio-economic growth (Naves, 2020).

The earliest implementation of FFP was pioneered by the Swedish government in 2014 (Conway & Herten-Crabb, 2019). The premise of Sweden's FFP was built on three areas of focus, appropriately named the "three R's": employing existing resources to advocate for women's rights and ultimately elevating women's representation in foreign policy (Conway & Herten-Crabb, 2019, p. 102). The Swedish commitment to the principles of inclusion, gender, and security proved to be highly influential as more countries began integrating gender equality in their foreign policy (Conway & Herten-Crabb, 2019; Naves, 2020). For example, Canada's adoption of a Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP) in 2017 similarly advocated gender-sensitive conceptions of global aid. Moreover, in 2018, the United Kingdom's Labor Party established a gendered framework within their global assistance plan to bolster women empowerment in their departments. Recent notable examples of FFP adoption also include Mexico, Hawaii, Luxembourg, France, and Spain (CFFP, 2020).

However, questions concerning FFP's practicability and implementation continue to emerge (Naves, 2020). Due to multiple barriers, the role of women in governance remains a ripe area for feminist activism and advocacy. Additionally, the lack of gender-specific research in the field of international security threatens the validity of a gender approach in security policy (Hushcha, 2020). Naves (2020) argues that despite the growth in women's diplomatic visibility over the last two decades, men remain the top occupants of major decision-making positions. Relatedly, Fihn (2018) claims that only men are permitted to engage in high-level security negotiations, such as those concerning weapons of mass destruction. These negotiations are of great importance, for the impacts of nuclear weapons on women are highly devastating (Guro Dimmen, 2014). Scientific findings from Chernobyl, the Marshall Islands, and Japan claimed that women are more prone to cancer, mental illnesses, discrimination, and social stigma after nuclear attacks. Today, however, women's inclusion in nuclear diplomacy remains nonexistent (Conway, 2019a).

The contemporary landscape of international security is built on the marginalization of vulnerable communities from policymaking along with the heavy reliance on the perils of violence to sustain or maintain peace (CFFP, 2020; see also Conway, 2019b; Conway & Herten-Crabb, 2019). Such

patterns are highly synonymous with the current nuclear policy. The power dynamics maintaining current nuclear policy are ingrained in hegemonic masculinity, colonialism, imperialism, militarism, and racism, all of which validate the scope of the patriarchal system our world is built upon (Conway, 2019a; Conway & Herten-Crabb, 2019). Said dynamics also regulate the international access to power and decision-making as the five nations possessing nuclear weapons serve as the Permanent Members of the Security Council (P5) (Conway & Herten-Crabb, 2019). The P5 violently rejects negotiations around disarmament, reinforcing deterrence theory—a military strategy that relies on nuclear weapons to maintain political power and discourage armed attacks—as a key means to security (Baggett, 2018; Conway & Herten-Crabb, 2019). This has created a prominent and intrinsic power imbalance between the P5 states and other nations. Moreover, the existence of nuclear weapons along with the reinforcement of deterrence theory sits at odds with FFP, especially when P5 countries like France and the UK employ gender equality in their foreign policy (Conway, 2019b). Ensuring sustainable national security necessitates holistic deconstruction of the masculinized ideals governing the proliferation of nuclear weapons (CFFP, 2020). FFP’s human-centered framework can be applied to unravel the enduring effects of nuclear weapons on “human lives, health, the environment, and economic development” (Adebahr & Mittelhammer, 2020, p. 10). On the other hand, FFP places nuclear weapons as highly “phallicized” (Conway & Herten-Crabb, 2019, para. 14) subjects that epitomize masculinity and sexual potency (Adebahr & Mittelhammer, 2020). Therefore, FFP can contribute to negotiations by opting for the destruction of nuclear weapons from a feminist lens.

### **Understanding The Nuclear Discourse: The Cultural-Structural, Psycho-Sexual, and Discursive Frameworks**

The eruption of the Cold War, along with a subsequent revival during the late 80s, marked the birth of a multilayered nuclear culture (Eschle, 2012; Voyles, 2020). This period manifested at the intersection of the “academic and activist discourses” (Eschle, 2012, p. 3) of nuclear weapons, conferring a myriad of debates on the gendered ethics and motifs of such arsenals. Consequently, atomic metaphors were the spawn of a new sexual revolution—a period governed by collective

panic and newfound notions of weapons imagery. Feminist analysis by Cohn and Ruddick (2004) highlights a prominent juncture between gender and moral thought. Conceptions of nuclear weapons were equated with highly masculinized images of sexual potency, aggression, virility, and national security. Additionally, the mobilization of gendered stereotypes and symbolism persisted throughout the life of most political regimes (Cohn & Ruddick, 2004). Said patterns reinforced patriarchal hierarchies and appropriated deterrence theory as a global system (Acheson, 2018a; Cohn & Ruddick, 2014).

Modern valuations of nuclear weapons are contested by a multitude of international relations experts and feminist scholars. Political expert and feminist researcher, Catherine Eschle, approached these valuations through three fundamental frameworks: the cultural-structural framework, the psycho-sexual framework, and the discursive framework (Eschle, 2012). The cultural-structural framework highlights the materialization of highly masculinized social orders that foster the perpetuation of colonialism, racism, capitalism, and most importantly, patriarchy (Eschle, 2012). This framework depends on the intertwined notions of strength and masculinity with war and violence (Acheson, 2018a; WILPF, 2019). It centers rigid militarized ideals of masculinity showcased by the capacity and inclination to instill damage through weapons. It encourages engaging in armed conflicts and murder as proof of power. In other words, the cultural-structural framework draws from hegemonic masculinity that augments the justification of deterrence theory and justifies the abuse of power for the sake of maintaining peace and security (Acheson, 2018a; CFFP, 2016). Proponents of deterrence theory often obstruct disarmament dialogues through gaslighting (Acheson, 2018a). In this context, gaslighting is done by “feminizing” (Acheson, 2018a, para. 15) anyone who tries to argue against the proliferation of nuclear weapons. For example, multiple incidents have showcased the unscathed ridicule some UN diplomats face when trying to ban nuclear weapons. Terms like “radical dreamers,” “emotional,” and “naïve” were often used by other diplomats to describe the anti-nuclear negotiators (Acheson, 2018a, para. 19). Furthermore, Carol Cohn, a feminist researcher, shared an account of her time working with nuclear war strategists in the 1980s (Acheson, 2018a). A Caucasian male physicist working on modeling nuclear counterforce assaults yelled at a gathering

of other Caucasian male physicists about their nonchalant attitude toward civilian mortality. He exclaims, “Only thirty million! Only thirty million human beings killed instantly?” (Acheson, 2018a, para. 1) The entire room fell silent. He was embarrassed. “Nobody said a word,” (Acheson, 2018a, para. 15) the physicist in Cohn's story later admitted to her after his outburst in the room of other male physicists. “They didn’t even look at me. It was awful. I felt like a woman” (Acheson, 2018a, para. 15).

Indigenous populations, women, the LGBTQIA+ community, and gender non-conforming individuals are the main victims of militarized, hegemonic masculinity (Acheson, 2018a). Members of these groups are at greater risk of domestic violence as they do not ascribe to the established patriarchal norms. More specifically, they are more impacted by the effects of nuclear weapons. Eschle’s cultural-structural framework emphasizes the vilification of innocent civilians when nuclear weapons are used (Acheson, 2018a; Eschle, 2012; WILPF, 2019). When it comes to U.S. nuclear policy, indigenous eviction and racialized violence have been part of the atomic saga both within and outside the United States’ territorial limits (Conway, 2019b; Voyles, 2020). In 1944, the United States’ forceful acquisition of the previously colonized Marshall Islands marked the inauguration of illegitimate nuclear testing on indigenous lands. For more than a decade, relentless detonations of atomic bombs on the Islands’ Bikini Atoll led to the complete decimation of the soil and water. Consequently, farming and fishing were severely impacted, and the Marshallese people were deprived of their food and work. The Islands’ natives were also exposed to insufferable degrees of radiation that further amplified their homelessness, sickness, and death. Women were among the most affected by the U.S. nuclear testing on indigenous lands (Guro Dimmen, 2014). To illustrate, lands are passed down from mothers to their children in a matriarchal society like the Marshall Islands. Women were unable to exercise their cultural rights as owners of Marshallese lands due to the constant land displacement caused by nuclear testing. Consequently, these women were denied profit generated by owning property, which heavily destabilized the structure of Marshallese families. Relatedly, the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the U.S. in 1945 showcased the disproportionate effects of nuclear weapons on women (Guro Dimmen, 2014). A study conducted on the survivors of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki

atomic bombings between the years 1950 and 2003 found that cancer incidents were nearly twice as high in females as in males. Moreover, the exposure to nuclear radiation after the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings has been directly linked to breast cancer and increased risks of stillbirth and miscarriages among Japanese women. According to literary theorist Lisa Yoneyama, these racialized narratives of violence are the pillar of the nuclear policy that provides an opportunity for a “good war” (Voyles, 2020, p. 660). Wheatcroft (2014) asserts that the U.S. involvement in the Cold War, and the subsequent bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, was a “good war” against the totalitarian regime of Japan. Thus, the bombing was crucial to achieve peace and spread democracy. As a result, the violence committed against the Japanese was rendered “illegible” and represented a solid “victory of the rational mind” (Voyles, 2020, p. 661). The U.S. potency of racial othering and colonial crimes not only diluted the experience of countless innocent civilians, but also concealed the humanity of the bombing victims and the inhumanity of the bomb’s deployment (Voyles, 2020). With regards to Eschle’s cultural-structural framework, this realist manifestation in nuclear policy favors the blind optimization of power, for national security rests upon the destructive capacity of nuclear weapons (CFFP, 2016; Cohn, 2018). As a result, the patriarchal attachment to nuclear weapons legitimizes the strength and modernization of nuclear-possessing states (Constantinides, 2021).

Masculine pathology in nuclear discourse gave birth to the psycho-sexual framework. Eschle (2012) claims that the acquisition and proliferation of nuclear weapons are best explained by men’s projection of “sublimated anxieties” (p. 4) around sexual potency and the fetishization of aggression and death. These implicit drivers motivate violent fantasies thereby highlighting underlying angst. Eventually, this manifests in masculinist fantasies that exploit phallic imagery when talking about nuclear weapons. Euphemistic notions of security are often expressed through “invulnerability, invincibility and impregnability” (Eschle, 2012, p. 5). Likewise, world leaders are also at fault for using phallogocentric rhetoric when describing nuclear weapons (Constantinides, 2021). Notable examples include: “deep penetration, erector launchers, orgasmic whumps, and thrust-to-weight ratios” (Cohn, 2018, para. 6).

The use of phallic symbolism also suffuses hypersexualized ideals of nuclear power (Constantinides, 2021; Voyles, 2020). Historical proof of eroticized nuclear power dates to the second half of the 20th century (Voyles, 2020). The U.S. government launched marketing campaigns that saw the emergence of beauty queens as mascots of atomic power. This included sexually suggestive clothing and jewelry mimicking nuclear annihilations, atomic bombs, and rockets of mass destruction (University of Nevada Las Vegas, 1955). Additionally, the campaigns involved dance shows, music, magazine spreads, and photoshoots in the deserts of Nevada—lands with a rich indigenous history that were marred by countless atomic trials (Voyles, 2020). The inherent sexist stereotypes weaved into such campaigns illustrate what the academic Lyko Day dubs as the “beauty of annihilation”—a concept permeating the deflection of the atomic infrastructure through hypersexualized aesthetics (Voyles, 2020, p. 652). The imminent fear of the effects of nuclear technology was the reason behind the marketing campaigns’ eventual failure (Voyles, 2020). However, patterns of nuclear eroticism persist to this day. The world’s smallest bathing suit, the atome, is named after the French spelling of “atom” (Fihn, 2018). Commercial revisions of this bathing suit ultimately resulted in the birth of the bikini—a more provocative suit, appropriately named after an atomic annihilation site.



*Figure 1. Photograph of servicemen with opera singer Marguerite Piazza as Miss-Cue, Las Vegas, May 1, 1955*

The discursive framework of nuclear weapons, Eschle's final framework, moralizes abstract, strategic, and logic-driven modes of nuclear authority (Eschle, 2012). It confers gendered dichotomies that devalue the "feminine" (Eschle, 2012, p.4) notions of denuclearization, disarmament, and peace. The discursive framework draws rigid separations between objectivity and emotions (CFFP, 2016). It censures every ideal that does not align with the patriarchal, militarized norms. These forms of emasculation validate the concepts of virility and stoicism. Despite the evident similarities with the cultural-structural and psycho-sexual frameworks, the discursive framework is strictly concerned with emphasizing the binary modes of governance between genders. Biswas (2016) illustrates how this framework materializes through an analysis of the Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) doctrine—a theory built on the assumptions that both world annihilation and national security are products of a calm, strategic, and objective political leadership. In other words, MAD delegitimizes "feminized" (Biswas, 2016, para. 3) anti-war ideologies that reject the acquisition of nuclear missiles.

### **Iran: A Nationalist-Paternalist Nuclear Culture**

British anthropologist Hugh Gusterson used the term "nuclear Orientalism" to express the generally held belief of third-world or non-Western nuclear irrationality in relation to the Western nuclear democracies' presumptions of the safe and dependable ownership of nuclear weapons (Biswas, 2016; Gusterson, 1999). This term unravels the "feminized" (Biswas, 2016, para. 4) impulses of the third world which ultimately delegitimizes their nuclear possession. Characterization of Iran's nuclear policy stems from accusations of "irrationality" and is entwined with Gusterson's nuclear Orientalism (Biswas, 2016, para. 8). This manifests in the inadvertent emasculation of the Iranian nuclear discourse as the binary dichotomies between the West and non-West reinforce first-world ideals of nuclear custodianship (Biswas, 2016; CFFP, 2017). Yet, despite this emasculation, the gendered capacities of Iran's nuclear policy do not stray away from current Western ideals (Behraves, 2015). The only difference this entails is a non-Western embodiment of cultural motifs that tether to Iran's culture, language, and Islamic background.

The diction governing Iran's nuclear discourse signifies "dignity" and "honor" in response to previous military and political failures (Behraves, 2015, para. 2). Historical evidence of such political defeats includes the Iraq-Iran war during the 1980s and the downfall of Muhammad Mosaddegh in the early 1950s. More specifically, discussions of honor and dignity underlie a symbiosis between masculinity and femininity known as *namous* (Behraves, 2015). *Namous* prompts masculine adulation of feminine family dynamics that are regarded as honorable or sacred. Consequently, any violation of *namous* aggravates masculinized domination in the form of honor killing. The preservation of honor thus manifests in the punishment of women's violations of sexual mores and codes (Behraves, 2015). In nuclear policy, this reveals the Iranian construction of inviolability—penetrative violations on Iranian ground necessitate radical retaliation.

Examination of *namous* from the cultural-structural framework underlies Iran's nuclear policy and the country's politics. However, such examination goes beyond a cultural analysis, for religion plays a significant role in Iran's nuclear discourse (Behraves, 2015). *Harim* (sanctuary) and *gheirat* (masculine valor) are gendered terminologies that enforce concepts like *namous* through a religious view. Along with nationalism and sexual potency, Iran's military sites are private and highly inaccessible (Behraves, 2015). Such conceptions are enacted by Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who often moralizes *harim* to fortify guardianship and protection. Consequently, nuclear scientists, who are largely considered the "sons of the motherland" (Behraves, 2015, para. 10), are prohibited from giving interviews. This paternalist formulation underlies the core of *gheirat*: masculinized vigor that safeguards honor. Therefore, those who fail to ascribe to the nationalist-religious principles are indicted as *pofyouzi*, a Farsi insult describing dishonorable men who lack sexual potency. *Pofyouzi* entails the rejection of feminine characteristics like *sazesh* (negotiation) and *narmesh* (flexibility). Iranian reformists are plagued by such descriptions as disarmament dialogues jeopardize "heroism" (Behraves, 2015, para. 18). In 2014, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani delivered a speech that condemned dialogues on denuclearization (Behraves, 2015). He described reformists as "political cowards" who were "timid and trembling" (Behraves, 2015, para. 21).

The ardent masculinization of Iranian nuclear discourse goes beyond mere cultural and religious valuations as it also boasts phallogocentric imagery of nuclear weapons (Särmä, 2014, 2016). In July 2008, the Iranian government reported testing nine nuclear missiles. Images released to global media showcased the launch of four arsenals. However, investigations proved that the images were photoshopped as one missile did not take off. The photoshopped images amassed huge controversy as most Western governments attested to Iran's "femininity" (Särmä, 2014, p. 138). Iran's initial aim to provoke the Western world backfired since their sexual imagery depicted incapability instead of potency.

Despite its unique cultural aspect, the gendered analysis of Iran's nuclear discourse validates Eschle's frameworks (Behraves, 2015; Eschle, 2012; Särmä, 2014, 2016). Male-centered terminologies reflect the cultural-structural framework, while the phallogocentric imagery is a manifestation of the psycho-sexual framework. The discursive framework, however, is inapplicable in the case of Iran as the country's political makeup does not include women in nuclear governance. Despite this, the nuclear deals between the US, the European Union (EU), and Iran demonstrated key roles for women in nuclear negotiation and mediation processes, notably Catherine Ashton and afterward Frederica Mogherini (Hushcha, 2020). Furthermore, the terms of the deal with Iran were negotiated by Helga Schmid, Secretary-General of the European External Action Service. Nathalie Tocci, Mogherini's counselor, also backed her up during the process. Wendy Sherman, the Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs and eventually the U.S. Deputy Secretary of State in the Obama administration, headed the American negotiating team.

The gendered binaries imposed by the realist governments of nuclear nations constitute major impediments to denuclearization (Acheson, 2018b; Constantinides, 2021). The emasculation of non-possessing nations often stems from a masculinist mentality that denounces denuclearization's impact on peace and security. Such dismissal is highly gendered and well-aligned with Eschle's discursive framework (Acheson, 2018b; Eschle, 2012). Patriarchal notions that affiliate the proliferation of nuclear weapons with power and dominance maintain current

global hierarchies. Consequently, disarmament efforts get dismissed as irrational, emotional, and destructive. Additionally, international treaties, such as The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) often get violated (Constantinides, 2021). In an article published in 2020, Gladstone expressed the U.S.' willingness to adopt a "trilateral arms control negotiation" with China and Russia to "advance" disarmament outside the policies imposed by TPNW (Constantinides, 2021, para. 5). Responses to this statement echoed consensus on the significance of nuclear proliferation in achieving peace and security. The denigration of TPNW by the nuclear states continues to halt discussions on denuclearization (Constantinides, 2021).

### **Anti-Nuclear Activism: Feminist Denuclearization & The EU Policy with Iran**

The birth of the nuclear age marked a new era for feminist activism (Fihn, 2018; Voyles, 2020). In the early 1950s, African American women across New York and Philadelphia organized rallies to condemn nuclear proliferation. The rallies were overarching as they also preached against gender discrimination, racism, and colonization in Africa. In 1964, lesbian civil society activists birthed the Daughters of Bilitis organization, an initiative that challenged the presence, and illuminated the gendered impacts of nuclear weapons. Similarly, during the 1970s, prominent feminist organizations incorporated anti-nuclear philosophies into their agendas. One prominent organization was the indigenous-led Women of All Red Nations (WARN) which protested against uranium mining and its dire effects on reproductive health. Recent examples of women-led nuclear activism comprise the efforts of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, also known as ICAN (Fihn, 2018). The organization won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2017 and was an undisputable precursor for the formulation of TPNW. ICAN works towards the complete prohibition of nuclear weapons.

The diverse scope of feminist activism in the nuclear field prompted increased women's inclusion in arms control, non-proliferation, and disarmament diplomacy (Hushcha, 2020). However, the number of women in this field remains minimal. A U.S. experiment found that over one month, 93 percent of nuclear articles in major U.S. publications were authored by men (Hushcha, 2020). As

a result, researchers coined terms like “marticles” or “man-articles” (Hushcha, 2020, para. 23). This disparity is consistent throughout all major divisions of nuclear policy. One major reason behind women’s underrepresentation in nuclear diplomacy talks is the “gender stereotypical attributions of “feminine” (irrational) and “masculine” (rational) policy actors” (Adebahr & Mittelhammer, 2020, p. 9). Unlawful institutionalized agendas often reinforce such differentiation through stereotypes that equate women with diplomacy and negotiations, and men with deterrence theory and technical ability (Hushcha, 2020). Furthermore, despite the exemplary academic performance in STEM, most women divert away from the field due to perceptions of women's incompetency (Hushcha, 2020). Nuclear weapons and dialogues on deterrence require deep knowledge in STEM. Finally, the long hours of work, unpredictable nature of nuclear negotiations, and discriminatory practices in the field impede women’s inclusion in disarmament and arms-control dialogues (Hushcha, 2020).

The skewed patterns of women’s participation in arms control, non-proliferation, and disarmament diplomacy, however, do not negate their positive impact in such processes (Hessmann Dalaqua et al., 2019). Research asserts that equitable ideals of representation elevate the efficacy of multilateral nuclear diplomacy. Additionally, Hushcha (2020) claims that fostering diversity in nonproliferation negotiations breeds diversity and acknowledgment of marginalized communities.

The militarized and religious dimensions of the Iranian nuclear discourse along with the countless impediments facing women in arms control, non-proliferation, and disarmament diplomacy pushed the EU to redress their policy approach with Iran in hopes of establishing a gender-sensitive nuclear program (Adebahr & Mittelhammer, 2020; Young, 2020). The analysis below assesses the EU options in adopting an FFP to deal with the current Iranian nuclear discourse. It presents a thorough feminist analysis proposed by the European center of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (2020).

In addition to facilitating overall policy priorities, an FFP framework permeates a plethora of structural improvements to the EU's current Iranian policy. This includes broadening its scope and regionalizing its approach, eliminating obstructions to women's involvement in policymaking and negotiations, and bolstering the role of civil society (Adebahr & Mittelhammer, 2020). The EU does not challenge the Iranian government in adopting an FFP, for feminism remains a touchy subject in the Islamic Republic. Recent suggestions, however, proposed making use of present resources in hopes of empowering women beyond the realms of feminism. This manifests through economic and social efforts that imbue the prominent inclusion of women in decision-making and local initiatives (Adebahr & Mittelhammer, 2020).

Beyond the hopes of mere peacebuilding and guaranteeing equitable involvement of women in the militarized security infrastructure, the EU must adopt a broader notion of security and engage more in regional conflict prevention (Adebahr & Mittelhammer, 2020). In the case of Iran, a wider approach would mitigate concerns ranging from environmental deterioration and water availability to education and immigration. Furthermore, regional collaboration in areas such as the environment, military security, migration, and religious tourism might serve as a springboard to the far more difficult aim of security cooperation. This guarantees a safe space for all civilians, especially women who are generally the most affected by political conflicts (Acheson, 2018a). Additionally, although women have been adequately represented in the Iran nuclear negotiations, the EU needs to improve its participation and engagement in its foreign affairs (Adebahr & Mittelhammer, 2020). This applies to top posts in EU delegations across the world. Rather than simply encouraging diversity in nuclear negotiations, a feminist approach necessitates a paradigm shift to transcend a gender-stereotypical security discourse. This includes promoting level-headed discussions on nuclearization and disarmament beyond accusations of being “emotional” or “naïve” (Acheson, 2018a, para. 19). Lastly, an FFP approach is needs-based and develops policies in collaboration with civil society (Adebahr & Mittelhammer, 2020). The inclusion of civil society, particularly in the case of Iran, might provide an opportunity to incorporate more women in policymaking. As a result, “although the EU generally recognizes and interacts with civil society

organizations in its external contacts, it should strive to integrate such views and players in its policy toward Iran especially” (Adebahr & Mittelhammer, 2020, p. 26).

## Conclusion

Beyond the issue of the EU and Iran, a multitude of recommendations is necessary to align nuclear weapons discourse with the agenda of FFP. Given the dominant position of the P5 nations, every nuclear nation must adopt an FFP. Audits should be conducted by firms working for the UN to guarantee a genuine feminist agenda that caters to the destruction of power hierarchies and militarized masculinity within the nuclear discourse. Furthermore, all nuclear states must apply budget cuts to their current nuclear policy or restrict nuclear power for energy and electricity. For example, nuclear and non-nuclear states could work to put together a network to supply and transmit nuclear energy for public consumption. Such a network could greatly benefit marginalized communities.

In conclusion, ensuring sustainable national security through FFP necessitates holistic deconstruction of the masculinized ideals governing the proliferation of nuclear weapons. FFP applies its human-centered approach to pinpoint the enduring effects of nuclear weapons on “human lives, health, the environment, and economic development” (Adebahr & Mittelhammer, 2020, p.10). It contributes to negotiations opting for the destruction of nuclear weapons through amplified women participation. Implementing FFP in international relations will completely transform the current conceptions of peace and will ensure that nuclear policy and discourse is gender-sensitive.

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