

The CFFP Glossary

CFFP THE CENTRE FOR
FEMINIST
FOREIGN POLICY

March 2021

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This Glossary is designed to offer short and succinct definitions of terms used frequently throughout CFFP's work. These definitions guide CFFP team members in our everyday work as well as provide brief explanations of important but complex concepts and terms to the wider public. All definitions serve as an entry point into larger, more detailed, and nuanced discussions.

Feminism

Feminism refers to a set of philosophies which drive political organising. Feminism acts as a tool to both analyse and question existing power hierarchies as well as present new and alternative visions for equal and just societies for all. Its primary goal is to end all types of oppression, injustices, and power hierarchies, including sexism, racism, classism, colonialism, and imperialism, among others. The everyday lived experience of marginalised people with diverse backgrounds, experiences, and identities are reflected, and so, intersectionality is a core tenant to feminism. By basing CFFP's work on the principles of feminism, which include equality, justice, solidarity, and transparency among others, we acknowledge the movements, organisations, and individuals that came before us and on whose shoulders we stand today.

Feminist Foreign Policy

As implemented by governments, Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP) is a political framework to centre gender equality policies across certain areas of foreign policy. We, however, believe its potential extends well beyond this, and so define it as follows: FFP is the external action of a state that defines its interactions vis-a-vis states, supranational organisations, multilateral forums, civil society, and movements in a manner that prioritises equality for all, enshrines the human rights of women and other politically marginalised groups, and wholeheartedly pursues human security and feminist peace. By offering an alternate and intersectional rethinking of security from the viewpoint of the most marginalised, FFP functions as a framework that elevates the everyday lived experience of marginalised communities to the forefront and centres their needs in political processes and policy. FFP scrutinises the destructive forces of patriarchy, capitalism, racism, and militarism across all issue areas, such as the climate crises, migration, and trade, as well as its practices, including policymaking, diplomacy, and aid. By doing so, FFP interrogates domestic and foreign policy decisions to push for a more just global order and significantly resources feminist civil society to achieve its goals.

Femininity/Masculinity

'Femininity' and 'masculinity' refer to the categorisation of traits stereotypically associated with women and men. In most of our societies certain personality traits like softness, compassion, or empathy are coded as feminine, while traits like strength, power, or rationality are coded as masculine. Within the (foreign) policy space, masculine traits have historically been held as preferential and best for policy making, thus influencing the norms and standards of policy discussions, and dominating the rules and processes in domestic and foreign policy.

Gender

Gender is a societal construct with associated traits used to differentiate people based on their sex assigned at birth. The term gender was first used by feminist scholars in the 1970s as distinct from the term “sex” which refers to the biological characteristics a person is born with. Gender is influenced by laws, politics, the media, family structures, and religion, among others. However, gender is more than a set of ideas; gender acts to organise power relations. It hierarchically structures human relationships and activities within society and labels them as masculine and feminine, thus categorising people. Simply put, gender acts as a determinate regarding our positions and roles in society as a way to sustain power hierarchies amongst people, communities, and states. When talking about gender in international politics, we do not necessarily refer to *the* gender of policymakers and decision makers, but rather to the *gendered dimensions* of who has access to power and why, as well as whose needs are being accounted for and whose are not.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a concept and analytical tool to describe how systems of oppression like racism, sexism, classism, ableism, among others, are interconnected and can be mutually dependent. Coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, the term was originally used to describe the oppression Black women experience due to both their gender and race, the concept has since expanded in its usage to encompass a wide variety of forms of oppression. In order to effectively tackle discrimination, all aspects of identity, privilege, and oppression must be considered in conjunction rather than in isolation. The principles behind intersectional thought have been developed and emphasised for more than 150 years, rooted in the experiences, and struggles of Black women. Thus, whenever one talks about intersectionality, it is essential to centre intersectional thought in Black feminism.

Militarism

Militarism is an ideology referring to the state's glorification and justification of the military as a means of maintaining or extending its power. Intricately linked to militarisation and sometimes even used interchangeably, militarism describes an idea whereas militarisation refers to the declaration and preparation of making this idea a reality.

Militarisation

Militarisation is the social, cultural, symbolic, and material preparation for war. Grounded in the belief that a state's security can (only) be guaranteed by the threat of violence, militarisation is a declaration of a state's willingness and preparedness to pursue its strategic objectives through the deliberate and organised use of physical force, hence violence. This way, militarisation has both tangible and ideological manifestations. Materially, the effects of militarisation can be seen in the increase of security and defence budgets that allocate disproportionate funds to the military and other militarised security actors. The effects of militarisation include a dissemination of militaristic language, values, and symbols, which are internalised and normalised by societies and causally linked to destructive gender stereotypes. Militarisation promotes gendered hierarchies and the primacy of the nation manipulating the image of the “Other” to construct an “enemy” worth

fearing, establishing war as a natural or inevitable occurrence. In other words, militarisation permeates societies.

Oppression

Oppression describes deeply ingrained social practices that restrict a group's ability to participate in society and devalue their experiences and existence through social norms, institutional rules and power positions assigned along socially constructed categories. Oppressive behaviour and structures result in silencing, suppression, and shaming, as well as a lack of access, freedom, resources, and opportunities. In more extreme forms, oppression can mean devaluation, exploitation, and the use of force. Oppression never stands alone and is always connected to social relations, privilege, and the abuse of power.

Patriarchy

Historically, patriarchy described a societal structure in which status, land, property, and rights are managed by fathers and passed on to their sons. Although this system is seen in less and less places around the world, society is still organised around sustaining men's power. We, then, understand patriarchy as institutionalised sexism which perpetuates male privilege and hegemonic masculinity. It is important to note that due to factors like race, class, sexuality, or ability, not all men benefit equally from the patriarchy. It therefore cannot be simplified as the "rule of men" but a social system that values and upholds certain racist, classist, and abilist ideas about hegemonic masculinity, which women and marginalised people are also capable of upholding.

Peace

Peace is more than the absence of war; it is the absence of all forms of structural violence and oppression. Applying an intersectional feminist perspective, peace advances demilitarisation, equality, justice, and the dismantling of discriminatory structures. To adapt to ever-changing circumstances, peace requires a constant reflection of how we think and approach it, questioning the historically masculine and Western understanding of peace. Feminist peace must offer alternatives based on the knowledge and needs of the most marginalised members. The absence of women and marginalised groups at peace negotiations has led to the continuation and reinvigoration of systems of exclusion and injustice. Without the various and diverse perspectives of women and marginalised groups, human rights and the agency of women and marginalised groups is neglected.

Power

Power is a multidimensional phenomenon exercised by actors like individuals, groups, organisations, or states to influence the behaviour and actions of individuals, groups, organisations, and states. Depending on the context and setting, power can manifest itself as communication, influence, opportunity, responsibility, or coercion. Power is an intrinsic element of any given society and is in continual flux on political, social, ethical, and educational levels. Power also adapts and shifts, meaning what might constitute a position of power in one situation is not necessarily the case for another.

Race

The ever-changing idea of race describes a social and political concept. Whereas there are no different biological races, race exists as a social construct to filter access to choice, opportunity, resources, status, and power. The racial categories that people are assigned (or rather, we assign to ourselves) shape lived experiences and can even determine the difference between life and death. The category of race has often historically been used to reference non-white people and perpetuate the dangerous ideology that white people are peripheral spectators to race and unaffected by it. Like other markers of identity, whiteness is also a racial factor that usually provides its members with benefits. Race has been, and still is, used to create hierarchies between groups of people and justify power imbalances.

Security

Over the past century, mainstream understandings of security have been dominated by realist political thinkers who centre the abstract state as the most important actor within an anarchic international system. This perspective sees the primary purpose of security as protecting the state against 'outside' threats, relying mostly on military and defence policies to mitigate them. However, for over 100 years, feminists have advocated for alternative approaches toward security which focus on what ensures the safety of people, rather than states, because secure states do not automatically correspond with secure people. In fact, secure states can also put their own people (or groups of people) in danger. FFP deploys human security, which redirects focus to insecurities in the daily life of people, such as the threat of hunger, disease, crime, environmental degradation, and issues related to the labour market

Systemic violence

Systemic violence is caused by social and political institutions, such as schools, governmental organisations, or workplaces. Societal, political, and economic structures sustain and reproduce discriminatory and harmful ideals, rhetoric, and practices that privilege certain groups and oppress others. These structures foster power relations and specifically target marginalised groups. Systemic violence prevents affected people from satisfying their basic needs, restricts their opportunities to fully participate in society, and even leads to life-changing circumstances such as higher rates of illness and death. This can be seen in unequal access to education, affordable housing, or healthcare.

White/Whiteness

Whiteness does not describe a biological category, but a socially constructed marker of identity that provides its members with specific advantages and access to power. It represents a set of ideas, norms, and practices grounded in othering, colonial legacies, and white supremacy. Whiteness is often falsely assumed to represent 'normality', neutrality, and objectivity, and thus superiority. It is crucial to make whiteness a subject of interrogation to challenge the many facets of white domination and power across society.

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