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**‘Progressive’ Foreign Policies: A Postcolonial Feminist
Analysis of Policies of the Global North and India**

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Declaration

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Neha Tetali', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Signed: Neha Tetali

8th April 2025

‘Progressive’ Foreign Policies: A Postcolonial Feminist Analysis of Policies of the Global North and India

Abstract

Progressive foreign policies support the improvement of social conditions. They are reflected in the ways states represent and portray progressive values in their conduct of foreign policy. This thesis focusses on two such progressive foreign policies that have developed in International Relations. Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP) as an approach prioritises gender equality in foreign policy and was initially developed by the Global North. Some feminist scholars suggest that FFP is a novel approach that spotlights women and their issues in a traditionally masculine field. Similarly, in the context of a Global South country, India, another type of progressive foreign policy takes shape: that of postcolonialism. India’s foreign policy advocates for eradicating racism and supports self-determination. However, critics suggest that Global North FFPs reinforce power inequalities, and that Indian foreign policy is lacking in its approach to gender. In this context, postcolonial feminist theory offers a framework for scrutinising these progressive foreign policies. This thesis first explores how postcolonial feminism engages with Global North FFPs and conducts a critical cartography to flesh out these critiques. It then critically investigates India’s postcolonial foreign policy, using Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis of its foreign policy at the United Nations Security Council. In doing so, it not only reveals the gendered, racial and colonial hierarchies in both these foreign policies, but also finds that despite claims to feminism and postcoloniality, there are limits and vulnerabilities to progressive foreign policies. This research contributes original work to the critical turn in Feminist International Relations.

Keywords: Feminist Foreign Policy, Feminism, Postcolonial Feminism, Postcolonialism, India, UNSC

Summary

“Progressive” in the context of IR takes its meaning from Szöllősi-Cira (2022), who defines it as that idea or principle in foreign policy which supports the improvement of social conditions. It also reflects a challenge presented to mainstream ways of conducting foreign policy. Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP) is a recent development in the international policy sphere. FFPs seek to bring gender to the forefront of interactions between nations and are viewed by some as a way to a gender-just peace. Several countries have adopted FFP over the past decade. Feminist scholarship, however, is ambivalent about FFPs: while some argue that they help challenge dominant masculinist notions of conducting foreign policy, others problematise them by pointing out the colonial underpinnings of the policy. In the context of a Global South nation that doesn’t espouse FFP, India, there is another form of progressive representation in its foreign policy — that of postcolonialism. Historical colonial experience translated into the foreign policy sphere and is seen in India’s commitment to eradicating racism, its non-alignment and suspicion of superpowers, and India’s staying aloof from Cold War politics, to name a few instances (Chiriyankandath 2004, 200; Cohen 2004, 40; Bajpai 2003, 241, Miller 2029, 69).

In this context, the thesis seeks to use postcolonial feminist theory to better understand progressive representations of foreign policy. Postcolonial feminism is a theoretical framework that helps unravels ways in which gender, race and coloniality interact to structure the world. In this case, postcolonial feminist theory can help reveal the way these ideas structure foreign policy. Based on this, the thesis poses its central research question: How do progressive representations of foreign policy do under the scrutiny of postcolonial feminism? The progressive representations focussed on are: one, the Global North states representing a feminist identity through their Feminist Foreign Policies and two, the Global South Indian state that represents its identity as postcolonial. These two progressive representations form the two research axes that the thesis will focus on.

The first research axis is explored in chapter 2. The thesis scrutinises the seemingly progressive FFPs of some Global North states and also postcolonial feminist FFP scholarship. The method used here is called critical cartography. The scrutiny reveals that postcolonial feminism is critical of FFP: the theory shows how the ideas constructing FFP

are liberal, exclude bottom-up voices, essentialise and victimise women from the Global South and ignore domestic racial dynamics. However, based on Spivak's (2005, xv) argument that postcolonialism must be autocritical in nature, I turn the lens of examination onto the existing postcolonial feminist FFP scholarship to dig deeper into the ways in which it engages with FFP. A critical cartography of the scholarship reveals that there is a spatialisation of power which it reinforces, and that it is strategically sceptic about FFP (sceptic because it is critical of Western liberal feminism, but strategically so because it accepts the importance of FFP as a feminist intervention in IR). Thus, the thesis finds that postcolonial feminism can provide profound insights into progressive representations of foreign policy in the form of FFPs in several ways.

The second research axis is explored in chapters 5 and 6. It aims to critically examine India's current foreign policy through the lens of postcolonial feminism. Although India does not label its foreign policy feminist, this axis critically evaluates India's identity as a progressive postcolonial foreign policy actor. To do so, the research evaluates India's UNSC statements through the years of 2021-22 from a postcolonial feminist perspective.

The methodological approach of this axis as explained in chapter 3 is grounded in feminist epistemology. My approaches are derived from two of feminist epistemology's traditions: one of offering a deep critique of mainstream approaches; and two of developing innovative, insightful alternative strategies of ways of knowing. Based on these core principles that informed the methodology, I conduct a Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) of India's foreign policy statements during its non-permanent term at the UNSC from 2021-22. I manually scoped 440 statements that India made at the UNSC and corroborated those with analysis from the Sketch Engine software. The software was used to highlight word repetitions and numbers.

The thesis finds that India constructs its identity as postcolonial in its UNSC statements. India does this through positioning itself as an advocate for the Global South, calling for local-led solutions, challenging the West through an anti-colonial foreign policy and continuing in some instances its value-based historical foreign policy. However, India's postcolonial positioning is indicative of a specific brand of postcolonialism that is accommodative of not just India's Global South advocacy, but also other complex manifestations of national assertiveness, and is instrumentalised by India to carve a space

for itself internationally. The thesis then finds that examining India's UNSC policy through the lens of postcolonial feminism reveals the limits and vulnerabilities of India's approach to gender at the UNSC. These limits take the shape of how India doesn't see gender as shaping foreign policy; that India's approach to gender equality comprises solutions based in liberal thought; that there is an epistemic violence observed in India's portrayals of women; that it doesn't address its domestic failings with respect to gender; and thus, doesn't fundamentally challenge patriarchy because of the exclusion of bottom-up voices in policymaking. Thus, despite progressive claims to postcolonialism, it is found that India's gender advocacy mirrors Global North countries' FFPs.

Based on these findings, the thesis concludes that although both these representations of foreign policy can be considered progressive, hierarchies exist. In the case of Global North FFPs, there are colonial and racialised hierarchies at play; and in the case of postcolonial Indian FP, there are gendered hierarchies at play. Thus, I highlight the need for critically examining even progressive expressions of FP using theories like postcolonial feminism. This scrutiny also revealed the geographical unitedness of some hierarchies like the lack of a nuanced approach to gender from both the Global North and the South (India, in this case). In the case of Indian foreign policy, the country's postcolonial standing is complicated by its current political developments in which women's rights, although granted politically and legally, are struggling to be translated into reality. Despite this, there seems to be a growing appetite for feminist thinking and analysis on foreign policy, and this thesis contributes to the same.

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List of Acronyms

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AU	African Union
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa
CAP	Common African Position
CAR	Central African Republic
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CPAS	Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System
CTBT	Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty
DA	Discourse Analysis
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
E10	Elected Members
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EU	European Union
FCDA	Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis
FFP	Feminist Foreign Policy
FIAP	Feminist International Assistance Policy
FIR	Feminist International Relations
FP	Foreign Policy
FPA	Foreign Policy Analysis
FPR	Feminist Peace Research
FPU	Female Formed Police Unit
G20	Group of Twenty
G4	Group of Four
HDI	Human Development Index
ICC	International Criminal Court
INC	Indian National Congress
IOR	Indian Ocean Region
IPFK	Indian Peacekeeping Force
IR	International Relations

IRMCT	International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals
ISIL	The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant/The Islamic State
MEA	Ministry of External Affairs
MINUSMA	UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
MTP	Medical Termination of Pregnancy
MUDRA	Micro Units Development and Refinance Agency
NAM	Non-Aligned Movement
NAPs	National Action Plans
NORMS	New Orientation for a Reformed Multilateral System
NPT	Non-Proliferation Treaty
OBCs	Other Backward Classes
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PMUN/NY	Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations, New York
PR	Permanent Representative
No.	Number
SC	Supreme Court of India
SCs	Scheduled Castes
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
STs	Scheduled Tribes
TLC	Transitional Legislative Council
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNPK	United Nations Peacekeeping
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
UNSMIL	UN Support Mission in Libya
USA	United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WILPF	Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
WPS	Women Peace and Security

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Introduction: ‘Progressive’ Foreign Policies: A Postcolonial Feminist Analysis of Policies of the Global North and India

Background

Progressive politics as a distinct political project emerged in response to profound societal inequalities (Mattoni 2025). “Progressive” in the context of International Relations (IR) takes its meaning from Szöllösi-Cira (2022), who defines it as that idea or principle in foreign policy which supports the improvement of social conditions. It also reflects a challenge presented to mainstream ways of conducting foreign policy. Foreign policy is a state-based practice towards that which is beyond the state’s borders, or the behaviour of states mainly towards other states in the international system through their authorised agents (Bulley 2014, 16; Tayfur 1994, 113). Thus, state articulations of progressive foreign policies include commitments to restorative justice, inclusion, antifascism, anti-imperialism, accountability, anti-capitalism, and even anti-corruption, to name a few (Jackson 2022).

This thesis focusses on two manifestations of progressive foreign policies: feminism and postcolonialism. Feminism fights inequalities in terms of gender, political rights, institutional politics and social norms, among others (Rosenkranz 2025). Postcolonialism furthers forms of resistance and counterhegemonic practices in the world system (Krishna 2018). Despite advocating for the improvement of social conditions and challenging mainstream foreign policy, both progressive instances can be problematised through postcolonial feminist theory. Postcolonial feminism in its work centres how the legacies of imperialism continue to operate with respect to gender today. The theory offers a framework to critically engage with feminist and postcolonial progressive foreign policies. Thus, it presents potential for scrutiny: it is in this juncture that the thesis intervenes. This section discusses the two instances of progressive foreign policy and how and why postcolonial feminism problematises them, setting the background for this thesis.

The first manifestation of progressive foreign policy takes the shape of ‘feminist foreign policy. Over the last few decades, there have been moves within the discipline of International Relations (IR) to be more cognisant of feminist approaches (Ackerly, Stern,

and True 2006). This was born out of feminist theory's deep disenchantment with the field for excluding gender as a part of its analysis. Over time, feminist theory has become a well-established approach (Feminist International Relations or FIR), advocating for feminist imaginings of peace and introducing new methods and theories for understanding international politics (Ackerly, Stern, and True 2006; Parashar, Féron, and Confortini 2021 and Peterson 1992). Simultaneously and consequently, there has been a development in the international policy sphere of an approach to foreign policy called 'Feminist Foreign Policy' (FFP). FFP is informed by international policy circles' response to the feminist turn in IR and helps challenge current ways in which foreign policy is being conducted and can thus be categorised as a progressive representation of foreign policy.

As an approach of foreign policy, FFP puts feminist concerns at the forefront of foreign policy. Thompson and Clement (2019, 7) offer a definition of FFP:

“Feminist Foreign Policy is the policy of a state that defines its interactions with other states and movements in a manner that prioritizes gender equality and enshrines the human rights of women and other traditionally marginalized groups, allocates significant resources to achieve that vision and seeks through its implementation to disrupt patriarchal and male-dominated power structures across all of its levers of influence (aid, trade, defense and diplomacy), informed by the voices of feminist activists, groups and movements.”

Although every state that adopts FFP defines it in its own way, this definition captures the principle underlining FFP succinctly. This principle is similar to feminist interventions in IR and peace research, both wanting to critique current modes of operation of foreign policy, while being guided by the idea that women's participation in global politics and sustainable peace will positively impact national and international security (Aggestam, Bergman Rosamond, and Kronsell 2019, 24).

Today Feminist Foreign Policies have emerged both in the Global North [Sweden (2014-23), Canada (2017), France (2018), Luxembourg (2019), Spain (2021), Germany (2022), Scotland (2022), Netherlands (2022), Slovenia (2023)] and the Global South [Mexico (2020), Chile (2022), Libya (2022), Liberia (2022), Colombia (2022), Mongolia (2023), among others] (Achilleos-Sarll et al. 2022). However, some scholars problematise the dominant ways FFP has been conceptualised and commitments to FFP enacted. Critical

perspectives, especially postcolonial feminist perspectives, suggest that FFPs are imbued with Western liberal feminisms and replicate global power inequalities. This is because they reflect a “troubling” skew in the uneven ways of FFP applications on the Global South (Ansorg, Haastrup, and Wright 2021, 208). Thus, critics suggest FFP is a policy that is adopted by the Global North (developed, high income nations) and practiced by them on the Global South (low income, culturally marginalised nations). There is a gap in incorporating knowledge from the Global South, which furthers domination of Western liberal notions of equality, peace and justice, ignoring postcolonial feminist voices when creating and implementing the policies. This presents an opportunity for postcolonial feminist theory to critically engage with Global North countries’ FFPs.

India doesn’t officially adopt a Feminist Foreign Policy. Despite this, there are discussions of a potential FFP in India that have been emerging over the past few years. For instance Vishwanath and Mukund (2022) discuss India’s approach to multilateralism in the context of gender mainstreaming in foreign policy. Tamang (2024) discusses the role of a prominent think tank in India in furthering the dialogue on FFP. During my research, I observed that most of these works that analyse a potential FFP for India engage with some form of postcolonial theory: for instance how India’s colonial past and present is shaping its foreign policy (Tamang 2024), or how the roots of contemporary Indian feminist thinking can be traced back to colonial times (Rathore 2024).

Therefore, in the context of a Global South nation that doesn’t espouse FFP, there is another form of progressive representation in its foreign policy — that of postcolonialism. This forms the second manifestation of progressive foreign policy that this research focusses on. India’s colonial experience has long-shaped its role in the world order today, which strongly influences its foreign and security policies (Chacko 2013, 11). Historical colonial experience translated into the foreign policy sphere and is seen in India’s commitment to eradicating racism, its non-alignment and suspicion of superpowers, and India’s staying aloof from Cold War politics, to name a few instances (Chiriyankandath 2004, 200; Cohen 2004, 40; Bajpai 2003, 241; Miller 2029, 69). A sense of victimhood in India’s foreign policy conduct because it has been traumatised from the imperial agendas in the past (Miller 2019, 12) is visible in the country’s advocacy for the agency of the people in determining their own future, which Jabri (2013, 3) calls a “postcolonial rationality” that gives primacy to the politics of self-determination. Postcolonialism not only shapes the country’s foreign

policy in specific ways, but research has also shown that it influences current populist politics.

With respect to feminism however, India has had a patchy record. The negligence of the issue of the violence against women in India (Nigam 2015) or the lack of a nuanced understanding of caste inequalities that lead to Dalit women facing inequity in terms of opportunity (Rao 2022), are but some instances. Therefore, although postcolonialism exerts a strong influential importance in India's foreign policy there is a lack of engagement with feminist issues. Postcolonial feminist theory presents a critical opportunity to engage critically with India's 'progressive' foreign policy and what that might reveal.

Both the instances discussed above — the feminist interventions in foreign policy as seen through the growth of FFPs; and India's postcolonial advocacy — are the two progressive representations of foreign policy that this thesis analyses. Thus, looking at progressive representations of foreign policy through the lens of postcolonial feminism is a ripe field of study that could have several implications. In relation to broad research on FFP, by taking a postcolonial feminist approach to FFP, the thesis adds to an emerging critical trend in academic work on FFP. These are: Eroukhmanoff (2024), Cheung and Scheyer (2024), Achilleos-Sarll et al. (2022), Ansorg, Haastrup, and Wright (2021), among others.

Studies on FFP are usually focused on official adoption of the label (see for instance: Aggestam and Bergman-Rosamond 2016; Nylund, Håkansson, and Bjarnegård 2022; Cheung and Scheyer 2024). The thesis contributes to this discussion by expanding the scope to countries that do not have official FFPs and are from the Global South. Thus, by focusing on India, I hope to further a contribution that looks at postcolonial feminist interventions in foreign policy and not just 'FFP' as in the label. Moreover, with regards to India in particular, the postcolonial feminist approach looks critically at its existing foreign policy and allows exploration of whether there are in fact gendered colonial and racial hierarchies in current foreign policy, despite India's claims to be a postcolonial state. As a country with a patchy record on gender equality, a postcolonial feminist lens could help give perspective to its foreign policy approach and evaluate where it stands with respect to feminism. Since foreign policy is a broad field, to carry out this study, a critical cartography of Global North FFP scholarship and a feminist critical discourse analysis of India's recent

foreign policy (as expressed through its time as a member of the United Nations Security Council in 2021-22) are used.

Therefore, this thesis examines progressive representations of foreign policy in the form of two research axes. The first axis focusses on Global North countries' representations of FFPs. The second research axis understands postcolonial foreign policy as the way that India represents it in the UNSC.

Research Question and Aims

Following on from the identification of gaps in current theories and practices of progressive foreign policies, this thesis explores one central research question intended to scrutinise these progressive representations of foreign policy. This is as follows:

How do progressive representations of foreign policy do under the scrutiny of postcolonial feminism?

The primary aim of the research question is to understand the many ways that postcolonial feminism as a theoretical framework undertakes an analysis of progressive representations of foreign policy, and what that might reveal. The progressive representations focussed on are: one, the Global North states representing a feminist identity through their Feminist Foreign Policies and two, the Global South Indian state that represents its identity as postcolonial. These two progressive representations form the two research axes that the thesis will focus on.

The first research axis forms the first part of the thesis and aims to critically analyse the seemingly progressive FFPs of some Global North states through the lens of postcolonial feminism. It also scrutinises postcolonial feminist FFP scholarship to reveal the many ways that the theory could expand the scope of the FFP research.

The second research axis forms the second part of the thesis. It aims to critically examine India's current foreign policy through the lens of postcolonial feminism. Although India does not officially label its foreign policy postcolonial, this axis critically evaluates India's

identity as a postcolonial foreign policy actor. To do so, the research evaluates India's UNSC statements through the years of 2021-22 from a postcolonial feminist perspective.

Theoretical Framework

Postcolonial feminism is central to exploring the question at the heart of this thesis. As will be explained in more depth in the coming chapter, postcolonial feminism was born out of the encounter between feminism and postcolonialism. It argues that gender intersects with race and coloniality to form matrices of power, thereby leading to a hegemonic system of International Relations dominated by nation-states and postcolonial geo-politics (Chowdhry and Ling 2010). The theory therefore complicates feminist theory for not giving adequate attention to forms of coloniality; but also points out to postcolonial theory that it fails to account for gender in its analysis.

In doing so, it also argues for understanding complexities of gendered political subjectivities in different contexts, and furthering bottom-up perspectives of analysis (Parashar 2009). It challenges the presumptions of Western, European feminisms that rejected or colonised indigenous forms of feminism and goes beyond liberal understandings of increasing women's representation through numbers, to including and giving space to marginalised voices (Kinsella 2020, 147).

Of its many theoretical contributions, I decided to focus on five postulates or tenets of postcolonial feminism, that emerge from the discussion in chapter 1. These are:

1. Gender, coloniality and race structure IR and foreign policy
2. Liberal themes like representation, 'add women and stir,' a market-based economic emancipatory strategy, etc., are not the solution to gender inequality
3. Representation of the Global South woman in foreign policy tends towards the construction of narratives of victimhood and homogenisation which are reductive and deny women's agency
4. Postcolonial states project foreign policy outwards in order to drive attention away from domestic feminist failings
5. The necessity of the inclusion/advocacy of bottom-up experiences/approaches/peace strategies of postcolonial women in policymaking

These postulates will be central to the analysis of Global North FFPs and India's postcolonial FP in the chapters to come.

Methodology

For the first axis of the research that focusses on critically examining FFPs of the Global North states, I first conduct a literature review to flesh out the critical arguments in the field. I then conduct a critical cartography of current postcolonial feminist work on FFP. As a method in IR, critical cartography turns the focus of analysis to knowledge production and scholarship in the field, to unravel hierarchies created in and by scholarly work especially in the context of the hierarchies they are seeking to address in international politics. Often used loosely to describe a scoping or mapping of literature of a field, I conduct critical cartography by looking at the scholarship through the lenses of 'place,' 'border' and 'location' (Desai 2015). By using these three concepts to conduct a critical cartography of postcolonial feminist FFP scholarship, this section seeks to uncover hierarchies at play in the 'place,' 'border' and 'location' of the scholarship, thereby critically scrutinising the scholarship. The goal was to see what a postcolonial feminist analysis of progressive representations of foreign policy — as seen through FFPs and its scholarship — would reveal, and these are discussed in chapter 2.

The second research axis focuses on India's progressive representation of its foreign policy as postcolonial. However, foreign policy is a broad field, with several aspects to it. Therefore, to conduct a postcolonial feminist analysis of India's foreign policy, I had to narrow the focus to one part of India's foreign policy. I chose to focus on India's relationship with the United Nations (UN), because this has a historical tradition of reflecting India's foreign policy priorities. Within the many wings of the UN, I chose to focus on India's work within the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) when India served as an elected non-permanent member from 2021-22. This is because India's foreign policy as expressed at the UNSC would be reflective of its international positioning and foreign policy priorities, which would make it ripe for a postcolonial feminist analysis. The time period of 2021-22 would also enable linking these priorities to current developments.

India's foreign policy at the UNSC is analysed through its statements to the institution. There was a total of 440 statements that India made through the two years of its non-permanent membership. These statements formed the main discourse that my research analysed. For the methodology, I employed Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA). FCDA is a method that seeks to analyse discourses to understand how power asymmetries get discursively produced, sustained and negotiated (Lazar 2014). I conducted the FCDA method through manually scoping the 440 statements and also ran the documents through a discourse analysis software called Sketch Engine, to reveal word patterns, repetitions, and word associations. The primary findings are arrived at through the FCDA, while the Sketch Engine software corroborates those findings. The findings were then analysed through the lenses of the postcolonial feminist theoretical postulates. The goal was to see what a postcolonial feminist analysis of Indian foreign policy as expressed at the UNSC would reveal and the outcomes are discussed in chapters 5 and 6.

Thesis Structure

The thesis is organised into 6 chapters followed by a Conclusion. Chapter 1 discusses the theoretical framework of this research. The multiple ways feminism is theorised and its impact on International Relations is outlined as a precursor to introducing postcolonial feminist ideas and deriving the postulates which form the backbone of the analysis to come. From the broad scope of FIR, chapter 2 brings the focus to Feminist Foreign Policy. The chapter offers a literature review of FFP, followed by a postcolonial feminist critique of its praxis and knowledge-production. This chapter develops a novel critical cartography of current postcolonial feminist work on FFP and so enables answers to emerge to the research question. Chapter 3 discusses the methodology chosen to explore the Indian case: Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis. It explains the methodological choices made, the reasons for case selection, the approach to discourse analysis and how it was conducted, as well as offering some self-reflexive consideration of the research process as a postcolonial feminist scholar. Chapter 4 provides the background of the case study of India. I discuss how postcolonial India came to be with mainstream and feminist historical lenses, current feminist issues in the country, along with the evolution of Indian foreign policy over the years. Chapter 5 discusses the findings in relation to India's self-presentation as a postcolonial actor in the UN system. Chapter 6 explores the findings from the perspective of the five postcolonial feminist postulates. Together chapters 2, 5 and 6 answer the

research question of the thesis. I end the thesis with a Conclusion which summarises the original contributions this work makes to the debates around theories and practices of 'Progressive FP' through critical engagement with Feminist Foreign Policy and postcolonial foreign policy and discusses future research avenues.

Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework: Postcolonial Feminism

Introduction

This chapter introduces the theoretical framework adopted in this thesis — postcolonial feminist theory. I begin with discussing feminist theory, which is the foundation of this research. In rendering visible how patriarchal power structures the world, feminist theory furthers women's experiences as an analytical category (Grant 2016, 230). The chapter then focuses on feminist theory's contributions to the discipline of International Relations, leading to Feminist International Relations (FIR). FIR exposes how mainstream IR has marginalised women, while also showing the complex ways in which gender is implicated in demarcating boundaries and constructing identities through statecraft tools like foreign policy (Steans 2003, 434). To understand 'progressive FPs', it is imperative to understand foreign policy analysis as a sub-field within IR. Therefore, I briefly highlight the sub-field of Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) and what this thesis borrows from that field.

While I see the study of FFP and Indian foreign policy as an analysis of foreign policy that is contextualised in Feminist International Relations (FIR), I show that it borrows some perspectives from the field of Feminist Peace Research (FPR). When viewed from this lens, Feminist Foreign Policy can also be seen as not only interrupting mainstream ways of foreign policy and IR but is also understanding peace as an objective of foreign policy (Ansorg, Haastrup, and Wright 2021, 203). FPR not only embodies the emancipatory goal of a gender-just peace, but complicates our understanding of peace by breaking the binaries of the feminine as being seen as peaceful and the masculine as violent, in the context of war and militarisation (Björkdahl and Selimovic 2021, 42; Parashar, Féron, and Confortini 2021, 4).

In this way, I illustrate the main contributions of FIR, FPA as a sub-field within FIR and some perspectives of FPR that enrich the thesis. However, both FFP and Indian foreign policy at the UNSC as currently articulated can be critiqued from the perspective of postcolonial feminism, and it is introducing this perspective that forms the final part of this framework chapter.

1.1 Feminist Theory: The Foundation of this Research

Rooted in the analysis of power and its effects, one of the primary goals of feminism is to eliminate the global subordination of women and achieve equality and justice for them all (Kinsella 2020, 147). Thus, feminist theory investigates the lives of women and men, bearing in mind that exclusion based on sexual difference is arbitrary (Disch and Hawkesworth 2016, 2). By doing so, it highlights the limitations of popular assumptions about sex, race, sexuality and gender, and puts forward its understanding of how complex hierarchies of difference are socially produced (*ibid.*). There are several concepts that are central to feminist theory, like sex, gender, intersectionality, patriarchy, and female lived experience, to name a few. Some of these are discussed here.

Feminist scholars distinguish between sex (biological characteristics: primarily genital and reproductive) and gender (the social codes that express femininity and masculinity) (Kirby 2020, 273). The idea of having primary biological difference, is riddled with sexist assumptions and has thus been challenged and transformed by new forms of categorisation (*ibid.*). Although, writes Kirby, sex is in some sense an element of who we are, gender is what establishes the collective parameters of our identity (Kirby 2020, 273). Gender, termed the “social institutionalisation of sexual difference” (Okin 1998), is understood by analysing how masculinity and femininity are constructed in relation to men and women and how gender norms combine with other structures of power, and get institutionalised (Kirby 2020, 273). Gender does not act in isolation and crosscuts with other forms of oppression in complex ways, which leads to an *intersectionality*¹ of combined harms (Crenshaw 2013). ‘Intersectionality’ is an analytical framework that highlights how systems of power interact, leading to particular forms of subjugation and subordination. It finds its roots in black feminist thinking which furthers the idea that patriarchy works with racism to uniquely disadvantage some groups of women over others (Cooper 2016, 386, 387).

In this way, feminist theory understands how these differences interact, with the goal of exposing how patriarchy structures the world, and how understanding women’s experiences can challenge patriarchy. In some of its earliest feminist theorising, patriarchy

¹ Italicised for emphasis

was conceptualised as “an invisible, but all-pervasive politically and socially constructed system of male and masculinist domination” (Grant 2016, 229). This idea of patriarchy posits a ritualised reproduction of all things male, both at the level of structure and in daily life (*ibid.*, 230). In response, second-wave feminism (discussed below) foregrounded its own categories of analysis of patriarchy, the primary one of which was women’s own experiences. Feminist activists not only recognised the importance of the experience of living as a subject under patriarchy, but also of women’s “self-conscious reflection” about that experience (Grant 2016, 230). This consciousness-raising about patriarchal power, coupled with the emerging choice of women’s experiences as an analytical category contributed hugely to feminist theory.

Thus, feminist theorists foreground women’s experiences as analytical categories to reclaim knowledge. According to feminist scholar Ackerly (2000, 27), most feminists have been quite concerned with regards to the “disjunction between political theory and women’s lives,” and thus encourage using women’s lived experiences to inform feminist theory (see for example Moser 1989; Narayan 2013). The concept of “experience” found its origins in the second-wave Anglo-American feminist traditions (feminist waves are discussed below), where ideas of using the “female experience” as grounding for new feminist theories and basis for feminist theoretical knowledge claims came to be used in analyses of patriarchy (Grant 2016, 227). However, it should also be noted that the idea of using “experience” as an epistemological foundation of feminist analysis has always been problematised, in the earlier Anglo-American and French Western traditions and the more recent postcolonial feminist traditions (to which I will revert later in this chapter) for homogenising all female experience into one. For instance, Nancy Hartsock, posed the question as to whether there is one “feminine or female” way of exercising power (Hartsock 1983, 2). Therefore, one of the major challenges faced by feminist theory was how to conceptualise the multiplicity of female experiences. One of the ways to deal with this challenge involves the acknowledgement of difference, even within feminist thinking. For instance, writing from the position of women-of-colour feminism, Patricia Hill Collins said that she was developing a black women’s and not a black woman’s standpoint (*ibid.*, 233). Nevertheless, a primary contribution of the usage of lived experience as a category of feminist analysis is that it points to the reality of a currently dominant male point of view.

Therefore, over the years, the development of feminist theory led to more nuanced notions of patriarchy, and to the idea of there being not one feminist theory, but rather, many kinds of feminisms (Grant 2016, 231; Baylis, Smith, and Owens 2020, 12). To understand this growth of feminist theory and its pluralisation over time, this next section discusses the broad historical evolution of feminism, which is often categorised into ‘waves.’

The first-wave feminism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries rallied against the subordination of women’s identity to men’s (Ehlers 2016, 347, 348). The goal for feminist activists was to gain suffrage, or the right to vote for women, which also linked to the demand of basic equal rights for women (Leavy and Harris 2019, 21). The philosophy was primarily liberal, because it sought political equality with men, and was guided by the claim that individuals are rational and governed by free will and this rationality is universal and even transcends gender (Ehlers 2016, 349). At the same time, their rationality for equality was rooted in understandings of women as being naturally more nurturing and kinder because they were mothers and would thus make better leaders and politicians than men (Bystrom 2018, 159).

Feminist work from the 1960s to the 1980s is known as second-wave feminism: it revolved around two central questions, whether identity (femininity) is a fixed characteristic of women, or whether it was culturally and socially formed (Ehlers 2016, 349). Drawing from the liberal philosophies of first wave feminism, second wave feminism too focussed on achieving formal equality between men and women, defined in terms of their participation in the public arena, economy and politics (*ibid.*). They reasoned that this, along with the refusal of the disempowering roles of wife and mother, would enable women’s social status to be equal to men’s (*ibid.*). Second wave feminists also politicised the body and the idea of health (Grigg & Kirkland 2016, 332). Politicising health involved dismantling the notion that women’s bodies were inferior to men’s, and to direct curiosity about women’s health on its own terms, rather than a deviation from the standard men’s health (*ibid.*). Sexuality thus came to the forefront of second wave feminist concerns, with terms like ‘reproductive rights’ being coined in the 1970s (Heberle 2016, 599; Browner 2016, 806). Two Western conceptual frameworks inspired the demand for reproductive rights: one, the liberal paradigm that focussed on bodily integrity and reproductive autonomy, and two, the socialist paradigm that draws on ‘socially determined needs,’ implying that since women were affected by pregnancy, they must have the final say in reproductive matters (*ibid.*).

Third-wave feminism from the 1990s onwards criticised the sex binaries and foregrounded the study of sexualities (Vigoya 2016, 860, 861). Though it has its roots in second-wave feminism's consciousness-raising, the third wave shifted toward women of colour and race-informed feminist inequalities (Leavy and Harris 2019, 25). Its origins are identified in the critiques of white women's feminism, as seen through black theorist bell hooks' work (hooks 2014; Gamble 2004, 44). hooks challenges white bourgeois women's unthinking assumption of an oppressed subject, arguing instead that women should not be treated as a homogenous group, since the experience of black working-class women are insurmountably different as compared to their white counterparts (hooks 2014; Gamble 2004, 44; Munro 2013). The third wave thus accepts contradiction and pluralism as a given. Theoretically driven by the renowned scholar Judith Butler, third-wave feminism sought to transform heteronormative practices through trans activism and queer critique (Butler 2006; Gamble 2004, 43). By applying poststructural theory² to address issues of gender and social difference, the third wave understood agency as resistance and, from Butler's analysis, analysed gender norms as fragile despite them being socially pervasive (McNay 2016, 44). This is because of their ceaseless reiteration through cultural behaviours, which evidences that heterosexuality is not inevitable, and thus has to be laboriously elicited (*ibid.*, 44).

Termed an emergent and dynamic wave, fourth-wave feminism was first discussed after the 9/11 attacks of 2001 by Kaplan (2003), who said that the fourth-wave projects must be able to articulate extremism experienced by women brought on by imperialism in the form of global capitalism (Parry, Johnson, and Wagler 2018, 5). Fourth-wave feminism cuts across racial, ethnic and national divides, blurs the lines between waves and uses technology to rapidly globalise local women's agendas, especially focussing on sexual harassment and violence against women (*ibid.*). Some scholars however have challenged the existence of a fourth wave of feminism based on the reasoning that the internet is not enough to delineate a new era (Munro 2013, 23). In contrast, others like (Baumgardner 2011, 250) respond saying, "I believe that the fourth wave exists because it says that it exists." However, despite the controversy concerning the delineation of the fourth wave,

² Poststructuralism is a critical theory that in the context of IR investigates how current constructions of world politics reinforce exclusions, marginalisations and legitimise particular policies (Hansen 2020).

contemporary feminism is still animated by several key issues such as the exclusionary nature of mainstream feminism (Munro 2013).

Therefore, in a nutshell, feminist theory exposes how patriarchy permeates the world, thereby leading to gendered structures creating a host of exclusions and dominations. Feminism argues that difference based on biological sex is arbitrary, and gender is a mode of socialisation. Thus, it seeks to foreground women's experiences as both an analytical category, and as way to claim agency in male-dominated spheres. The traditional classification of feminism into waves shows how feminist theory is tied to activism. What began as a fight for political equality, moved into other realms like reproductive rights, intersectionality, pluralism and now technology's critique. Although there is an agreement among feminists that oppression of women is a matter of international concern and feminism is working towards overcoming exclusions, the existence of different waves indicates divergences within feminism(s). Even the customary division of the history of feminism into 'waves' is often criticised for being conventionally organised around American and European events and personalities, which goes to show the dominance of the West in both the theoretical and practical aspects of feminism (Kinsella 2020, 150 and Kurian 2004, 54). In this thesis, I will be using feminist theory's contributions as a foundation, while also forwarding the critique of mainstream feminist theory as furthered by postcolonial feminism (discussed at the close of this chapter).

Feminist research, as evidenced in its evolution, has also been intrigued by the paradoxes and dichotomies that the state gives rise to for instance, the public-private dichotomy (Kantola 2016, 77). Many feminist scholars therefore focus their work on understanding the power relations behind the constructions of the state, and how states rely on, reproduce and are constitutive of the gender order (*ibid.*). Through their critiques of the gendered nature of various forms of governance, feminist scholars have documented the complex effects of governmentality and governance on women's lives and livelihoods and on gender power dynamics in the contemporary world (Shin 2016, 310). For the purposes of this research, I will be seeking to apply feminist theory to understanding the state's power structures, particularly foreign policy. Thus, I will be drawing on a field that feminism enriches, International Relations. I will also highlight some perspectives from Feminist Peace Research (FPR) that are relevant for this work.

1.1.1 Feminist International Relations [FIR]: Situating this thesis

This section discusses Feminist International Relations as the field in which this thesis is situated. To do that, I first highlight the mainstream approaches of International Relations, such as realism and liberalism, with which feminist IR scholars critically engage.

Emerging in the aftermath of World War I (1914-18), the academic discipline of International Relations focussed on the study of the relations of states, traditionally by understanding the state in diplomatic, military and strategic terms (Heywood 2011, 4). This state-centric approach of IR led to the development of what are called the mainstream approaches of IR — Realism and Liberalism, which dominated the field from the 1930s till the 1970s, after which newer versions of these traditions appeared (*ibid.*, 5, 54). In both the mainstream approaches, statehood formed the solid core of IR (Ankersen 2021, 51). Through taking the state as the central and key actor both domestically and on the stage of world politics, the discipline of IR intended to find ways of establishing enduring peace (*ibid.*).

Realism offers an account of the world based on two core assumptions: that people are essentially selfish and that there is no authority higher than the sovereign state (Donnelly 2019). Scholars from Realist traditions, like Kenneth Waltz, EH Carr and Hans J. Morgenthau, postulate that international politics is driven by the states' national interest, which can be defined in terms of 'power' (Heywood 2011, 57). This 'power' in Realism, is defined narrowly in terms of military strategy and material capabilities (Dunne and Schmidt 2020, 135; Hansen 2020, 182).

The second dominant mainstream approach that developed was Liberalism. With theorists like Immanuel Kant, JS Mill and Jeremy Bentham, Liberalism draws on the belief in the possibility of universal and perpetual peace (Dunne 2020, 104; Heywood 2011, 61). As a political theory paradigm, liberalism is based in individualism, with the idea that individuals are motivated by self-interest, and that the government is constituted to protect the rights of people: these rights are best realised in a market economy, with the presence of constitutional rights and obligations, and a government established to protect those rights (Dryzek, Honig and Phillips 2006, 14, 15). Liberalism focuses on concepts like freedom and liberty, equality, cooperation, human rights and cosmopolitanism (S. Smith, Booth,

and Zalewski 1996). In the context of IR, liberalism is seen through ‘liberal internationalism,’ or the idea that there can be a natural harmony of interests in the international order, with a focus on concepts like democracy, self-determination and collective security, which became universal moral principles of the world order today (Dunne 2020, 104). Unlike realists, liberals believe that conflict is never irreconcilable: states may pursue self-interest, but a notion of balance and harmony will tend to assert itself (*ibid.*, 62). Particularly through trade and international organisations, peaceable relations in the international system are possible.

While liberalism contrasts with realism in terms of its ideas of reconciliation, it still views states as essentially self-seeking actors and still understands power in terms of sovereign states that safeguard citizens (Dunne 2020, 64, 65). And so, while it decoupled power from overt conflict as highlighted by the realists, it linked power to actors exploiting their institutional positions to silence dissent (Mattern 2008, 693). And thus, both the mainstream approaches to IR reflect the discipline’s preoccupation with tangible measures of power and understanding power as a sphere of influence (*ibid.*, 692).

Realism and liberalism are ‘positivist’ theories (Kinsella 2020, 150). Positivism is grounded in the assumption that the use of the unbiased scientific method can lead to a clear explanation of the world (Heywood 2011, 75). Positivists believe that the world has a concrete character, and that the scientific method has an objective character. Positivism postulates that knowledge is neutral, unbiased, objective, and separate from theory, with the latter’s purpose being only explanatory.

Mainstream IR has faced several challenges over the decades over its many postulates, the most formidable challenge being from critical perspectives. Critical theories are emancipatory theories that attempt to expose the inequalities and asymmetries that the mainstream theories ignore (*ibid.*, 67). Critical theories offer critiques on mainstream traditional theories like realism and liberalism for concealing and even legitimising power imbalances of the global system, and for being dominated by positivist assumptions (Smith, Booth, and Zalewski 1996, 12; Heywood 2011, 67). Some critical theories are also termed ‘post-positivist’ approaches, for their critique of positivist beliefs that there exists an objective reality that is separate from the assumptions of the observer: they question the idea of neutral, objective knowledge and believe that while observers attempt to explain

the world, they also impose meaning upon it, because “we only ever see the world as we think it exists” (*ibid.*). Thus, post-positivists critique realists and liberals by highlighting how hidden biases are embodied in theory, and how dispassionate scholarship is an unachievable ideal. Feminist theory is one such post-positivist critical theory that seeks to challenge mainstream IR, leading to the growth of the Feminist International Relations (FIR).

FIR theory found its beginnings in the late 1980s, after the Cold War, when IR was opening up to new methodological perspectives and issues (Kinsella 2020, 150; Tickner 2016, 5). Feminist theory challenged mainstream IR on the premise that women and women’s issues are excluded from conventional analysis (Heywood 2011, 74). FIR points out that the assumptions, models, boundaries, and even practitioners of IR not only reflect a bias to (certain) men’s experiences, but also reinforce each other to marginalise and invisibilise women’s roles and concerns in the international arena (Hooper 2001).

The goal of FIR theories initially was to draw from various feminisms to critique the exclusion of women, gender, and the erasure of female scholars the discipline of IR (Owens 2018). The methodology used by FIR theorists was, according to Peterson (1992), deconstructive in their critique of the state of the field and reconstructive in introducing new methods and theories for understanding international politics. Being advanced by scholars like Marysia Zalewski, Ann Tickner, Jan Jindy Pettman and V Spike Peterson to name a few, feminist scholars wanted to expand the scope of the field and radically alter its predicates (Owens 2018). However, over time, what initially began with the focus on increasing representation of women and feminist issues in IR grew to a nuanced analysis of the gendered nature of structures and institutions.

For instance, IR’s excessive focus on states did not go unchallenged. Questions about state sovereignty, and state boundaries between the national and the international, are at the centre of feminist critiques of mainstream theorising (Kantola 2016, 77). Feminist writers question the traditional emphasis on the central role of the state in international security studies (Baylis 2020, 247). Different feminist theoretical traditions view the state “less optimistically,” with the state being critiqued and theorised as patriarchal, abusive or capitalist (Kantola 2016, 78). Liberal feminists understand the state in terms of its political institutions, radical feminists connect the formal and informal practices of politics to their

inherent patriarchal nature, Marxist feminists analyse the state as a capitalist form of social relations, while socialist feminists combine the dual system of oppressions of patriarchy and capitalism (*ibid.*, 79).

In this way, FIR posits that an analysis of foreign policy which does not account for gender is deeply flawed for two reasons: first, because such an analysis fails to reflect on the relationship between patriarchy and the war system (Reardon and Snauwaert 2015). Secondly, mainstream approaches that claim to be gender neutral are in truth, deeply gendered (see Ackerly, Stern, and True 2006; Enloe 2014; Runyan and Peterson 2014; Tickner 1992). FIR scholars analyse gender not as a variable, but rather an analytical category of a social construct (Kantola 2016, 79). They have built upon studies of women's exclusion from state institutions, analysing the gendered structures of these very institutions, and attempting to transform them. This implies that the state is a process, and the complex relations between gender and the state continue to subtly reproduce hierarchies in the state (*ibid.*). For instance, Enloe shows how the gendered nature of the state reflects in the way power is dispersed within the state and is visible in the states' security apparatus (Enloe 2014). Thus, gender is shown by feminist IR scholars, to be fundamental to the construction of the state (Kantola 2016, 80).

While scholars were advancing the discipline of feminist IR, feminist movements across the globe also began to engage with international bodies like the United Nations (UN) to bring forward feminist issues. For instance, a big step forward for the international feminist movement was the foundation of one of the world's oldest women's organisations, WILPF (Women's International League for Peace and Freedom), that campaigned against the World Wars and militarism (Meyer and Prügl 1999, 117).

These transnational movements also significantly impacted the visibility of women in international politics, especially seen through the adoption of the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, which forms one of the key moments of feminist interventions seen in international policymaking (True 2003, 377). The UNSCR 1325 was a Resolution that was unanimously passed in the Security Council and called for women's increased participation in the prevention of conflict, and their protection in war (Pratt and Richter-Devroe 2011, 489). This resolution formalised the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda: an "expansive and ambitious" agenda that commits to sustainable peace

and seeks the radical reconfiguration of the gendered power dynamics that characterise the world (Thomson 2019, 599; Kirby and Shepherd 2016, 373). The agenda, among other provisions, encouraged UN member-states to develop National Action Plans (NAPs) domestically to further their commitments to ‘gender mainstreaming.’ In this way, work in the international policy sphere began focussing largely on gender mainstreaming, which is defined as a strategy of making the concerns and experiences of women an integral part of policy drafting, evaluation and implementation (Cohn 2008, 2). The concept grew out of global women activists’ work to ensure the inclusion of women in international development agencies and sought gender equality as the ultimate goal (*ibid.*).

Therefore, the scholarly critique of IR, transnational feminist movements and feminist policymaking interventions in the global arena together combined to further FIR as a field of research and practice. In this way the scholarship and women’s growing visibility as actors in the international sphere have emerged together and informed one another. While this increased the visibility of women and their issues, gaps remain in the field. For instance, FIR’s focus on a global homogenous sisterhood, that builds feminist solidarity through internationalising feminist networks is problematised by postcolonial feminists for relying on colonial dependencies, maintaining global hierarchies and ignoring the realities of heterogeneity and difference amongst feminist movements (Agathangelou and Turcotte 2016, 43; A. Basu 2000).

The thesis is situated in FIR, since the research understands the analysis of progressive FPs as a study within FIR. Within FIR however, the study of FP is understood as part of the sub-field of Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA). Thus, I understand FFP’s growth as one dimension of feminist interventions in IR *via* foreign policy specifically. For this purpose, I discuss briefly what FPA studies, and which part of FPA this thesis borrows from.

(i) FPA’s Conceptual Tools

This thesis borrows some tools from the sub-field of Foreign Policy Analysis. These are: analysing state-centric articulations of foreign policy, challenging the lack of incorporation of gender in foreign policy, and examining ‘foreign policy contexts.’

The study of interstate relations is as old as the existence of nation-states themselves. However, as a distinct and consciously theoretical enterprise, FPA did not exist before World War II (Hudson and Vore 1995, 212). The study of foreign policy is an “ever-changing story of how states, institutions and peoples engage with one another within a dynamic international system” (Alden and Aran 2017, 1). This thesis narrows its focus to the study of state behaviour and positioning in the international system as a reflection of foreign policy, as opposed to people-engagement. Therefore, by researching FFP approaches in the Global North and India’s UNSC statements, this research too has an institutional focus and therefore borrows the conceptual tool from FPA of studying foreign policy through institutional expressions.

Foreign Policy is shaped by several markers, like historical and institutional practices, and the blurred lines between domestic policies and external environments, along with the roles played by several state and non-state agencies (*ibid.*). Thus, FPA is a vibrant subject and growing subject area in today’s world. Yet, as Stienstra (2019, 59) shows, it is still resistant to the incorporation of gender. She asks, “What would it take to incorporate gender in the analysis of foreign policy? To what extent can or should gender analysis attempt to be policy relevant?” In my research for this thesis, I found that in several scholarly works on FPA, there is no mention of feminist theories, neither as standalone theories, nor as gender analysis (for example, see: Hudson and Vore 1995; Alden and Aran 2017). In Alden and Aran’s conclusion chapter on new directions in FPA, they remark that IR scholars have failed to adequately engage with critical intellectual developments in IR over the last two decades like constructivism and historical sociology (Alden and Aran 2017, 149), but a mention of gender analysis and how it challenges FPA is still missing. This is a guiding principle for my methodology, since I will be looking for nuanced mentions of gender as structuring foreign policy through India’s statements (or challenging the lack thereof). In a similar way, a nuanced understanding and incorporation of postcolonialism in foreign policy is missing from the Eurocentric moorings of foreign policy, as highlighted by Chakraborty (2017).

In my methodology, I borrow traditional FPA’s conceptual tools by undertaking ‘foreign policy context analysis,’ with a focus on multilateral institutions (in this case, India’s statements at the UNSC) and foreign policy decision-making and relevance (in this case, how India’s foreign policy decision-making reflects its foreign policy positioning,

continuity and priorities; and how that is relevant to postcolonial feminism) (Hudson and Vore 1995). However, I do not aim to use these conceptual tools without problematising them from the lens of postcolonial feminism. I take inspiration from Achilleos-Sarll (2018, 45), who studied country-specific examinations of gender and foreign policy, and showed how prioritising gender as a relation of power can work to obscure structural inequalities and intersectional oppressions. Therefore, despite using state-centric research that borrows from conventional FPA, I aim to be sensitive to the gendered, sexualised, racialised problematics of these conceptual tools and work towards unconventional approaches to FPA in my research.

The previous two sections discussed FIR and FPA and being the fields in which this thesis situates its research question. The next section discusses some perspectives that are borrowed from Feminist Peace Research.

1.1.2 Feminist Peace Research [FPR]: Perspectives borrowed

Although foreign policy per se has not been the focus of FPR, both FIR and FPR share theoretical patterns (Ansorg, Haastrup, and Wright 2021, 204). These are: the supposed irrelevance of women in international security politics, the structured nature of gender in decision-making, whether states can ensure women's protection in war and peace, essentialist notions of gender, and the role of hegemonic masculinity in explaining war.

Thus, although this research draws from FIR, ideas from FPR have been instrumental in adding to the intellectual basis of Feminist Foreign Policy, and foreign policy more broadly. As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, FFPs have been explicitly implemented by a number of states (Spain, etc.) while some others have broadly integrated feminist commitments and gender concerns into their foreign policies (Norway, etc.). Although the nature and extent of FFP will be explored in the next chapter, it's important to signpost here how FFP draws from FPR.

Feminist Foreign Policy operates within the institutional structures of IR and foreign policy. Simultaneously, scholars understand the policy as having the goal of a gender-just peace (Ansorg, Haastrup, and Wright 2021, 203). Looking at FFP in this way furthers the argument that peace is an objective of foreign policy, and that if gender hierarchies persist

in the study and practice of foreign policy, we are unlikely to achieve a gender-just peaceful world (*ibid.*, 204). Thus, borrowing critical perspectives from FPR would lend to this research the tools for engaging with Feminist Foreign Policy. In this way I hope to emulate the feminist tradition of looking beyond the constructs of disciplinary boundaries (Ansorg, Haastrup, and Wright 2021, 203).

Peace research shows how institutions (even those designed for peace) often enact violence that spreads at a societal level. Feminist peace researchers, however, look at how these violent patterns are gendered, and how to develop feminist imaginings of peace (Parashar, Féron, and Confortini 2021, 187). The field found its beginning in the work of feminist scholars like Enloe (2014) who showed how the state has mobilised patriarchal practices, Elshtain (1995) who highlighted the dichotomy in the images of peaceful women and violent men, Ruddick (1995) whose work focussed on a feminist peace politics built through maternal thinking, and Cohn (2013) who foregrounded the sexualised nature of war. FPR scholars critique mainstream peace studies for sidelining the roles of masculinities and femininities in peace and war; the political economy of gender and militarism; intersectionality as a methodology to understand peace and violence; postcolonial and decolonial feminist perspectives; and the queering of peace and violence (Parashar, Féron, and Confortini 2021, 1). They also critique *critical* peace research³ for ghettoising gendered perspectives (McLeod and O'Reilly 2019, 127).

Feminist peace research and feminist work on militarisation and war, have been in recent times stimulated by the expanding engagements of feminist theories, the growth in the interdisciplinarity of feminist scholarship, and the devastating impact of armed conflict, along with the mixed opportunities available to women in military institutions (Ferguson and Naylor 2016, 509). The scholarship asks questions like: Where are the women? How are wars and militarizing practices gendered? What is the relation of gender and sexuality to the making of war and peace? (*ibid.*)

³ Critical Peace Research is critical of dominant ideologies of mainstream peace research. It aims to achieve positive social change by critiquing inequalities perpetuated by mainstream peace research, prioritizing bottom-up approaches and placing lived experience at the centre of the analysis (McLeod and O'Reilly 2019, 128). In this, it is similar to feminist peace research, except for FPR having an explicit feminist commitment to expose the patriarchal nature of inequalities in peace and conflict work.

In conventional research, it is assumed that men inherently have the violent capacities required to protect the state, while the vulnerable population is discussed in undifferentiated terms as “womenandchildren” (Enloe 2014, 1). Such an assumption is not only gendered, but also essentialist — it believes that there are certain unchangeable characteristics associated with biological sex, for instance that men are naturally aggressive and women are naturally caring (Kirby 2020, 281), or that men are associated with the public sphere and women with the private sphere (Cassidy and Althari 2017). This ideal version of masculinity is celebrated in any gender regime and is studied under a framework developed by Connell (1987) called “hegemonic masculinity.” A stereotypic version of hegemonic masculinity would include traits like heterosexuality, whiteness, military service, and rationality, among others (*ibid.*).

Feminists critique mainstream IR for giving extensive attention to hegemonic masculinity. This is visible in the usage of certain terms in the mainstream discourse, by focusing on a perceived notion of how the ideal male must express himself through practices like war or violence. For instance, terms like ‘national security,’ are designed to preserve the prevailing male-dominated order and not protect the state from external attack (Enloe 2014). In its explicit focus on hegemonic masculinity, the field silences, disregards, and even bereaves women of their agency (Cassidy and Althari 2017).

Feminist peace scholars even highlight mainstream security literature’s legitimising of violence and silencing of women’s experiences of violence. Women are seldom recognised by international security literature, despite the fact that conflicts affect women as much as, if not more, than men, argues feminist scholar Tickner (1992). Not only are the majority of casualties and refugees in war women and children; rape of women is also used as a tool of war (*ibid.*). Feminists argue that the traditional Western academic disciplines privilege issues that grow out of men’s experiences and ignore women’s experiences in the field, which contributes to their exclusion. In her study on security, Enloe (2014) writes that the patriarchal structure of privilege and control at all levels effectively even legitimises all forms of violence.

Thus, Feminist Peace Research is a transdisciplinary, transnational field of research, and confronts conventional parameters of current debates, decentres dominant boundary-making and allows for “conceptual and methodological cross-pollination to occur”

(Wibben et al. 2019, 86). For the purposes of my research, I will be borrowing these intersecting perspectives from the field to analyse Feminist Foreign Policy and foreign policy in the context of India. In doing so, FPR's analysis of the gendered dimensions of war, violence, and security, will inform my analysis.

To complete the theoretical framing of the thesis, the last section of this chapter turns to a fundamental critique that has been levelled at mainstream theories but also feminist ones — postcolonialism, followed by the main theoretical lens of this work, postcolonial feminism.

1.2 Postcolonial Feminism: The Theoretical Lens of this Thesis

Postcolonial theories converge on several key points: the need to revisit, remember, and interrogate the colonial past and its aftermath in today's context; the need to critically analyse the experiences of colonialism and their current manifestations; the need to deliberately decentre dominant culture, so that the perspectives of those who have been marginalised become starting points for knowledge construction; and the need to expand our understanding of how conceptualisations of race, racialisation, and culture are constructed within particular historical and current neocolonial contexts (Browne, Smye, and Varcoe 2005).

Postcolonialism is not just used simply as 'after colonialism,' as Nivedita Menon (2004, 1815; 2005, 207), a renowned feminist scholar demonstrates in her work. She uses postcolonialism in another sense: as the "discourse of oppositionality" that the encounter with colonialism brings into being, implying that postcolonialism begins from the very first moment of colonial contact. Thus, postcolonialism is not only a point in time where the effects of colonial encounters are observed, but a discourse of resistance that develops from opposition to colonial rule. Resistance to colonial rule can take several forms. Research has classified postcolonial resistance into the "resistance as opposition" model and the "resistance as transformation" model, among others. The former argues that the liberation lies in the collective opposition to and dismantling of the material structures of colonial authority, while the latter reads resistance as that which seeks to transform the condition of the colonised through, for instance, transformation of the discourse which involves acknowledging the past and fostering a new discourse (Jefferess 2008; Bhandari 2022, 5,

6). Thus resistance constitutes an expression of alternatives and the means of affecting a revolution (Jefferess 2008, 9).

Postcolonial theory grew profoundly in the 1990s, from the scholarship of the South Asian Subaltern Studies Group, which included prominent scholars like Ranajit Guha, Homi Bhabha, Partha Chatterjee, Dipesh Chakravorty and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Mendoza 2016, 101). In the context of IR, the growth of postcolonial theory began with inspiration from anticolonial struggles, which sought independence and freedom, to become a more nuanced critique of colonialism's impact on not just the global system, but on IR scholarship as well.

In arguing for the need for postcolonialism, Chakraborty (2019, 74) reiterates the importance of its theoretical rubric when discussing the politics of resistance of the Global South. Postcolonial theory serves two functions, as a form of resistance against dominant discourses and as a theory that gives invaluable insights into the politics of previously colonised societies. These approaches critique a universalist one-size-fits all approach and turn the focus to understanding multiple and distinct forms of crosscutting oppressions, that require an intersectional understanding (Parashar 2016, 371; Khan et al. 2007, 231). In doing so, it furthers bottom-up thinking that understands history and society from the most disadvantaged position (Mendoza 2016, 107). Thus, postcolonialism seeks to stress the importance of specificity, situatedness and the colonial relationship that impacts identity, culture, race and gender, and stands as a contrast to mainstream IR's universalist, statist and often elitist character (Abrahamsen 2007, 112).

Postcolonial countries are sometimes called unanimously the 'Global South' or the 'Third World.' The concept of the Third World grew out of the rhetoric of the Cold War in the late 1940s and 1950s, as a 'third force' in world affairs distinct from American capitalism or Soviet socialism (Tomlinson 2003, 309). Coined in 1952, it stressed the disempowerment of the newly independent countries of Asia and Africa, concluding that "the Third World has, like the Third Estate, been ignored and despised and it too wants to be something" (*ibid.*). The Third World's academic usage has declined strikingly in recent years replaced by the term 'Global South,' which remains associated with the postcolonial world, which are the large fast-developing states characterised by poverty, weakness and political marginalisation (Tomlinson 2003, 308; Hurrell 2020, 85, 97, 90).

Having discussed postcolonial theory and its contributions, I will now discuss the main theory informing my research, postcolonial feminist theory.

Postcolonial feminism was born from the encounter between feminism and postcolonialism. The theory is critical of both feminist theory for its universalising and Eurocentric notions of gender equality in which women from the Global South do not feel represented; and postcolonial theory for failing to include gender in its analysis and focussing on what it deems more significant issues like empire-building, decolonisation or liberation struggles ((Kinsella 2020, 153, 154; Bahri 2004, 201). In this section I discuss postcolonial feminism's primary contributions. I also survey what the theory has to say about IR and classify some of these major arguments into what I term 'postulates.' These postulates serve two functions: one of succinctly summarising what postcolonial feminism's main theoretical arguments are; and two, of serving as guiding lights of this research, providing the lenses through which I will conduct my analysis later in the thesis.

Finding some of its intellectual roots in Third Wave Feminism of the late 1970s and early 1980s, women of colour, in both the Global North and South, challenged white women to confront their racism (Kinsella 2020, 147). This intellectual movement argued that women from the Global North benefited from imperialism as the 'inferior sex within the "superior race,"' and also that feminist perspectives were blind to colonialism (Pettman 2005; Bahri 2004, 201). For the past few decades, this academic and intellectual movement building on the epistemologies of the Global South highlights the invisibility, silences and subalternity produced through the interactions between patriarchy and colonialism (Ballestrin 2022, 108, 110). Therefore, it seeks to highlight the centrality of conceptions of gender to colonial regimes and their continuing effects (Kinsella 2020, 153, 154). Thus, postcolonial feminism argues that world politics and IR are not only sites of colonisation, but also where race, gender, sex and class interact to form matrices of power, thereby leading to a hegemonic IR (Chowdhry and Ling 2010). Based on these arguments, I summarise the first postulate of postcolonial feminism: 'Gender, Coloniality and Race structure IR and Foreign Policy.'

Another argument postcolonial feminism makes in the context of IR, is that accounts of a progressive journey to a liberal modernity is becoming less and less relevant for

contemporary world problems (Tickner 2011, 6). This is because liberal modernity is rooted in the European historical experience and their knowledge traditions, which is not accommodative of the rest of the world (*ibid.*). Postcolonial feminism recognises that the feminism of the Global North is rooted in and dependent on discourses of rights and equality, primarily liberal discourses, that are of concern to Western Europe. This is described by Rey Chow (2006, 80) as the Eurocentric “hierarchizing frame of comparison,” a frame of reference through which the Global South is viewed. The postcolonial feminist critique of IR therefore challenges the presumptions of Western, European feminisms that rejected or colonized indigenous forms of feminism and ignored the legacies of imperialism and exploitation (Kinsella 2020, 147).

In doing so, it is against the ‘add women and stir’ approach, which is taking elite women as a subject in foreign policy and stirring (Achilleos-Sarll 2018). This approach leads to a tokenistic representation of women in a structure that is inherently masculinist (Aggestam and True 2020, 147). Based on this, postcolonial feminism brings forward a critique against the concept of representation of women in foreign policy structures, that is based on liberal Western notions: this is discussed in the next chapter in detail.

In terms of a critique of liberal approaches, postcolonial feminism is also wary of neo-liberal economic empowerment. It must be noted that postcolonial feminism is not against economic empowerment *per se*. It just advocates for a more nuanced understanding of economic empowerment that sees women as agents and not mere recipients of economic benefits. It also focusses on collective organising and community-based empowerment. For instance, Mohanty (2016) gives an example of this perspective of empowerment through women living in free trade zones in postcolonial countries, who work together and help each other achieve production targets. Sometimes, they even lower the production targets to help the women who cannot meet them. In this way, postcolonial feminism focusses more on the social and cultural aspects of economic empowerment, as opposed to a market-based empowerment.

The above arguments together lead to the second postulate, which can be summarised as: ‘Liberal themes like representation, ‘add women and stir,’ a market-based economic emancipatory strategy, etc., are not the solution to gender inequality.’

Another key idea of postcolonial feminism is that not all women are colonized equally. As the feminist scholar Madhu Kishwar writes, “the definitions, the terminology, the assumptions ... even the issues are exported west to east ... and we are expected to be the echo of what are assumed to be the more advanced movements of the west” (Kishwar 1990, 3). Thus, they argue that feminism as appropriated and defined by the West has too often become a tool of cultural imperialism (Kinsella 2020, 147).

One of the founding texts of this theory is Gayatri C. Spivak’s (1988) seminal essay, ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’ The essay confronted Western academia and modes of thinking, while making the argument that colonial discourse prevents the subaltern, or the most marginalised, from having an authentic voice (Neilson 2021, 760). Spivak demonstrates that Western scholarship reproduces the logic of colonialism, since generating knowledge about the oppressed is to hold a kind of power over them (Riach 2017, 32, 33). She argues that the subaltern, who she views as the most marginalised downtrodden women, cannot speak, and cannot be heard because of continuing oppressive systems that not only represent them wrongly as homogenous (when they are in fact heterogenous), but also thus deny their agency (Spivak 1988). She coins the term ‘strategic essentialism,’ as a way for the marginalised to accept their essentialist identities in order to use them as a strategy for collective representation for pursuing chosen political ends (Spivak 1988, Pande 2017). Essentialism assumes a certain identity of a group, in that they have defining features that are exclusive to everyone in that group (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 2003). Strategic essentialism as a political strategy therefore temporarily downplays differences to show unity required for achieving political goals (Eide 2016). Much of postcolonial feminist work focusses on the identities of the subaltern, their agency and their portrayal in essentialist ways.

Another useful concept for this thesis is Spivak’s conception of epistemic violence, that structures these oppressions. Systems of knowledge, particularly Western scholarly work, lead to what she terms “epistemic violence,” or violence through discourse (Riach 2017, 27). In her postcolonial feminist description of what epistemic violence is, she writes, it is “the remotely orchestrated, far-flung, and heterogenous project to constitute the colonial subject as ‘Other’” (Spivak 1988, 280).

Over the decades, several scholars ranging from disciplines across the social sciences have engaged with the concept of epistemic violence — what it could mean and how we can undo it. Situated within the post- and de-colonial frameworks of epistemologies, ‘epistemic violence’ contends with issues of colonial power in knowledge production. Scholar Castro-Gómez (2019, 207) writes, “the colonial imaginary permeated the entire conceptual system of the social sciences from their inception.” Post- and de-colonial scholars often critique social scientists for practicing what they term “epistemicide,” which is when the latter put the Eurocentric paradigm into practice within the social sciences, instead of developing an epistemological framework to dismantle it (de Sousa Santos 2015; Brunner 2021, 203). Behera (2023, 1903) also argues that along with academia, the state and even policy practitioners, whose expertise usually drives disciplines like International Relations and Peace and Conflict studies, have become complicit in “epistemically silencing the voices of the common people—the subalterns—and in neglecting their lived experiences as a rightful site of knowledge production.”

In her article published in 1984, “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses,” Mohanty (1984) produces one of the most significant postcolonial challenges to Western feminism and to traditional understandings of the Third World as confined to predictable geographical areas such as formerly colonised nations (Bahri 2004, 212). Mohanty argues that the representation of the ‘third world woman’ as a singular monolithic subject within Western feminist theory enacts a “discursive colonisation” (*ibid.* 213). Often defined by their victimhood status, Third World Women are depicted by Western feminism as a composite, singular picture and Mohanty warns, such a reading can also reproduce imperialist assumptions as to their inferiority (C. T. Mohanty 1984).

Thus, the arguments above together form the third postulate of postcolonial feminism, which I summarise as ‘Representation of the Global South woman in foreign policy tends towards the construction of narratives of victimhood and homogenisation which are reductive and deny women’s agency.’

While postcolonial feminism is critical of the West and Western feminism, it is equally sceptical with respect to postcolonial governments. While violence is often seen as a predominantly direct and physical phenomenon, critical scholarship today is highlighting the deeply embedded epistemic violence in real-world and theoretical international politics

(Brunner 2021, 193, 194). Postcolonial feminism also complicates this othering by arguing that the subaltern is not only othered by Western discourse, but by its own postcolonial governments through epistemic erasures and exclusions (Behera 2023).

This is linked to the domestic context as much as it is to the international. Postcolonial feminism reiterates the importance of domestic context in shaping policies for the Global South and is wary of universalising policies. For instance, South African inequalities are often intensified in situations of anti-state rebellions, conflicts and extremism, most of which find their roots in colonialism (Haastrup 2020). In another instance of a postcolonial country, India, the feminism(s) that Indian women espouse today are deeply attached to other identities, unlike Western liberal notions that usually draw from second wave feminism. India's feminism(s) involve a recognition accorded to differences among women deriving from their "primordial" identities, especially religion (Sunder Rajan 2000, 65). In a diverse country like India, 'feminine' identity involves several layers, including commitments to caste, community, religion and family. In her work, Menon (2005, 225) demonstrates through examples of multiculturalism in India that there must be a recognition of the complexity of cultural identity, which is preceded by challenging both fixed cultural boundaries and its opponent, "universal" rights.

At the same time, it is also observed that postcolonial countries divert attention away from their domestic contexts by projecting their foreign policy outwards (Basu 2016). In studies on postcolonial feminist approaches to Feminist Foreign Policy, authors argue that ignoring the domestic context can be detrimental to building an ethical FFP (Bergman Rosamond, Cheung, and De Leeuw 2023; Tamang 2024). Based on these arguments of how the domestic colonial experience shapes a country's foreign policy and how the countries divert attention from the continuing colonial injustices within their borders, comes the fourth postulate: 'Postcolonial states project foreign policy outwards in order to drive attention away from domestic feminist failings.'

Beyond critique, postcolonial feminist research identifies potential solutions or alternative paths of policymaking derived from the experiences of the Global South. Three of them are discussed below: the importance of listening to postcolonial feminist voices, the uniqueness of postcolonial specificities and the dangers of homogenising postcolonial identities.

In “Gendered States,” Peterson (1992, 9) showed that feminism is at the heart of the shift from “women as knowable” to “women as knowers” and that this has a significant impact on knowledge claims. This was one of the first attempts within feminist IR to understand the politics of states from a gendered lens that rejected knowledge claims based on the partial experiences of masculine elites. Postcolonial feminism goes a step further and asks us to understand location and listen to the Global South experience. Each location carries its own history and marking in the present (Bahri 2004, 218). For instance, as Mani (1990) articulates, in the Indian context, a politically engaged criticism must direct itself to the limited parameters within which nationalists posed the question of women’s status, the marginality of women to nineteenth century discussions supposedly about them, and the legacy of colonialism in contemporary discussion of women’s issues (Bahri 2004). The importance of such a bottom-up analysis is reflected in certain postcolonial feminist analyses. For instance, Parashar (2009, 250) argues in the context of the militarisation of Kashmir, that there are complexities of gendered political subjectivities produced by the Kashmiri women and their actions. Her analysis of women in Kashmir reflects the complexity of the intersectionality of feminism, gender roles, IR and the postcolonial condition.

Postcolonial feminism argues that a detailed understanding of these unique postcolonial specificities is vital for policy constructions that are not based on Western conditions. For instance, the form of modernity (defined through capitalist production and growth of liberal democratic institutions) that is encountered through colonialism is defined by scholar Partha Chatterjee as “our” modernity, a term that highlights the uniqueness of characteristics that postcolonial societies share (Chatterjee 1997 as quoted by Menon 2005, 207). “Our” modernity is reflected in postcolonial societies having a specific character: local elites on one side, and subaltern groups on the other, each entering into differentiated agreements with colonial authority and with modernity.

In a diverse country like India, the case that this thesis focusses on, ‘feminine’ identity involves several layers, including commitments to caste, community, religion and family. Therefore, any policy seeking to incorporate feminist interventions has to be careful to avoid being an urban mainstream feminist response highly influenced by upper-caste majoritarian norms in defining “women” (Sunder Rajan 2000). A postcolonial feminist foreign policy situated in the postcolonial condition of the Global South therefore must be

wary of the danger of homogenising Indian women and even inherently defining ‘Indian women’ as having a certain common set of needs that can be articulated through a single foreign policy, irrespective of the intersectionality of their different identities. This is where lived experience plays an important role and recognising the intersectionality of Indian identities.

For postcolonial feminist experience to take concrete shape in policy, historically locating the postcolonial condition is thus essential. “An ahistorical understanding of the contemporary world order can never lead to knowledge that can comprehend the contemporary world,” writes (A. Chakraborty 2017, 53), therefore, historicising current policy realities would help us better understand contexts and challenges that are unique to the postcolonial condition. Postcolonial feminism thus highlights how listening to lived experiences of women in the Global South that are contextualised in social realities, furthers the idea of policymaking from the experiences of the marginalised (Parashar 2018, 160). The previous paragraphs form the basis of what I term the fifth postulate: ‘The necessity of the inclusion/advocacy of bottom-up experiences/approaches/peace strategies of postcolonial women in policymaking.’

The challenge that feminist politics faces in the postcolonial condition is that in its radical critique of dominant culture, it must carve out a different space for resistance (Menon 2005, 207). With the usage of postcolonial feminist theory, this thesis echoes what Menon (*ibid.*, 226) articulates, that in the face of complex intersections there are no clear-cut ever-valid political strategies, and in this space feminism should seek continually to refuse binaries, between universal rights and cultural specificities for instance. By doing so, feminism in postcolonial contexts seeks to critically question already-defined modes of constructing policy, while also offering alternative ever-evolving strategies to cope with the postcolonial condition. It is both a theoretical and a political project.

The section above summarized postcolonial feminist theory, as articulated by the stalwarts of the field like Spivak (1988) and Mohanty (1984), among others. Based on these discussions, I have fleshed out five main arguments or postulates of postcolonial feminism, which are:

1. Gender, Coloniality and Race structure IR and Foreign Policy

2. Liberal themes like representation, ‘add women and stir,’ a market-based economic emancipatory strategy, etc., are not the solution to gender inequality
3. Representation of the Global South woman in foreign policy tends towards the construction of narratives of victimhood and homogenisation which are reductive and deny women’s agency
4. Postcolonial states project foreign policy outwards in order to drive attention away from domestic feminist failings
5. The necessity of the inclusion/advocacy of bottom-up experiences/approaches/peace strategies of postcolonial women in policymaking

These postulates derived from postcolonial feminist theory form the analytical lens of this thesis. They not only help develop the critiques of current expressions of Feminist Foreign Policy in the global North (Chapter 2) but will also be the analytical keys I will use to examine the ostensibly postcolonial UNSC policy statements of India (Findings Chapters 5 and 6). Beyond this, it must be noted that postcolonial feminist theory is expansive and not restricted to these 5 arguments. These postulates are what I have distilled from the works of several postcolonial authors in the context of IR, that will be useful to the thesis in the context of analysing foreign policy.

Conclusion

This chapter aimed to discuss the main theoretical approach of this thesis: postcolonial feminist theory. It began with a brief introduction to feminist theory and its evolution through waves. I discussed several concepts foundational to feminist analyses like gender, sex, patriarchy, women’s lived experience as an analytical standpoint, and intersectionality. I then discussed Feminist International Relations. Among other goals, FIR renders visible the exclusions of women in foreign policy. I also discussed some conceptual tools from the sub-field of FPA that informs this research. These are: analysing state-centric articulations of foreign policy (and yet challenging them through problematising conventional FPA), challenging the lack of incorporation of gender in foreign policy, and examining ‘foreign policy contexts.’ I then discussed how Feminist Peace Research informs the intellectual emergence of FFP, and the concept of foreign policy broadly, which is why this thesis borrows some perspectives from FPR. FPR highlights the gendered nature of war and looks at foreign policy as having the goal of a gender-just peace.

I then discuss postcolonialism, highlighting the theory's main contributions: the importance of situatedness leading to specificities of the postcolonial condition, and critiques of mainstream IR's universalist, statist and often elitist character. Finally, the chapter discussed the primary theoretical lens the thesis will employ, postcolonial feminism, and outlined five postulates derived from the theory. It is to be noted that these five postulates are not the only contributions of the theory. Postcolonial feminism's ideas stretch beyond just these postulates. However, these are chosen for their importance to this research since they capture what postcolonial feminists say about IR. Therefore, they have been identified as the guiding lights of this work. I use these guiding lights as the analytical lenses through which I can engage with the axes central to this thesis – a critical engagement with the 'progressive' FPs in the shape of Feminist Foreign Policy in the Global North and India's postcolonial foreign policy at the UNSC.

With this chapter framing the theoretical lens for the research, the next one focusses on the first research axis of the thesis: the postcolonial feminist analysis of FFP.

Chapter 2: Research Axis 1 — Feminist Foreign Policy: A Postcolonial Feminist Critical Analysis

Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the disciplinary belonging and theoretical framework of this thesis. This chapter extends that theoretical discussion and begins to answer the research question developed by the thesis: *How do progressive representations of foreign policy do under the scrutiny of postcolonial feminism?* To answer this question, this chapter focusses on the first (of two) progressive representations of foreign policy discussed in this thesis, which I term the first research axis: Feminist Foreign Policies of the Global North and their postcolonial feminist critiques.

The chapter answers the question in two parts, by first discussing a postcolonial feminist critique of FFP concepts and praxis, and second, by offering a postcolonial feminist critique of current FFP knowledge production. While the former is an analytical engagement with existing critiques in the scholarship, the latter focusses on FFP knowledge production and so develops one of the original contributions of this thesis — a critical cartography of current FFP scholarship.

2.1 Feminist Foreign Policy: The Approach

It was a decade ago that for the first time in the history of the world, any nation explicitly labelled its foreign policy ‘feminist.’ In 2014, the newly elected Swedish Government announced that it would pursue a Feminist Foreign Policy, with the objective of becoming the “strongest voice for gender equality and full employment of human rights for all women and girls” (Aggestam, Bergman Rosamond, and Kronsell 2019, 23).⁴ This announcement, which was championed by feminist foreign minister Margot Wallström, was initially met with “ridicule and confusion” and even “giggles” (Achilleos-Sarll et al. 2022, 3; Thompson

⁴ Recently, Sweden withdrew its Feminist Foreign Policy, on the grounds that labels tend to cover up content, and that they would always stand for gender equality, but just not conduct a Feminist Foreign Policy (Thomas 2022). Analysts say that this reversal is less to do FFP’s strategy, and more to do with the country’s current political dynamics. After the 2022 election victory of the right wing government, the abandonment of FFP is being seen as attempts of the right wing government to reclaim conservative authority on social and fiscal issues (George 2024).

and Clement 2019, 1). This initial resistance to feminism can be attributed to several factors, including but not limited to the masculinised approaches to conventional foreign policy practice, discussed in the previous chapter. Other scholars are more concerned that current versions of feminism are being bent to the neoliberal state and the market's economic interests (Rottenberg 2017, 331; Kantola and Squires 2012, 1) and that feminism is being mobilised by state discourse for economic policymaking (Berglund et al. 2018). For example, research shows that corporations using gender equality language can help them legitimise their economic power (Roberts 2015). Thus, structural gender inequality is left unaddressed, and ambiguous usage of the term seems to be enough to benefit economies (Thomson 2020). The choice of the word 'feminism' in the context of foreign policy was thus perceived with doubt. The fact that feminism is traditionally associated with a more radical form of politics, and is therefore potentially more challenging could be another reason for the resistance (Aggestam and Bergman-Rosamond 2016, 323).

Despite this early scepticism, today Feminist Foreign Policies (FFPs) have emerged both in the Global North [Sweden (2014-23), Canada (2017), France (2018), Luxembourg (2019), Spain (2021), Germany (2022), Scotland (2022), Netherlands (2022), Slovenia (2023)] and the Global South [Mexico (2020), Chile (2022), Libya (2022), Liberia (2022), Colombia (2022), Mongolia (2023)] (Achilleos-Sarll et al. 2022). Since the approach is still relatively new, it is generally accepted in existing scholarship and discussions that there isn't a fixed definition of what constitutes a FFP (UN Women 2022). The lack of a specified definition of FFP could also be because of context-specific and differing definitions of feminism itself. For instance, in the analytical work of Achilleos-Sarll et al. (2022), it's highlighted that feminist values are linked with different meanings in the many countries that have adopted them: France links feminism with Republican values, Spain links it with recent large-scale social movements and Sweden links it to the decades-long feminist state agenda. According to Sweden, the principle of FFP is to ensure women's participation in global politics and sustainable peace, with the notion that women's empowerment will positively impact national and international security (Aggestam and Bergman-Rosamond 2019). It is for these diversity of ideas on what constitutes a feminist foreign policy that this thesis understands it as an 'approach' — thereby making room for all these differing definitions allowing space for incorporating critical analyses like postcolonial feminist analyses.

As the first of its kind, Swedish FFP comprised three “Rs,” that have translated into practice over time; they are: Rights, Representation and Resources (*ibid.*). Termed a ‘derivative’ of the UN Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda (discussed briefly in the previous chapter), Sweden’s Feminist Foreign Policy focussed on promotion of women’s participation in peace processes, advocacy of women’s rights as human rights and a more gender-sensitive and equitable distribution of global income (S. Parashar 2018; Aggestam and Bergman-Rosamond 2016). Other countries show their commitments to international frameworks as an added justification for the pursuance of FFP. For instance, Canada commits to report on gender data and analysis as part of its gender responsive humanitarian action within its Feminist International Assistance Policy (Ansorg, Haastrup, and Wright 2021). Other countries like Germany focus on pragmatic action combined with principles because, as the German Federal Foreign Office writes:

“on a global scale, it is clear that in many places there are gaps in the legal protection of women and marginalised groups, and it is more difficult for them to take part in decision-making processes. There is still unequal access to education, networks and financial resources. To deal with these issues, Feminist Foreign Policy combines principles with pragmatic action” (Amt 2023).

Some authors argue that Sweden’s launch of a FFP was distinct for two reasons: one, that it elevated gender mainstreaming politics⁵ into a more controversial politics that challenges patriarchal global institutions; and two, that it was guided by broad cosmopolitan norms of global justice and peace, thereby making FFP an ethically informed framework for the conduct of foreign policy (Aggestam and Bergman-Rosamond 2016, 323). Here Aggestam and Bergman-Rosamond (2016, 323, 328) write that FFP is more controversial than other gender mainstreaming policies because it provides a platform from which to promote controversial national issues to a global audience, and because FFP explicitly seeks to elevate broadly consensual gender mainstreaming policies to a policy that *explicitly* challenges power hierarchies in institutions, and thereby can be met with resistance.

Similarly, there are some who view the rise of FFPs optimistically: by implementing the aims and goals of feminist theory, feminist scholars clarify that FFP is not an idealistic

⁵ Gender mainstreaming as a way to increase the participation of women in international politics was discussed in the previous chapter.

departure from the practical world of foreign policy conduct (Aggestam and Bergman-Rosamond 2019; Scheyer and Kumskova 2019). Rather, it is a well-defined, nuanced alternative to the neo-realist framework of global politics. Therefore, FFP reflects another means to security, one based on “the principles of multilateralism, common morality, human rights, and extraterritorial accountability” (Scheyer and Kumskova 2019, 58).

However, some scholars problematise these commitments to FFP, because they emanate from the Global North and reflect a skew towards practicing FFP on the countries of the Global South. The authors call this “troubling,” because FFP is unevenly applied (Ansorg, Haastrup, and Wright 2021, 208). This has potential to lead to dangerous outcomes especially for women in the Global South (WILPF 2018). It is at this juncture that this thesis intervenes. Using postcolonial feminist theory, I engage with existing critiques of FFP in next section.

2.2 Postcolonial Feminism’s critique of Feminist Foreign Policy

In this section, I analyse FFP as an approach from a postcolonial feminist lens. As discussed in the previous section, Global North countries represent FFP as a progressive approach to foreign policy. Thus, I understand FFP as the way the Global North countries represent it, thereby having a focus on the role of the state in representing this policy. Using the five postulates of postcolonial feminism as guiding lights⁶, I will analytically engage with three critiques of Global North FFPs. The first critique is a critical take on the liberal thought in the conceptual logic of FFP, as seen in the focus on the ‘add women and stir’ approach, tokenism, framings of the nation through borders, and the identities that inform the policy. This is informed by the postcolonial feminist postulate 2 on the critique of liberal themes. The second critique will be on the portrayals of the ‘third world woman,’ and how these

⁶ Based on the theoretical discussion in the previous chapter, I fleshed out five main arguments or postulates of postcolonial feminism, which are listed again here:

1. Gender, Coloniality and Race structure IR and Foreign Policy
2. Liberal themes like representation, ‘add women and stir,’ a market-based economic emancipatory strategy, etc., are not the solution to gender inequality
3. Representation of the Global South woman in foreign policy tends towards the construction of narratives of victimhood and homogenisation which are reductive and deny women’s agency
4. Postcolonial states project foreign policy outwards in order to drive attention away from domestic feminist failings
5. The necessity of the inclusion/advocacy of bottom-up experiences/approaches/peace strategies of postcolonial women in policymaking

are problematic because they essentialise, victimise and homogenise women from the Global South. This is informed by postulates 3 (representation of the third world woman) and 5 (inclusion of bottom-up strategies of women in policymaking). The third critique is on how countries that adopt FFP (especially Sweden and Canada) project their foreign policy outwards, thereby ignoring the racial dynamics within their borders (seen in the othering of indigenous populations) and outside their borders (as seen in the Global South being seen as a site for policy experimentation). This critique is informed by postulates 1 (coloniality and gender structures IR) and 4 (projections of foreign policy outwards).

In advancing a critical approach to Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA), David Campbell posits that foreign policy is the politics of identity — a set of discursive practices that are constituted through a process of ‘othering’ (Campbell 1998). He problematises conventional FPA, by showing how it takes for granted an “unproblematic internal identity” that constitutes foreign policy decision-making processes. In doing so, he reconceptualises FPA through a critical lens, arguing for a focus on the production and configuration of foreign policy, rather than the more traditional focus on problem-solving and decision-making processes. In a similar vein, Doty highlights FPA’s theoretical omission — it focusses only on the ‘why-questions’ and not the ‘how-possible’ questions (Doty 1993, 299). Conventional FPA presupposes a particular subjectivity and doesn’t analyse how identities get constructed: Doty contends that FPA must shift the focus from why a policy was adopted to how are social constructions informing policy (*ibid.*). Understanding these social constructions of identity within FPA can serve to highlight the presuppositions that inform these policies. As Achilleos-Sarll (2018, 39) elaborates in her work on FFP analysis, “problematising, rather than naturalising these categories opens up a space to think critically about the salience of social categories, fundamental to a postcolonial feminist approach.”

It can be argued that within the conception of Feminist Foreign Policy, the feminist identities and ideologies underlying the policy are primarily liberal in nature. This is evidenced in Sweden’s promotion of women’s participation in peace processes, to advocate women’s rights as human rights and to work toward a more gender-sensitive and equitable distribution of global income (Aggestam and Bergman-Rosamond 2016). As discussed in chapter 1, liberalism comprises a focus on concepts like human rights, equality and collective security. In the case of FFP, the Global North (represented by Europe) focuses a

lot of its efforts on official commitment to representation and gender equality advocacy (Rajagopalan 2020), both primarily finding their roots in liberal theory. For instance, Sweden's FFP specifically focussed on 'Rights' and 'Representation' which are both derivatives of liberal philosophy.

This Western liberal thought in the conceptual logic of FFP that reflects in the attention given to 'representation,' is critiqued by postcolonial feminists. The questions they raise are: is more women's representation the only main outcome we must seek from a Feminist Foreign Policy? While it is imperative to address the historical underrepresentation that women have faced in foreign policy-making, to "simply take elite women as a subject in foreign policy and 'stir'" is not enough" (Achilleos-Sarll 2018, 45). Thereby, 'giving' rights without questioning the structure could have unintended consequences, like that of further entrenching global hierarchies (Ansorg, Haastrup, and Wright 2021, 208). It is insufficient to merely increase representation without understanding underlying gendered, sexualised and racialised assumptions that exist prior to foreign policy formulation. The research and curiosity of feminist scholars has cautioned that the incorporation of women's voices is not a panacea (McEvoy 2009). Simply considering women does not in itself resolve conflict without an acknowledgment of the many ways that masculine politics has sown distrust and political alienation (*ibid.*). Thus, by focusing largely on representation, FFP today is missing out the opportunity for structural change. By this, the current world order is managing to deflect the feminist challenges to the existing world order, without actually altering the dominant structures (Scheyer and Kumskova 2019, 70).

Scheyer and Kumskova (2019, 60) illustrate this by quoting renowned international theorist Cynthia Enloe, who writes that such an approach fails to challenge the underlying gender norms that fuel violence and conflict. The tokenistic "add women and stir" approach has resulted in the instrumentalising of women's rights, thereby disarming the transformative potential of larger feminist agendas like the WPS Agenda (Brown 2021, 142). This not only sustains an unequal racialised world hierarchy but is also evident in the "glaring lack of support" for women's organisations, despite statements of intent (*ibid.*). Such an approach must also respond to the theoretical challenge it faces from feminist theory: the very basis of feminist theory is that the central foundation to establishing a feminist order is the necessary destruction of the patriarchal order, which would then lead to the reimagination of a feminist world order. A feminist foreign policy calls for a *reimagination* of current

institutions as they exist, rather than an infusing of feminist principles into existing systems, bordering on tokenism (*ibid.*).

Parashar (2018) terms FFP a ‘derivative’ of the WPS Agenda, and problematises its emphasis on gender equality and women’s empowerment as the *universal* outcomes for implementation of a gender-just peace. Parashar’s critique reveals that FFP is aiming for an outcome that it seeks to universalise. The universalising aspect of FFP’s goals while seemingly noble, could be problematic, since it leads to a discourse that perceives individuals in the Global South as merely recipients of the WPS norms (*ibid.*). Not only does this outlook view the Global South a certain way, but it also blurs any agency that the Global South may have in the drafting of the policy. For instance, it must be noted that while FFP’s initial proponents were primarily from the Global North, with the adoption of FFP by Mexico, Chile and Liberia, Global South nations are not merely recipients, but proponents of FFPs. However, recent scholarship has also shown that some of these Global South FFPs are also replicating their northern colleagues. Mexican FFP for instance, is critiqued for not holding consultations with local feminist actors before drafting, thereby distancing civil society from its FFP (García 2023).

Other liberal aspects of FFP approaches are evident, for instance, in Sweden’s migration policy. In the Swedish FFP (although it has abandoned the approach), migration and gender equality are linked as a policy intersection (Achilleos-Sarll et al. 2022, 17). Sweden projected itself as an ethical, gender and refugee friendly country — it applauded its treatment of refugees by highlighting how it has increased the number of support officers along its main migration routes, prioritising safe workplace migration (especially for women) and provided access to education.

The basis of such an approach is grounded in Sweden’s self-image. As Edenberg (2020, 102) analyses, “national identity [in Sweden] has for decades been tied to the idea that the Swedish welfare model has created a unique society based on equality, solidarity and modernism.” This is seen in Sweden’s gender equality policies such as paid parental leave, individual taxation and free abortion (all introduced in the 1970s), all regarded as cornerstones of the Swedish welfare model (*ibid.*). Swedish politicians often describe the country as “the most gender equal country in the world” (Towns 2002). In this context, FFP was introduced, thus continuing a history of positioning Sweden as an international

forerunner in gender equality (Agius and Edenberg 2019). In fact, Sweden has had a long-running reputation of what scholars call ‘Swedish exceptionalism’ — a society extolled as inclusive and defending human rights (Dahlstedt and Neergaard 2019, 122). This rhetoric of Sweden as ‘exceptionally’ gender equal and welcoming to refugees has been criticized by feminists, for disguising circumstances that dispute the image of Sweden as a progressive ideal (Martinsson, Griffin, and Nygren 2016; Mulinari 2016; Norocel 2017). This is seen in the temporary asylum policy that was adopted in 2015, which significantly limited family reunification and had a negative impact on women (Ansorg, Haastrup, and Wright 2021, 207). The policy targeted many women who were still in conflict zones who had little to no recourse to reunite with their male family members already in Sweden. Moreover, Sweden reintroduced border controls to Schengen countries and restricted the rules for admitting asylum-seekers down to minimum EU levels, a move described by the Swedish Migration Board as a necessary “breathing space” after Sweden had received 80.000 asylum-seekers during the two preceding months (Åberg 2015 in Edenberg 2020, 102).

Achilleos-Sarll et al. (2022, 17) highlight this focus on migration as a concept within the larger FFP discourses. Migration, they conclude, simply becomes another policy area added to the lists to which a gender perspective should be applied. Thus, when proposing “migrant status” as an identity marker that compounds (gender) discrimination, it leads to particular policy solutions around rescue and hospitality, advocated for those deemed vulnerable, like women and children. And thereby, these ideas of hospitality reproduce “liberal, state-centric framings, of migrant justice” (Achilleos-Sarll et al. 2022, 17). Such a framing legitimises statist and foreign policy logics that deem immigration a crisis in the first place, with the idea that the border serves the function of the limit of the sovereign state. It also highlights a liberal approach to the state and borders, which understands power in terms of sovereign states that safeguard citizens (Dunne 2020, 64, 65).

Another aspect of postcolonial feminists’ weariness towards liberal approaches is seen in their take on economic empowerment. Taking again Sweden’s example: its FFP’s pillar ‘Resources,’ rested on the assumption that without adequate resources, the rights and representation of women and girls cannot be realised (Aggestam and Bergman-Rosamond 2019, 44). This is in line with its normative position on women’s economic empowerment and the logic that investing in gender equality is a way of ensuring economic growth

broadly (*ibid.*). Sweden also expresses support for female entrepreneurship, with the idea that with acquiring entrepreneurial skills, women can empower themselves and get “power over their own lives” (Aggestam and Bergman-Rosamond 2019, 44).

While economic empowerment as an emancipatory strategy is not new, a postcolonial feminist critique problematises it in three ways. The first draws from Mohanty and Miraglia's (2010) critique that economic empowerment as an emancipatory strategy is associated with neoliberalism. Neoliberalism as a political rationality and ideological framing emphasises individualism and free market capitalism. But it tends to ignore other structural social and political inequalities, like systematic legal discrimination, gender-based violence, and denial of human rights (Aggestam and Rosamond 2019, 44). Two, such approaches to economic empowerment also don't consider reproduction and care work, even though as an economic order, neoliberalism relies on them. With the reduction of everything to market metrics, and the infiltration of a market rationality into all spheres of life, human subjects are increasingly converted to “generic human capital, where gender is disavowed.” (Banet-Weiser, Gill, and Rottenberg 2020, 8). The third problem with the liberal economic empowerment approach is through postcolonial feminism's spotlighting of unequal global power dynamics. Scholars argue that the practice of FFP's economic approach then seems to only be possible in the context of wealthier Northern countries' support for aid, development, peace, and security to parts of the world that are less wealthy (Ansorg, Haastrup, and Wright 2021, 208). In essence, this could imply that ‘resources’ are a prerequisite to have an FFP. Therefore FFP defining itself as a return to the neo-liberal, interventionist, governmentalities of post-Cold War liberal internationalism limits its potential to be a critical alternative to *realpolitik* (Achilleos-Sarll et al. 2022, 10).

I now move to the second critique of this section: postcolonial feminism's critique of the homogenising of the ‘third world woman’ in existing FFPs. Hewitt and True (2021, 374) discuss how most often, women are invited to the UN as tokens, to discuss “sad stories” or homogenise women's experiences as one woman representing all women. A deeper postcolonial feminist analysis of the formation of such policies, which inevitably keep the Global South as testing grounds, reveals the underlying assumptions of women as oppressed groups. Such assumptions characterise most of Western feminist writing about Third world women (Bahri 2004, 212).

Often defined by their victimhood status, Third World Women are depicted by Western feminism as a composite, singular picture and, Mohanty warns, such a reading can also reproduce imperialist assumptions as to their inferiority (*ibid.*). For instance, Aggestam and Rosamond (2019, 43) have discussed Sweden's dual obligation to protection of women within and beyond from inequality. They link Sweden's move to the politics of protection and rights to Foreign Minister Wallström's personal ethics and dedication to gender justice. While it is true that under her leadership, Sweden adopted an activist stance, the idea of the politics of protection can be critiqued. Duriesmith (2018) argues that despite integrating feminist perspectives in foreign policies, the policies risk the 'masculine protector logic'. This logic is explicitly evident in FFP, since women of the Global South are portrayed as those that need to be protected. In some discussions regarding UNSCR's WPS agenda too, there are strong arguments visible that attach victimhood to women and rescuer-status to men (Shepherd 2011). Positioning 'feminine/feminist foreign policy' in opposition to masculinities, legitimises the "selfless femininity and detached masculinity" logic, which is necessary for establishing hierarchy (Gilligan and Snider 2017, 183). Not only does this come with the assumption that women are inherently peaceful and pacifist, but also that they are defined in three conflating categories: women as vulnerable, women as mothers and women as civilians (Basu and Nagar 2021, 213). Such a positioning also limits the representations of men, ignoring the multiple ways in which men too are affected by conflict. As summarised by Kinsella (2020, 146), these hierarchical binaries that are considered fixed and universal, are falsely taken to *explain* differences, rather than as *constructing* those differences. Such a reductive and essentialist approach to feminist foreign policy will also fail to accomplish the radical transformation necessary (Robinson 2021).

FFP as a concept must engage more critically with the concept of identity and its implications. Current conceptions of FFP understand identity as unidimensional. Using Campbell (1998) and Doty's (1993) analysis discussed at the beginning of this section, this would be the "unproblematic internal identity" and "particular subjectivity" which are both based on a particular Western white woman and are chosen to inform policy: a policy that is often enacted *on* the Global South. For instance, the case this thesis looks at is India. India's feminism(s) involve a recognition accorded to differences among women deriving from their "primordial" identities, especially religion (Sunder Rajan 2000). In a diverse country like India, 'feminine' identity involves several layers, including commitments to

caste, community, religion and family. Therefore, in the Indian case, a FFP must be careful to avoid being an urban mainstream feminist response highly influenced by upper-caste majoritarian norms in defining “women” (*ibid.*). The conceptions of Feminist Foreign Policy within India itself (see: Vishwanath and Mukund 2022) too skirts the danger of homogenising Indian women and even inherently defining “Indian women” as having a certain common set of needs that can be articulated through a single foreign policy, irrespective of the intersectionality of their different identities. Thus, a FFP in the postcolonial Indian context must not only stand for representation and advocacy but must also advocate for the intersectionality of Indian identities.

Drawing from the postcolonial feminist critique, the consequence of the arguments made here is that FFP should be constructed employing the Global South as the site of knowledge *construction* and not merely as the site of policy experimentation or implementation. As evidenced, current FFP strategies have universalist, homogenising and essentialising tendencies, which don’t fully consider the multiplicity of feminist mechanisms that are ever flourishing in the Global South. At the same time, there is research to show how the non-implementation of such universalist mechanisms are telling of the agency of the Global South actors. For instance, Basu (2016) draws out an important aspect of how paying attention to the non-implementation of universalising resolutions (like the WPS Agenda) could help us better understand the larger discourses. “Not only are there diverse and divergent interpretations of the resolutions, gender advocates in particular settings may well find mechanisms other than a Security Council resolution more useful in strategizing for peace and security” (Basu 2016, 371). Thus, understanding such mechanisms while constructing the policy, and furthering research on the non-implementation of universal mechanisms to take into account what people on the ground feel is a more useful way of strategising peace, could have better consequences for postcolonial women.

This leads me to postcolonial feminism’s third critique of FFP: that current FFP approaches do not consider their own coloniality in their borders, and project their foreign policy outwards. In this regard, there are two aspects to FFP that current conceptions do not consider: the racialised dimension of foreign policy practice and the uneven power dynamics of the Global North and South. Ansorg, Haastrup, and Wright (2021, 208) write that the uneven power dynamics between the North and the South is manifested in brown and black bodies inevitably becoming the testing ground for policy priorities. They go on

to highlight how this racialised dimension of foreign policy practices is hardly ever interrogated (*ibid.*). Historically analysing the development of world orders and the situating of particular states within those orders, can yield a significant picture of the extent to which certain practices of foreign policy might reinforce these power relations. Add to that, we must also consider how gendered assumptions and practices have both reinforced and challenged other unequal power relations, such as those based on race, colonialism, sexual orientation or disability (Stienstra 2019, 67). As McClintock writes, “gender never stands alone as a factor structuring society, but rather is inflected through, and co-constituting of, other hierarchical forms of structuring power” (McClintock 1995, 5 in Achilleos-Sarll 2018, 42). The intersections of these social categories thereby structure the relationships between states and between peoples, remaking the content of foreign policies and also conditioning how foreign policy issues are framed, prioritised and perceived. Postcolonial feminists therefore argue that the hierarchised social markers are not just produced in relation to each other, but the state is also complicit in regulating and policing gender, sexuality, race and ethnicity for national interests (Achilleos-Sarll 2018).

This can be seen in Canada’s case, where despite its proclamations of feminist policies, the government “legally discriminates” against indigenous women, through the colonial-era Indian Act of 1876 (Ansorg, Haastrup, and Wright 2021, 207). According to the Act, an indigenous woman is only recognised to be so if they are “the wife of a male Indian or the child of a male Indian”. Also, an indigenous woman who marries outside her community loses all rights and benefits awarded to First Nations people, including protection from gender-based discrimination and violence. The Indian Act has had a direct role in the continued marginalisation of indigenous women, noting that it continues “to place indigenous women at an increased risk for multiple forms of violence, and often results in impunity for crimes against indigenous women, which in turn perpetuates the violence” (Inter-American Commission on Human Rights 2014, 22).

One of the primary critiques offered here to current conceptualisations of FFP stems from the discussion above: does the pursuit of an FFP necessarily indicate a feminist domestic policy? What does ‘foreign’ indicate in Feminist Foreign Policy? Stienstra (2019, 68) uses the example of Canada’s temporary work permits for immigrants to illustrate how foreign policy is related to domestic workers, thereby showing how the “other” is constructed around class and racial lines. “...we use the term “foreign” to create and maintain a sense

of fear about the “other” in our societies.” Therefore, policies that are put into place to address these “foreign” domestic workers, reinforce gender disparities. This is seen in Canada’s case, where women who can afford to hire these “foreign” domestic workers are primarily white elites, and the ones who are the immigrants who are primarily women of colour, face differential treatment from the immigration laws.

One could argue then, that projections of FFP work to drive attention away from domestic failings and inadequacies. The ‘others’ that the foreign policy is directed towards, are conceptualised as different from ‘us’ and FFP can be seen as a country’s philanthropic projection outwards, rather than a nuanced feminist outreach. Sweden’s projection of an FFP serves to silence discord (Jeziarska and Towns 2018), and obscure domestic conditions, perpetuating the myth that “feminism” is doing alright at home in Sweden, a message fundamental to the country’s foreign policy brand (Ansorg, Haastrup, and Wright 2021, 207). In her work on South Asian states’ engagement with the UN WPS Agenda, Basu writes that they have projected their WPS commitments outwards and have dissociated themselves from the implementation of the commitments in the domestic context (Basu 2016, 368). “Clearly then, it is not only the developed states of the Global North that are reluctant to reflect upon the domestic implications of their engagement with UNSCR 1325; a more substantive engagement with the WPS resolutions may well draw attention to such governments’ complicity in fomenting violence against their own citizens...” (*ibid.*). While this aspect of the Global South and its engagements with feminist policy will be discussed in detail in the following chapters, I bring it up here to substantiate the idea further of nations using foreign policy as a tool for distracting from domestic (un)doings. Thus, FFP becomes something to do “over there”, and not a starting point for reflecting inwards on the gendered and racialised inequalities and insecurities within their own borders (Ansorg, Haastrup, and Wright 2021, 207). This is contrary to a feminist peace that renders domestic insecurities particularly those faced by women as visible as the ‘foreign’ ones (Chan 2011). A way postcolonial feminism suggests this can be done is to engage local actors, ensuring working to an ethical code, to study intersections with other areas of injustice like race and poverty (Ansorg, Haastrup, and Wright 2021, 209). The idea is to further sustainable feminist peace for the long-term. And a way to do that would be to go beyond representation, to value women as intersectional knowledge holders who provide nuanced analysis on the root causes of conflict and avenues towards sustainable positive peace (WILPF 2018, 2, 3).

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While the critiques advanced by this section can be a standalone contribution to FFP analysis, it would be limiting to reduce the aspirations of postcolonial and anticolonial thought to exposing the exclusionary nature of Western thought (Getachew and Mantena 2021, 379). While it is essential to highlight and critically engage with the blind spots in current FFP practices, postcolonial feminist theory does more. Therefore, the systematic critique of FFP offered by this chapter also forms the foundation of *reconstructing* FFP. This draws from the idea that the postcolonial thought takes up positive and reconstructive agendas in creative ways, especially through developing new forms and categories of analysis (Getachew and Mantena 2021, 379). The implications of this can be seen in the theoretical agenda of postcolonial feminist thought (as discussed in Chapter 1). For instance, a postcolonial feminist critique of FFP could contribute to a ‘decolonisation’ of the discipline of IR, by challenging it to reckon with its implication in histories of imperial domination and the latter’s continuing ideological imprint (Getachew and Mantena 2021, 359).

The postcolonial feminist critique of Western feminist policies has its critics too. For instance, Krishna (1993, 405) argues that while critical engagement with identity is important, it fails to provide the basis for political action: “It is precisely the greatest victims of the West’s essentialist conceits (the excolonials and neocolonials, Blacks, women and so forth) that are articulating a need for new strategic essentialism.”⁷ Krishna asks postcolonialists: How does one work to politically garner the emancipatory potential of such essentialisms even as one guards against the temptation to make these the new blueprints of yet another hubristic project in social engineering? (Krishna 1993, 204).

In the midst of these critiques, it must be noted also that “the best of postcolonialism is autocritical.” (Spivak 2005, xv). Although Spivak makes this statement with respect to postcolonialism, it also speaks to postcolonial feminism. Building on this argument, the next section turns the analytical lens to the postcolonial feminist scholarship itself, by

⁷ Strategic Essentialism as a concept was discussed in chapter 1.

conducting a critical cartography of the scholarship, to reveal the many ways in which it can expand the scope of FFP study.

2.3 A Critical Cartography of current Postcolonial Feminist FFP scholarship

The discussion above has reviewed the growing literature which offers a postcolonial feminist critique of Global North FFPs. By using the five postulates of postcolonial feminist analysis, I have shown how the work of postcolonial feminist scholars is providing a cogent critique of mainstream FFP as practiced (primarily) by the Global North. Yet, in the spirit of Spivak's (2005, xv) call for postcolonialism to be 'autocritical,' it's interesting to reflect on the dynamics of this knowledge production in itself.

Thus, to engage more deeply with the scholarship, I conducted a critical cartography. As a method in IR, critical cartography turns the focus of analysis to knowledge production and scholarship in the field. This contributes to the diversification of IR and also furthers previous research that examines the state of scholarship and IR knowledge production, seen against the background of recent policy developments (see: Basu, Kirby, and Shepherd 2020; Haastrup and Hagen 2021; Ravecca and Dauphinee 2018; Holsti 1998). Therefore, critical cartography has implications for the field of IR, for it seeks to unravel hierarchies created in and by scholarly work especially in the context of the hierarchies they are seeking to address in international politics.

Often used loosely to describe a scoping or mapping of literature of a field, I derive the conceptual meanings of critical cartography from transnational feminism⁸, as way of mapping the terrain of geographically varied feminist scholarship through lenses of 'place,' 'border' and 'location' (M. Desai 2015). By using these three concepts to conduct a critical cartography of postcolonial feminist FFP scholarship, this section seeks to uncover hierarchies at play in the 'place,' 'border' and 'location' of the scholarship, thereby critically scrutinising the scholarship.

⁸ Transnational feminism, as highlighted by (Conway 2017, 205, 206) is understood as both a normative discourse involving a particular analytical and methodological approach in feminist knowledge production, and as an empirical referent to feminist cross-border organising.

While ‘place’ is not a pre-existing space of specifically defined entity, it works as a product of social relations, practices and processes — a site of operation of power, an expression of historical sedimentation (Desai 2015, 117). Alexander and Mohanty (2010) highlight that this “hierarchy of place” was evident in the genealogies of feminist thought, which foregrounded European narratives of liberal, socialist and postmodern theory, and mobilised that particular geographical history in the linear periodisation of feminist theory of first-, second- and third- wave feminism. The hierarchy of place therefore privileges a certain discourse, under the assumption that the community it is speaking about is homogenous. This is visible in terms of knowledge construction, that even when spatial connectivities are mobilised, there is a clear hierarchy visible. “Cartographically then, the transnational was either placed elsewhere or positioned Eurocentrically or within the United States as theoretically normative” (*ibid.*, 34). I therefore base my understandings of place on these ideas, and through critical cartography, attempt to understand if the scholarship is privileging certain discourses over others, and how that might act as an operation of power.

Transnational feminist cartography identifies ‘border’ as not only a physical space of a border crossing, but also as the space that is overcome through transnational activism. This is specifically seen as outside the academy, in the context of activism (Desai 2015, 125). In terms of knowledge production, transnational feminism recognises the structural asymmetries of border crossings, and the historical subjectivities of groups that are not captured in universal categories of modernity — “In doing so, it [transnational feminism] echoed the works of, among others, Anzaldúa (2012), who theorized La Frontera/Borderlands as those in between spaces, which produce asymmetries but also open up new possibilities for action” (*ibid.*). Here I focus on the borders observed in the scholarship — what asymmetries are visible in the analysis of FFP of various countries especially with regards to cross-border theorising, and what are the possibilities of knowledge production in the ‘in between spaces,’ attempting to understand the concept of border within the knowledge production of academic scholarship.

A critical cartography would be incomplete without the analysis of the concept of ‘location.’ ‘Location’ is different than ‘place’ — while location can be identified geographically (Mason 2017, 62) or in a certain historical time period (Parker 2012, 1), place is understood as a dynamic site of operation of power (Desai 2015, 117). In their

canonical work, Grewal and Kaplan (1994, 17) discuss how transnational feminism to them was made of the “practices that different women use in various locations to counter the scattered hegemonies that affect their lives.” Alexander and Mohanty's (2010) work too, speaks about the importance of location of contemporary feminist struggles and the counterhegemonic histories that inform them. Drawing from this transnational feminist understanding of location, a critical cartography of scholarship as conducted in this section will involve a multiplicity of locations, and understanding the feminisms that come from them. Location of the scholarship is telling in feminist theorisation, of not only the politics of knowledge production, but also of how that is contended with in scholarship. Scholars argue that in terms of academic work, an acknowledgement of one's privileges in the world-system are linked to another women's oppression or exploitation, thereby highlighting the importance of location in producing knowledge (Desai 2015, 127). This section conducts the critical cartography keeping in mind these understandings of the concept of location. It seeks to acknowledge and address the location and sites of various productions of knowledge, and what that might reveal in the case of research on postcolonial feminist FFP.

The literature used in the first section of this chapter to critique FFP from a postcolonial feminist point of view is revisited here through the lens of critical cartography. The field of postcolonial feminist critique of FFP is a nascent one, and it's possible to identify a corpus of 16 peer-articles which constitute the main body of this work⁹. These are summarised in the table below.

#	Author/s	Reference with boldened article title	Brief summary
1	(Achilleos-Sarll 2018)	Achilleos-Sarll, Columba. "Reconceptualising foreign policy as	Achilleos-Sarll (2018) not only draws our attention to gendered, sexualised and racialised exclusions in conventional foreign policy analysis (FPA), but also

⁹ The material in this section (2.3) is derived from a paper submitted for peer-review to a journal. In that paper, I detail more clearly how the corpus of articles was identified. In brief: there were three main criteria that narrowed down which articles to conduct the cartography on: one, that they must be peer-reviewed research work published in journals, two, that they focussed on postcolonial feminist approaches to FFP, and three that were published between 2014 and February 2024.

		gendered, sexualised and racialised: Towards a postcolonial feminist foreign policy (analysis)." Journal of International Women's Studies 19, no. 1 (2018): 34-49.	problematises unconventional FPA for marginalising postcolonial feminist theories. She therefore argues for (re-)centring intersectionality, (re-)instating connected histories, and (re-)configuring normative orders, thereby offering a blueprint for a postcolonial feminist FFP that challenges the status quo.
2	(Achilleos-Sarll et al. 2022)	Achilleos-Sarll, Columba, Jennifer Thomson, Toni Hastrup, Karoline Färber, Carol Cohn, and Paul Kirby. "The Past, Present, and Future (s) of Feminist Foreign Policy." International Studies Review 25, no. 1 (2023): viac068.	The forum article by Achilleos-Sarll et al. (2022) takes stock of FFP's current state of the field. They first highlight the conceptual and practical genealogies of FFP, and then move to study its policy intersections, while also engaging with the coloniality underpinning FFP in its various iterations.
3	(Bergman Rosamond, Cheung, and De Leeuw 2023)	Bergman Rosamond, Annika, Jessica Cheung, and Georgia De Leeuw. "Caring feminist states? Paternalistic feminist foreign policies and the silencing of Indigenous justice claims in Sweden and Canada." International Feminist	Bergman Rosamond, Cheung, and De Leeuw (2023) conduct illustrative readings of Sweden and Canada's FFPs, highlighting these states portrayals of themselves as ethically feminist states. They argue that their FFPs are a rearticulation of colonialism whereby state care is paternalistic, silencing indigenous articulations of care, and say that Swedish and Canadian FFPs are mobilised to reassert colonial power relations both within and outside borders.

		Journal of Politics (2023): 1-24.	
4	(Cheung and Scheyer 2024)	Cheung, Jessica, and Victoria Scheyer. "Feminist foreign policy and global (health) care work migration: Addressing the invisibility of colonial gaps in feminist policy making." Asian Journal of Women's Studies (2024): 1-25.	Cheung and Scheyer (2024) examine Germany's Triple Win policy (a policy that aims to secure Germany's national healthcare system through recruitment of foreign labour) in the context of the recently adopted German FFP. They argue that absent in such policies that seek to recruit healthcare workers from the Global South is awareness of ongoing colonial power relations and set this against Germany's FFP. They use a postcolonial feminist framework grounded in an ethics of care, to show that care work migration is a neocolonial development practice.
5	(Guerrina, Haastrup, and Wright 2023) .	Guerrina, Roberta, Toni Haastrup, and Katharine AM Wright. "Contesting feminist power Europe: Is feminist foreign policy possible for the EU?." European Security 32, no. 3 (2023): 485-507.	Guerrina, Haastrup, and Wright (2023) conduct a critical analysis of key official documents of the European Union, and caution against an uncritical adoption of feminism without reflexivity. They argue that within their framework of a Feminist Power Europe, the EU's propensity for a transformative FFP is limited by prevailing traditionally masculinist environment in which Europe's integration policies operate.
6	(Haastrup 2020)	Haastrup, Toni. "Gendering South Africa's foreign policy: Toward a	Haastrup (2020) conducts a content analysis of speeches to discuss the presence of pro-gender norms within South Africa's foreign policy. She argues that the domestic

		feminist approach?." Foreign Policy Analysis 16, no. 2 (2020): 199-216.	context can help limit or shape a country's enactment of feminist foreign policy. In doing this, she goes beyond the countries that have officially adopted a feminist foreign policy.
7	(Hauschild and Stamm 2024)	Hauschild, Anna, and Leonie Stamm. "From feminist questions towards feminist processes: strengthening Germany's feminist foreign policy." European Journal of Politics and Gender 7, no. 2 (2024): 296-300.	Hauschild and Stamm (2024) further a feminist self-reflexive approach to Germany's FFP. They argue that Germany must reflect on whose knowledges and experiences are being heard during the decision-making processes of an FFP.
8	(Midzain-Gobin and Dunton 2021)	Midzain-Gobin, Liam, and Caroline Dunton. "Renewing relationships? Solitudes, decolonisation, and feminist international policy." Millennium 50, no. 1 (2021): 29-54.	Using a feminist critical discourse analysis, Midzain-Gobin and Dunton (2021) render visible the colonial logics underpinning Canada's international feminist assistance policy (FIAP), and their bilateral mechanisms with Indigenous people's organisations. They argue that these two are seen as mutually exclusive policy areas, but must be read in conjunction with each other, because of how both reproduce gendered coloniality.
9	(Morton, Muchiri, and Swiss 2020)	Morton, Sam E., Judyannet Muchiri, and Liam Swiss. "Which feminism (s)? For whom? Intersectionality in	Morton, Muchiri, and Swiss (2020) show what feminist values are being operationalised by Canada's FIAP, and conclude that the latter reflect mainstream liberal feminist goals leaving several groups and people excluded from the

		Canada's feminist international assistance policy." International Journal 75, no. 3 (2020): 329-348.	policy. They also demonstrate, using a discourse network analysis of the groups represented in FIAP that there is no intersectional approach taken by Canada.
10	(Nylund, Håkansson, and Bjarnegård 2022)	Nylund, Mia-Lie, Sandra Håkansson, and Elin Bjarnegård. "The transformative potential of feminist foreign policy: The case of Sweden." Journal of women, politics & policy 44, no. 3 (2023): 257-273.	In a more optimistic note, Nylund, Håkansson, and Bjarnegård (2022) show through an analysis of Sweden's FFP's discursive practices, that while essentialist postcolonial language still forms a large part , transformative elements are still visible through usage of concepts like intersectionality.
11	(Robinson 2021)	Robinson, Fiona. "Feminist foreign policy as ethical foreign policy? A care ethics perspective." Journal of International Political Theory 17, no. 1 (2021): 20-37.	Situating the study of FFP in a critical feminist ethic of care, Robinson (2021) argues that FFP can only be transformative if it troubles the binary gender norms that constitute the international. She analyses the diplomatic crises between Sweden, Canada and Saudi Arabia to show that ethical stances like current FFPs are thick with neo-colonial logics and racial hierarchies .
12	(Runyan 2024)	Runyan, Anne Sisson. "Problematizing "Security" in Citizen Security: A feminist security studies critique of Mexico's "feminist" foreign	Runyan (2024) problematises "security" within the "citizen security" concept employed by Mexico in the light of its FFP. She shows how Mexican FFP ignores the different forms of violence within the state, while simultaneously reproducing

		policy and women, peace and security projects." Latin American Policy 15, no. 1 (2024): 39-54.	militarised violence in its attachments to security.
13	(H. Smith and Ajadi 2020)	Smith, Heather, and Tari Ajadi. "Canada's feminist foreign policy and human security compared." International journal 75, no. 3 (2020): 367-382.	Smith and Ajadi (2020) draw parallels with Canada's crafting of a unique feminist image in the context of its FFP, to when the country embraced human security in the 1990s. Through their comparative analyses, they argue that in both, there is a consistent liberal value-based discourse which privileges rhetoric over transformation.
14	(Thomson 2022)	Thomson, Jennifer. "Gender norms, global hierarchies and the evolution of feminist foreign policy." European Journal of Politics and Gender 5, no. 2 (2022): 173-190.	In a similar vein, Thomson (2022) addresses four case studies of FFP countries—Sweden, Canada, France and Mexico—to argue that FFP signifies states' adherence to the modern liberal world order. This contributes to further strengthening global gender hierarchies, and a lesser chance for FFP to be successful, since the international systems that underpin it like international institutions, legal treaties and global alliances are all under attack.
15	(Ambika Vishwanath and Mukund 2022)	Vishwanath, Ambika, and Aditi Mukund. "Feminist Foreign Policy Approaches to Strengthen Multilateral Cooperation." Journal of International Affairs	Vishwanath and Mukund (2022) situate the growth of FFP in current systems of multilateral governance. They argue that FFP must be seen as an approach and not an outcome. They also write that with developing countries like Mexico, Colombia and Chile adopting FFPs,

		75, no. 1 (2022): 143-152.	feminist approaches can restore trust in multilateralism.
16	(Zhukova 2023)	Zhukova, Ekatherina. "Postcolonial logic and silences in strategic narratives: Sweden's feminist foreign policy in conflict-affected states." <i>Global Society</i> 37, no. 1 (2023): 1-22.	In an innovative media analysis, Zhukova (2023) contributes to an analysis of the reception of FFP in postcolonial societies. She analyses the media coverage of the strategic narrative of Swedish FFP in twenty countries affected by conflict. She argues that postcolonial logic can operate through silence or lack of FFP coverage (postcolonial disengagement) and through presence of FFP narratives but with no scrutiny offered (postcolonial allowance).

Table 2.1: Journal articles using postcolonial feminist approaches to FFP that were analysed

The critical cartography revealed two findings that contributed to answering the research question on how postcolonial feminism engages with current FFP approaches. The first finding is that the scholarship reproduces the spatialisation of power that it critiques FFP for. The second finding is that the articles meet FFP with ‘Strategic Scepticism.’ Both are discussed below.

2.3.1 Spatialisation of Power in Postcolonial Feminist FFP scholarship

The primary finding from my critical cartography is that the existing postcolonial feminist scholarship on FFP inadvertently creates a ‘spatialisation of power.’ Spatialisation of power is seen by Alexander and Mohanty (2010, 28) as a spatial segregation that normalises the location of the academy as the epitome of knowledge production, which creates a border between the academy and the community. This construction of the community may or may not be the same as grassroots mobilisations. This spatialisation points to the social formation of multiple uneven spaces, which makeup the power/knowledge matrix.

According to them, this matrix creates insiders and outsiders and those who can and cannot know, thereby reinforcing the border around the academy (*ibid.*, 29).

McKittrick (2006, xiv) highlights how this spatiality has its own cartographic rules, which “unjustly organize human hierarchies in place and reify uneven geographies in familiar, seemingly natural ways.” These cartographic rules that dictate the spatialisation of power, are often seen in the production of scholarship in academia. The following paragraphs evidence the spatialisation of power in more detail, through the analytical lenses provided by the critical cartography: place, border and location.

(i) Place

Taking an understanding of the hierarchies of place as sites of operation of power, where certain discourses are more privileged than others, I have two observations with respect to the scholarship analysed. One, the choice of adopting postcolonial feminist approaches to analyse FFP ensured that the articles are privileging discourses that seek to unravel colonial hierarchies. Therefore, according to Alexander and Mohanty's (2010) definition of the hierarchies of place which usually manifest in privileging Eurocentric discourses, these articles take FFP scholarship in the opposite vein, seeking essentially to dismantle Eurocentric framings of feminism.

The second observation is the choice of the FFPs to study. Ten out of sixteen articles work on FFPs adopted by states in the Global North (Bergman Rosamond, Cheung, and De Leeuw 2023; Cheung and Scheyer 2024; Guerrina, Haastrup, and Wright 2023; Hauschild and Stamm 2024; Midzain-Gobin and Dunton 2021; Morton, Muchiri, and Swiss 2020; Nylund, Håkansson, and Bjarnegård 2022; Robinson 2021; H. Smith and Ajadi 2020; Zhukova 2023); two work on FFP as a concept broadly (Achilleos-Sarll 2018; Achilleos-Sarll et al. 2022), while four on FFPs from the Global South (Haastrup 2020; Runyan 2024; Thomson 2022; Ambika Vishwanath and Mukund 2022). Despite these articles all working on some form of postcolonial feminist theory, the disproportionality between the choices of FFPs to study is visible, with Global North FFPs having the maximum engagement of scholars.

(ii) Border

‘Border’ is understood here as a transnational feminist concept that is composed of the physical space that separates groups, and in terms of knowledge, the structurally asymmetrical in-between spaces which can reveal possibilities for knowledge-production. I will specifically focus on the latter understanding of borders, to help flesh out knowledge-production processes in the mapped scholarship.

Based on this, I observe that fifteen of sixteen articles are based in academic spaces, primarily universities, with the exception of Vishwanath and Mukund (2022) who work at an FFP think tank. Thus, cross border theorisation only manifests in the choice of which FFP to study, which as discussed above, are primarily studies of Global North FFPs. This points to a potential gap which reveals that since most of the theorisation occurs within the space of academia, there is little to no consultation with ‘in-between spaces,’ which in this case would be other sources of knowledge production like think tanks working on similar topics, or contemporary feminist movements. Another exception to this observation is Färber’s article, which focusses on think tank contributions to FFP consultations, where Färber herself represented think tanks (Achilleos-Sarll et al. 2022).

Another observation that creates a spatialisation of power is that the sources engaged with are mainly institutional in nature and are detached from bottom-up theorisations. There are two exceptions however: Bergman Rosamond, Cheung, and De Leeuw (2023) engage with both institutional and indigenous sources of knowledge, while Zhukova (2023) engages primarily with newspapers in postcolonial post-conflict societies, thereby using knowledge productions from the Global South.

While FFP is a policy that is drafted by governments, engaging primarily with institutional sources risks seeing only the governments as knowledge-producers. Such a genealogy is a reflection of the disciplines FFP borrows its methods from. International Relations (IR) as a field is often known for its focus on elite interviews. Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) as a field of enquiry in IR, comprises an investigation into decision-making and -makers, the processes and conditions which influence the same (Alden and Aran 2017, 3). On the surface level therefore, an examination of FFP policy documents does make sense in the continuity of FPA and IR.

However there has been a growth of post-positivist FPA that critiques ‘conventional’ FPA, and postcolonial approaches that critique even the former for its marginalisation of gendered, sexualised and racialised dimensions of foreign policy (Achilleos-Sarll 2018). FFP research that this chapter analyses has taken inspiration from these critiques and applied them to feminist perspectives to foreign policy. Therefore, I am arguing that such critiques must also be applied on the methodologies, and there must be a turn towards other sources of knowledge production, disrupting the idea that foreign policy is only constructed/crafted institutionally.

(iii) Location

In terms of location, fifteen of the sixteen papers are knowledge productions from the physical location of the Global North. The exception is Vishwanath and Mukund (2022), who work from India.

This observation doesn’t take away from the richness of the work conducted in the scholarship, nor does it take away from other non-peer-reviewed articles on FFP published in the Global South (Devasia 2022; Rathore 2021). While the articles analysed here do engage with questions of coloniality in the structures of FFP, the locations from which this work is being produced is indeed telling of the political economy of journal publications, accessibility to resources and knowledge-production in the academy.

My thesis too, is evidence of the reinforcing of the spatialisation of power. I too engage with academic scholarship as sources, and don’t use ground-up knowledge-productions as part of my analysis. This presents a huge limitation of the study and can form the basis for critique of the study. This is discussed in more detail in the Conclusion of the thesis.

Therefore, a critical cartography of current postcolonial feminist scholarship on FFP reveals that there is an inadvertent spatialisation of power in the research, as seen through the lenses of place, border and location. The first research question of this thesis was: How does postcolonial feminism engage with current FFP approaches? The first section of this chapter demonstrated that postcolonial feminism reveals the limits in increased representation, the coloniality inherent in the way Global South women are represented as victims, and the projection of FFP by states that ignore the gendered colonial dynamics

within their borders. In the spirit of the being ‘autocritical,’ the next section conducted a critical cartography of the scholarship, which revealed that postcolonial feminist FFP knowledge is still reflective of global power hierarchies in knowledge production. The next steps in postcolonial feminist encounters with FFP would ideally involve more study of the Global South from the Global South and from more diverse sources. By bringing attention to Indian foreign policy from a postcolonial feminist perspective (discussed later in this chapter in section 2.4), this thesis does the former (although not the latter).

2.3.2 Strategic Scepticism in current Postcolonial Feminist FFP scholarship

A second important finding from the critical cartography is that although postcolonial feminists are highly critical of current FFPs, they do not reject the concept outright. Rather they meet FFP with ‘Strategic Scepticism’. By this I mean that although they adopt a sceptical approach towards Western-originated liberal policies, they remain strategically sceptic and do not entirely reject FFP. This strategic scepticism I argue is seen through the emergence of four themes in the scholarship: one, they don’t limit FFP analysis to liberal feminist themes like representation, two, they analyse the silences in non-/engagement with FFP, three, they scrutinise adoption of feminist principles without the FFP label, and four, they study links between FFP and other policy intersections like healthcare, migration and climate change.

I argue that strategic scepticism is not only an approach towards FFP seen in the literature but is also a tool that can build the foundation of original postcolonial feminist conceptualisations of FFP. By being strategically sceptic, postcolonial feminist scholars are resistant to accepting policies constructed in the Global North. As argued by Ansorg, Haastrup & Wright (2019, 208), these manifest in brown and black bodies inevitably becoming the testing ground for policy priorities, because of which, I argue, this resistance towards them signifies a reclaiming of agency by postcolonial feminist scholars.

Scepticism is seen in all sixteen papers analysed here. For instance, in the forum article by Achilleos-Sarll et al. (2022), scholars discuss how feminism in FFP reconciles with militarism. They write:

“Thus, while activists have argued that FFP has the potential to be emancipatory due to its ability to “scrutinise the destructive forces of patriarchy, colonisation, heteronormativity, capitalism, racism, imperialism, and militarism” (CFFP n.d.) in practice, it is also possible that FFP adapts and reacts to these oppressive hierarchical systems. As such, the recent embrace of militarization in the European sphere appears not to conform to prior feminist reticence toward militarization” (*ibid.*, 20)

They go on to highlight that the tensions between FFP and militarisation are disagreements between competing feminisms. In doing so, they challenge FFP’s emancipatory potential, which these scholars do not leave unquestioned. They write that while FFP “cannot challenge global power hierarchies in the ways that feminists may aspire, it is worth making allowances, at least for the reasons why this entanglement occurs and why now” (Achilleos-Sarll et al. 2022, 20).

This scepticism is directed towards current articulations of FFP, and it’s also visible in Bergman Rosamond, Cheung, and De Leeuw (2023). They argue that there are “general tendencies of FFPs towards paternalistic care,” (*ibid.*, 3), which highlights their scepticism. They also show that narratives of feminist statehood are rarely rooted in self-reflection (*ibid.*, 6), and unless they are self-reflexive, FFPs will remain rooted in the false ethical image of the state (*ibid.*, 18).

This scepticism is also observed in the work of Thomson (2022, 16) where she shows how vehicles that could make FFP a success (international institutions, global alliances, legal treaties) is declining and even under attack in the current global environment due to anti-immigration policies, for instance. She concludes by saying that given such a global environment, and women’s rights needing substantial commitment, “It remains too soon to know whether or not FFP provides this.” The idea of not accepting the Global North’s conceptions of FFP without problematising it, is the root of my conceptualisation of strategic scepticism. Nylund, Håkansson, and Bjarnegård (2022, 1) analyse Swedish FFP in relation to postcolonial feminist theory and conclude that a large part of the “Swedish FFP discourse reproduces essentialist discourse informed by colonial legacies, but with a new feminist label.”

Despite the overtly visible scepticism observed in the articles towards FFP, the scepticism is not accompanied by a complete rejection of FFP as a policy instrument. If anything, scholars speak of its transformative potential (Robinson 2021). It is for this reason that I call their scepticism *strategic*, since they are strategically suggesting ways forward from postcolonial feminist viewpoints, and not a dismissal of FFP.

This is seen for instance in Nylund, Håkansson, and Bjarnegård (2022, 13), where the authors conclude their research saying that while the discourse of FFP is still bound by the existing approach to foreign policy, important transformable elements are discernible. Their findings are strategically sceptic as well. Their research found that the discourse of Sweden's FFP showed both essentialist framings of women's concerns and desires, while at the same time containing transformative elements like committing to incorporate intersectional analysis.

Similarly, Robinson (2021, 23) suggests using the framework of a critical feminist ethic of care to disrupt the hierarchies in feminist foreign policy. She recognises that such a perspective could challenge the idea of a foreign policy itself, but doesn't pursue that further, writing: "I would argue that there is currently some discursive, political and ethical momentum behind the idea of feminist foreign policy, and that it is emerging at a time where the need for feminist mobilization – against the forces of patriarchy and populism – is more urgent than ever."

Thomson's (2022, 184) research on reproduction of gendered hierarchies also concludes similarly: "FFP may ensure a clearer role for gender equality on both the world stage and within individual states' foreign policy. Yet, given the early stage of this policy evolution, the implementation and impact of FFP is yet to be fully seen."

The articles, therefore, while offering nuanced critiques of FFP, also end with optimistic yet critical, strategically sceptic ways of thinking about FFP. They do this not only in direct ways as shown above, but also render it visible in the inventive methods and themes they use to engage with FFP. These analytical themes, observed in most of the articles, both broaden and deepen the scope of FFP research. I argue that this enriches the study of FFP, and reclaims postcolonial agency in otherwise Western-liberal methods of understanding FFP. I posit that strategic scepticism is thus also visible through four of analytical methods

that postcolonial feminist scholarship employs. These are — not limiting FFP analysis to liberal feminist themes like representation, analysing the silences in non-/engagement with FFP, examining of the adoption of feminist principles beyond the FFP label, and by studying links between FFP and other policy intersections like healthcare, migration and climate change.

The first analytical method observed is that the scholarship here is not limiting FFP analysis to liberal feminist themes like representation. In fact, it can be asserted that liberal themes like the ‘add women and stir’ approach is critiqued by these articles (Achilleos-Sarll 2018). Previous scholarship on FFP that didn’t engage with postcolonial feminist perspectives in their research, often focussed on the lack of gender perspectives in IR and FPA, which to an extent is remedied by FFP. For instance, Aggestam and Bergman-Rosamond (2016, 332) write that the FFP research agenda could provide incentive to investigate the normative orientation of states’ international policies. They also take the cosmopolitanism approach to international justice and argue that FFP is an ethically informed normative reorientation. However, such a contribution of FFP is questioned by scholars analysed in this chapter, like Robinson (2021, 21) who argues that liberal cosmopolitanism works to reproduce Western liberal modes of domination and works to undercut and not facilitate FFP.

Not only do the articles analysed here problematise liberal analytical themes surrounding FFP, but also further FFP analysis to postcolonial feminist framings, not restricted to Western liberal themes like representation. This is seen in the scholarship analysing discursive elements of power at play in policy language (Nylund, Håkansson, and Bjarnegård 2022), colonial implications of state sanctioned approaches to care (Bergman Rosamond, Cheung, and De Leeuw 2023), care extractivism and neocolonial reinforcement (Cheung and Scheyer 2024), historical evolution of EU’s gender actor over time (Guerrina, Haastrup, and Wright 2023), and media perceptions of FFP in conflict states (Zhukova 2023).

I argue that this reflects the authors’ scepticism in not accepting FFP analysis that is restricted to Western liberal framings of foreign policy. However, they do so strategically, since they seek to expand the scope of FFP analysis.

The second theme observed is the analysis of the silences in non-engagement/engagement with FFP. It is seen in the scholarship that non-engagement with FFP is also analysed as a form of engagement, or, as Zhukova (2023) analyses a postcolonial allowance. She writes that analysing silences reveal an acceptance or rejection of gender equality norms, thereby studying the agency of local actors with respect to FFP. This is also observed in Nylund, Håkansson, and Bjarnegård (2022, 11) who analyse the silences within Sweden's FFP itself, and conceptualise those silences as essentialist assumptions that are universally applicable, like reinforcing notions of women as victims and men as perpetrators. They show that there has also been a silence within the engagement in FFP with respect to a nuanced portrayal of men:

“While Sweden's FFP commits to consider and include both sexes in its work for gender equality, the space for men is either vague or rather limited. It states that men are to be included in work for gender equality. However, the only specific mention to how they are to be involved regards destructive masculinities (1). Men are repeatedly portrayed as the perpetrators and women as victims. For example, men's responsibilities in the work for gender equality is brought to light, but not how men may be disadvantaged from inequality or how they can be positive agents of change.” (*ibid.*).

Another instance of an analysis of the disengagement with FFP is observed in Guerrina, Haastrup, and Wright (2023, 493), who write that EU institutions don't need to use the FFP language to stake their claim as a feminist power—“By encoding key liberal feminist concepts – e.g. equality, empowerment and participation – into mainstream ideations about the EU, they are reaffirming the organisation's position as a (neo-liberal) gender actor and thus a (sort of) feminist power.”

Based on the aforementioned instances, it is observed that by analysing silences, FFP scholars are not restricting analysis to official adoption, but also understanding non-adoption as a form of engagement. I argue that this reflects the author's strategic scepticism, since they not only reject universalising norms of a linear mode of foreign policy analysis that excluded other forms of adoption, but also open up a space for understanding agency through silence.

The third analytical approach used by the authors is that their scrutiny of FFP goes beyond the official adoption of the 'feminist' label. Similar to the previous theme, this too deepens

the scope of FFP analysis, and can be argued, looks at FFP as broader gender norms over and above the label. For instance, Cheung and Scheyer (2024, 5) discuss the co-optation of the feminist label, to justify Western interventions in the Global South. Guerrina, Haastrup, and Wright (2023, 489) suggest that coherence and consistency in applying feminist ethics, and not the FFP label, must be key to assessing the state's gender actions —

“The question for feminist and gender scholars is whether FFP represents a shift in the way gender perspectives have been integrated into global politics, or whether it is a mere branding exercise by states seeking to affirm their position in the international system. Ultimately, it is probably a bit of both, in so far as it has elevated discussions about gender and other feminist principles to the area of “high politics”, but it has done so in limited and limiting ways.”

I argue that this strategic scepticism is evident in the scholars not rejecting, but nuancing the idea of the FFP label. This is also seen in Robinson (2021, 34), who goes a step back from FFP to analyses the femininities and masculinities that form the binary of FFP's formulation.

The final theme observed in these articles is that they focus on the links of FFP with other policy intersections. In doing so, they take a holistic, intersectional view of empowerment, based on postcolonial feminist principles, not restricted to the particularities of FFP. In their forum article, Achilleos-Sarll et al. (2022) discuss FFP in the context of militarisation, climate change, migration and bodies. In doing so, they not only chart FFP's current formulations, but also highlight its multiple and contested futures. They also problematise current articulations of FFP as only focussed on FFP and not considering important policy intersections—

“Feminist foreign policy's ability to meet any of its goals will be deeply undercut, if not entirely thwarted, by the conjoined climate and ecological crises the world now faces. Given this, it is striking how peripherally these crises appear, and how shallowly they are treated, in governmental articulations of FFP” (Achilleos-Sarll et al. 2022, 13).

This is also seen in Zhukova (2023), who focusses on media and strategic narratives, therefore taking into account local actor's agency in interpreting foreign policy; and in Bergman Rosamond, Cheung, and De Leeuw (2023, 2, 5), where they analyse indigenous justice claims, thereby linking FFP to domestic justice.

I argue here that FFP analysis that takes into account other policy issues, is more nuanced since it goes beyond a theoretical understanding of policy, to the practical aspect of implementation. This is revealing of the authors' scepticism towards FFP, to contend with which they situate FFP in practical issues of foreign policy, which legitimises what FFP would look like in practice.

2.3.3 How Postcolonial Feminism engages with FFP: Spatialisation of Power and Strategic Scepticism

The previous two sections combined push the answer to the research question. While the first half of this chapter revealed that postcolonial feminism is offering deep criticisms of FFP, this second half asked some auto-critical questions about this scholarship which points to future developments and research directions. As the same time, the critical cartography showed that from a strategically sceptical stance, postcolonial feminists are suggesting new ways FFP can be realised.

For the purposes of this thesis, I have employed the philosophy of strategic scepticism as part of my methodology. This is to ensure that the strategically sceptic approaches of postcolonial feminism, the theoretical framework of this thesis, are *applied* in this research. This is seen in the thesis is not limiting its work to liberal feminist themes like representation and focussing on scrutinising adoption of feminist principles beyond the FFP label. In this way by being strategically sceptic in my thesis, I am also contributing to expand the scope of FFP analysis.

However, when it comes to the spatialisation of power, I am unable to combat it. The thesis is researching the FFPs of Global North countries, and by virtue of being produced from a Global North academic space and engaging with institutional sources, it still reinforces the spatialisation of power. Although I have outlined the importance of the role of the state in this research, in terms of the state's representations of foreign policy being the focus, it must be acknowledged that postcolonial feminism is critical of state institutions. The theory critiques the mainstream and seeks to advance marginalised perspectives. This is why, the lack of engagement with bottom-up peace strategies works as a spatialisation of power in

this thesis and serves as a limitation of this work. This is discussed in detail in the methodology (chapter 3) and the limitations of this work (conclusion).

Conclusion

This chapter began with a brief introduction to the concept of Feminist Foreign Policy. FFP is now adopted by countries across the Global North and South and focusses on mainstreaming gender into the realm of foreign policy and international politics. For this thesis, I focussed on the Global North's adoption of FFPs.

I then employed the postcolonial feminist lens to critically analyse Feminist Foreign Policy. I forwarded three types of critique. The first was a critical take on the liberal thought in the conceptual logic of FFP as seen in the focus on the 'add women and stir' approach, tokenism, framings of the nation through borders, and the identities that inform the policy. The second critique was on the portrayals of the 'third world woman,' and how these are problematic because they essentialise, victimise and homogenise women from the global South. The third critique was on how countries that adopt FFP (especially Sweden and Canada) project their foreign policy outwards, thereby ignoring the racial dynamics within their borders (seen in the othering of indigenous populations) and outside their borders (as seen in the Global South being seen as a site for policy experimentation).

In the next section, I conducted a critical cartography of postcolonial feminist approaches to FFP. The chapter manually scoped and reviewed sixteen peer-reviewed journal articles in the field through lenses of 'place,' 'border' and 'location,' thereby finding a spatialisation of power in the scholarship. I demonstrate how the articles are reinforcing the colonial hierarchies they are critiquing, by privileging institutional sources of knowledge production, and by being located in the Global North. This spatialisation of power raises questions about the politics of knowledge production.

I also found that postcolonial feminist scholarship meets FFP with 'Strategic Scepticism,' which I conceptualise as a sceptical approach towards Western-originated liberal policies, but strategically sceptic for its lack of an entire rejection of FFP. The chapter posits that strategic scepticism reclaims postcolonial agency amongst Western-dominated literature in four ways: by not limiting FFP analysis to liberal feminist themes like representation, by

analysing the silences in non-/engagement with FFP, by scrutinising adoption of feminist principles without the FFP label, and by studying links between FFP and other policy intersections like healthcare, migration and climate change.

Across this chapter, I have engaged with my research question as to what a postcolonial feminist analysis of FFP reveals. While section 2.2 was an analytical engagement with existing critiques, section 2.3 was an original contribution of this work. Specifically, analysing the spatialisation of power and conceptualising strategic scepticism in the scholarship are original findings of this thesis. Although these concepts answer the research question, I will also discuss them in the next few chapters, since strategic scepticism is applied in the methodological decision-making (chapter 3) and the spatialisation of power is a limitation of this research (conclusion). This chapter explored the first research axis of this work. The next chapters move to the second research axis and discuss the methodology and case study for the same.

Chapter 3: Methodology: A Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis of India's Postcolonial Foreign Policy

Introduction

Chapter 1 discussed the theoretical framework of the thesis, postcolonial feminism. Chapter 2 elaborated on Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP) and offered postcolonial feminist critiques of both its practice by Global North countries, and its knowledge-production. Thus, these chapters formed the first research axis of the thesis and critically analysed a progressive representation of foreign policy, namely FFPs of the Global North, with a postcolonial feminist lens.

The next few chapters turn the focus towards the second research axis, which is the context of India. They seek to look at another progressive representation of foreign policy, namely India's construction of its identity as postcolonial. I answer the research question: *How do progressive representations of foreign policy do under the scrutiny of postcolonial feminism?* The objective is to critically analyse India's progressive representation of itself as postcolonial, through the lens of postcolonial feminism. In this case, I will analyse India's foreign policy as articulated at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) through the lens of postcolonial feminism to understand what kind of feminist ideas (if any) underpin the UNSC policy and what that implies.

The current chapter thereby leads us to this part of the analysis, by detailing the research methodology employed in answering the aforementioned research question. The chapter is divided into four parts. Part one begins with a discussion on feminist methodologies and epistemological standpoints. Part two links this discussion to the method chosen, Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA). Part three outlines the practical techniques and specific strategies I employed in the FCDA method. This includes the manual scoping technique and the software analysis technique. It also discusses which documents were chosen for the FCDA and the justification of these choices. Part four addresses ethics in feminist research, and my own reflexivity as a researcher.

3.1 Feminist Thinking about Methodology

This thesis follows from the philosophical idea that feminist research challenges the “boundaries within which the discipline of International Relations has sought to confine it” (Weber 1994, 338). This viewpoint of calling into question hegemonic modes of knowledge production informs the core epistemology of feminist research. I understand epistemology as a theory of knowledge that answers questions like ‘who can be a knower’ (‘can women?’) and ‘what kind of things can be known’ (can “subjective truths” count as knowledge?) (Harding 1987, 3). Feminist epistemology is more than the study of feminine “ways of knowing,” it is a branch of social epistemology that studies the influences of conceptions of gender, gender norms and gendered experiences on the production of knowledge (Anderson 1995, 50). However, feminist epistemology does not claim feminine cognitive differences, which are dubious at best (*ibid.*). Rather, the goal is to consider how non-masculinist perspectives construct the world differently (Leavy and Harris 2019, 44). For instance, Okech (2020, 314) draws on conceptualisation of ‘feminist epistemic communities’ which are either communities or individuals in the community, to ask foundational feminist epistemic questions: who knows? And how are those knowledges accessed and enabled?

Situational epistemology is another concept that characterises feminist research. Situated knowledge is shaped by a complexity of intersecting experiences and helps uncover the presence of several epistemological standpoints when thinking of peace and violence (Parashar, Féron, and Confortini 2021, 13). This is rendered visible in Julian, Bliesemann De Guevara, and Redhead (2019), where a choice of feminist epistemology helped them ground the experiential knowledge of “ordinary people” in conflict situations in their research in Myanmar (in McLeod and O’Reilly 2019). Situated epistemology in this way challenges universalising in knowledge production. It seeks to not only recast questions of who creates and defines knowledge but also gives importance to context or situatedness as a way to reclaim *many* epistemological standpoints.

Feminist epistemologies that challenge the hegemonic gendered production of knowledge, spotlight the importance of context, and uncover multiple ways of thinking, thereby inform my feminist methodology. I understand ‘methodology’ from Ackerly, Stern, and True

(2006, 6, 7), as a framework that guides epistemological assumptions and reflections. I adopt what (Björkdahl and Selimovic 2021, 40) write about feminist methodology: a set of investigatory and explanatory skills and sensitivities, which efficiently reveal exclusions, identify patterns of oppression and locate unexpected agency. Feminist methodologies spotlight how gender as an identity category, an analytical lens and an organising logic is foundational to our ontologies (Shepherd 2017). Thus, the goal of feminist methodologies is to reveal power relations and hierarchies of domination, thereby unmasking “the causes and consequences of politics of masculinities and femininities” (Enloe 2017, 63). Ultimately, feminist research is not only useful in the production of feminist methodologies, but its contributions also alter the field of theory (Haraway 1996, 81, 96).

Therefore, what makes a methodology feminist is when it asks feminist research questions about power (A. T. Wibben et al. 2019; Åhäll 2018). Methodology in this sense is a continuous process, that develops new knowledge and is driven by sceptical scrutiny (Ackerly, Stern, and True 2006, 257). The scepticism here is similar to postcolonial feminists’ strategic scepticism about FFP (chapter 2). In being sceptical, feminists problematise knowledge production, while simultaneously thinking about emancipation and transformation (Björkdahl and Selimovic 2021, 41).

In her ground-breaking work on feminist epistemology and feminist methodologies, Harding (1987, 1) writes that there is no distinctive feminist method, but rather distinctive characteristics of feminist analyses, and that is what makes them powerful. These are: using women’s experiences as theoretical resources, understanding inquiry *for* women as the new purpose of social science, and locating the researcher in the same critical plane as the overt subject matter. Viewing from the perspective of feminist developments in research today, Harding’s position can be criticised as reductionist (Pinnick 1994, 648), as too established with Eurocentric scientific discourses (Spina, Roberts, and Clough 2002, 1), and her theorisation of gender as too binary (Zita 1988, 1). These critiques call for a more careful examination of what constitutes feminist methodologies. For instance, Black feminism and Dalit feminism have contested the existence of any coherent body of shared experience that all women have, based on their gender identity (Chakraborty 2017, 52). This critique of a common feminist experience used to homogenise other feminisms was briefly discussed in chapter 1. Chakraborty writes that in the “postcolonial, globalised, neo-liberal, neo-imperial world that we inhabit, dramatic lines of separation exist between women on the

basis of their race, caste, class and nationality” (*ibid.*). Therefore, while adopting a feminist methodology informed by feminist epistemologies, this research is also cognizant of postcolonial feminist perspectives that problematise the former.

I will be using these principles in this thesis in the analysis of Indian foreign policy — I will be referring to postcolonial feminist scholarship (in chapters 1 and 2) as the theoretical base and attempting to understanding Indian foreign policy as not just a ‘postcolonial’ construction in itself, but as a policy *for* women. Therefore, I derive my approaches from two of feminist epistemology’s traditions: one of offering a deep critique of mainstream approaches; and two of developing innovative, insightful *alternative* strategies of ways of knowing (Sprague and Kobryniewicz 2006): a postcolonial feminist analysis of India’s UNSC policy is one of the original contributions of this research.

3.2 Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis — A Discussion

Following from the theoretical approaches guiding the methodology, this section elaborates on the particular method chosen to conduct the research, Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) as proposed by Lazar (2014). Since FFP is a policy instrument, most of the work to study it is based on analysis of policy documents, both governmental and private (policy papers as released by think tanks, non-governmental organisations, academic research, etc). Although different modes of study are possible, as shown in the critical cartography of FFP literature in chapter 2, most of the literature focusses on policy papers and governmental documents for analysis. This rest of the thesis follows this particular tradition of FFP work and focusses on critically analysing policy documentation as the mode of investigation. Thus, FCDA as a method was chosen, since it enables a thorough analysis of foreign policy documentation. The justifications for which documents were chosen and why, are elaborated in the following part of this chapter.

FCDA is a critical feminist method of contemporary gender research. However, before discussing FCDA and how I use it in the research, I will first elaborate on the concepts of ‘discourse,’ ‘discourse analysis’ and ‘Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA),’ thereby leading to FCDA. I will then discuss the role played by postcolonial feminist theory in nuancing the framework of FCDA.

Discourse analysis as a method finds its roots in critical linguistics, social semiotics or critical language studies, and has in recent years moved across the arts, humanities and social sciences (Gill 2000, 173). Gill defines the term ‘discourse’ as a reference to “all forms of talk and texts, whether it be naturally occurring conversations, interview material, or written texts of any kind” (*ibid.*). Discourse analysis becomes the study and analysis of the uses of language with the idea that examining segments of the research helps understand meaning at a “meta” level, rather than at the level of actual semantic meaning (Hodges et. al. 2008, 570, 572). Discourse analysis is therefore an interpretation, that is warranted by detailed attention to the material being studied, and then arguments being made after (Gill 2000, 188).

‘Critical’ theories, as elaborated in chapter 1, are emancipatory theories that attempt to expose the inequalities and asymmetries that the mainstream theories ignore (Heywood 2011, 67). Therefore, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is different than Discourse Analysis since the former aims to examine not only the texts, but also the ways in which power and its constructions are made possible by certain ways of thinking and speaking (Hodges et. al. 2008, 570). CDA as a research program is concerned with analysis of various forms of social inequality and injustice and is often known for its political stance (Lazar 2007, 142). Such a stance often enables discourse analysts to also make broader claims or “macroanalysis” (Hodges et. al. 2008, 571).

In justifying why we need a more explicit feminist CDA, Lazar (2007, 142) highlights how mainstream discourse analysis research has been characterised by a supposedly neutral and objective inquiry which feminist scholars have challenged. Although CDA comprises progressive projects, it is still founded by all straight white men, and Lazar notes these men’s failure to credit feminists in their work. While this is changing in recent years, Lazar (2007) writes that it is necessary within CDA to establish a distinctly “feminist politics of articulation,” a phrase borrowed from Wetherell (1995, 141), which is the need to be guided by feminist principles in analysis. Scholars have elaborated on this by articulating that gender is an omni-relevant category in many social practices and is more pervasive and complex than other systems of oppression (Lazar 2007, 143; Eckert 1989, 253, 254). Lazar (2007) also suggests that having a distinctively feminist CDA serves the function of feminist visibility.

Feminist CDA can therefore be seen as a political perspective on gender that is “concerned with demystifying the interrelationships of gender, power and ideology in discourse” (Lazar 2007, 144). This thesis uses the definition of FCDA as proposed by Lazar (2014, 182):

“FCDA is a perspective that seeks to examine the complex, subtle, and sometimes not so subtle ways in which frequently taken-for-granted gendered assumptions and power asymmetries get discursively produced, sustained, negotiated, and contested in specific communities and discourse texts. With a focus on social justice and transformation, the aim is to challenge discourses that entrench gendered social arrangements...guided by the goals of social emancipation and transformation.”

FCDA is different from CDA, because it draws on CDA for feminist purposes. This is different than conducting CDA to study gender. The latter leaves the theories and methods of CDA unchanged, except for the object of study being ‘gender.’ But FCDA is fundamentally driven by critical theory and practice, is politically invested and understands critique as a contribution in itself. Most importantly, it is shaped by “feminist political imagination” (Bell 1999), which relies on feminist theory to radically critique dominant discourses on gender (De Lauretis 1987). FCDA draws upon contemporary feminist theorisation including postcolonialism and accommodates a variety of methods. This research will keep the five key principles of FCDA as guiding lights for the discourse analysis, as highlighted in the following paragraphs.

The first principle outlined by Lazar (2014, 184) is titled “Feminist analytical activism.” It says that FCDA voices critique through an analysis of discourse and outlines the critique’s radical emancipatory agenda. In terms of this thesis, I seek to build a postcolonial feminist critique of India’s UNSC policy, thereby presenting a potential for an emancipatory agenda through incorporating postcolonial feminist insights in foreign policy. Feminist analytical activism would also pave the way for a radical reimagination of India’s foreign policy.

The second principle is titled, “‘Gender’ as an ideological structure and practice,” and claims that patriarchal gender ideology is structural, and enacted in a society’s institutions and social practices (*ibid.*, 186). By examining foreign policy discourses in the institutional

structures of the UNSC, I can demonstrate how India's interaction with the institution of the UNSC upholds patriarchal gender norms (discussed in chapter 6).

In the third principle titled "Complexity of gender and power relations," Lazar (2014, 187) suggests that FCDA must engage with various forms of power relations, for instance, in terms of top-down institutional power or the resistance of the social status quo by disadvantaged groups. My research attempts to do both, through its focus on top-down foreign policy documents as the primary discourse, and its usage of postcolonial feminist theory as the theory of the subaltern.

The fourth principle is, "Discourse in the (de)construction of gender" (*ibid.*, 190). This implies that while gender is of political analytical focus, feminist discourse analysts must also focus on other social categories that are relevant for understanding the situatedness of gender in any given context (*ibid.*, 191). This research will take into account intersections of identities, as highlighted by postcolonial feminist theory, as an important part of what constructs feminist foreign policy.

The fifth principle is called "Critical reflexivity as praxis" and speaks about the importance of reflexive practices being part of FCDA, as indicators of social awareness and possibilities for change (*ibid.*, 192, 193). Lazar rightly points out that self-reflexivity is necessary to safeguard against inadvertently reproducing hierarchical gender norms and relations (discussed in detail in section 3.5 of this chapter).

I chose the FCDA method since the goals of my research are also to reveal constructions of gendered power within articulations of foreign policy. I believe that this method would allow for a close examination of foreign policy documents, thereby enabling me to observe feminist ideas (if any) in India's UN statements and develop a postcolonial feminist critique of India's current foreign policy. The following section elaborates how I implemented the FCDA method practically, with respect to the discourses chosen and their justification.

3.3 Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis — Practical Techniques and Strategies

I define Foreign Policy through definitions of two scholars as follows: foreign policy as "a state-based practice towards that which is beyond the state's borders" (Bulley 2014, 16)

and as the behaviour of states mainly towards other states in the international system through their authorised agents (Tayfur 1994, 113). Therefore, I will be understanding foreign policy as a state-based or governmental domain of work. This implies that I will be looking at documents released by the state (the Government of India in this case).

To arrive at the decision to examine India's UNSC policy statements for the FCDA, I devised four qualifying questions. The first qualifying question was: Which part of foreign policy will I focus on and why? Mainly making the distinction between 'foreign' and 'domestic,'¹⁰ some scholars clarify the scope of what constitutes foreign policy as that which is not limited to military or security subjects, but also areas like foreign economic policy, international environmental and human rights policy, to name a few (Kaarbo, Lantis, and Beasley 2013, 4). Given this breadth, it became important to narrow the focus of this research to one aspect of foreign policy, for which I first looked at India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA). The MEA is tasked with dealing with India's foreign affairs, foreign policy, and its relations with other countries, among others (Government of India 2024a). Within these broad tasks, I studied the duties of the MEA, which are labelled, "Allocation of Business Rules to the Ministry of External Affairs" (Government of India 2023). These duties included up to fifty-five items, such as: "Relations with foreign states and Commonwealth Countries" (Item 02), "All Consular functions" (Item 10) and "Demarcation of the land frontiers of India" (Item 31), to name a few (*ibid.*).

Since these duties collectively form India's foreign policy, to examine all of them with a postcolonial feminist lens, would practically be beyond the scope of this thesis. Thus, I took the decision to focus my analysis on part 18 of the business rules — "United Nations, Specialised Agencies and other International Organisations and Conferences" (*ibid.*). Even within part 18, the choice to specifically analyse the UN over other multilateral agencies

¹⁰ The distinction between foreign and domestic policy has been problematized in the previous chapters. For instance, in chapter 1, I discuss how postcolonial feminism highlights the importance of the domestic context in shaping foreign policies. This also reflects in the fourth postcolonial feminist postulate, which says that postcolonial nations project their foreign policy outwards to take attention away from their domestic failings. In chapter 2, I show how foreign policy is related to domestic issues, thereby problematizing Canada and Sweden's FFP. Such a blend between how domestic and foreign policies inform each other will be further seen in the next chapter on India's history and current developments, and how its foreign policy evolution is also characterised by domestic changes. For the purposes of this chapter, in order to narrow down the scope of *which part* of foreign policy I will be studying in this research, I look at Kaarbo, Lantis, and Beasley's (2013, 4) definitions of the scope of foreign policy. However, this by no means indicates that foreign policy must be seen in isolation.

was motivated by India's historical engagement with the organisation. India was amongst the fifty-one original members of the UN, back when it was formed in 1945, although it was still under British rule (Mukherjee and Malone 2013, 111). Thus, the nation's lengthy and continuing engagement with the UN would give my research a strong impetus and depth, specifically when it comes to the analysis of foreign policy within the institutional structures of the UN. This would also be practically feasible, due to the ease of access to, and transparency of official documentation comprising India's statements at the UN.

The second qualifying question I sought to answer was: Which part of India's UN policy will this research focus on? Again, finding focus was important because India's relationship with the UN is carried out through various organs, in many different ways. I chose to focus on the work of the Permanent Mission of India to the UN in New York (hereby also referred to as the Indian delegation) because of its centrality to India's engagement with the UN (Permanent Mission of India to the UN 2024a). Traditionally since the origins of the UN, the responsibility for advancing national policy is borne by permanent missions, who maintain offices on a year-round basis in New York (Pedersen 1961, 256). These missions carry out functions on behalf of the home government, while also advising the latter on the manner in which the UN can be utilised as a diplomatic instrument (*ibid.*). Permanent representatives thus have the primary task of communicating their home country's preferences to the UN (Gray and Baturu 2021, 719). Therefore, conducting the FCDA on the work of India's Permanent Mission would reveal the country's policy priorities, which I would then analyse from a postcolonial feminist lens.

In this way, I narrowed the research focus to the UN, and then to the work of the Permanent Mission of India to the UN in New York. The third qualifying question I answered to further narrow the focus of the research was: What is the time period of the study? I initially chose the time period from 2014 onwards, until June 2023. This was because 2014 corresponded to Sweden's official adoption of a FFP (Achilleos-Sarll et al. 2022, 3), and June 2023 was when the document collection needed to be completed for this research. After scoping the website of the Indian delegation, I traced 2126 documents covering the work of India's Permanent Mission to the UN from 2014-23. These comprised:

- Statements made by the Indian delegation at UN Security Council (UNSC)
- Statements made by the Indian delegation at UN General Assembly (UNGA)

- India and the UN Policy Priority documents

However, due to the practical considerations of analysing over 2000 documents, and to prompt a deeper focussed academic inquiry into India's policy positions in the international system, I decided to narrow this further. I chose to focus on India's two-year membership of the UN Security Council, from 2021-22. This led to the fourth qualifying question: Why the UNSC statements? This was done for four reasons: one, the practicality, as discussed above; and two, it would better highlight India's leadership and its policy priorities (Permanent Mission of India to the UN 2024a), which would make clear its international positioning. "International positioning" is a concept in IR that refers to the role and perception of the country's positioning in the international community (Jing 2019, 33. 34). Positioning entails a country's identity, its cultural and value systems, institutional strength, material positioning, and (particularly relevant to this research) its national interest (*ibid.*). An analysis of how India positions itself in the international system of the UNSC would be revealing of its national interests and therefore apt to conduct an FCDA on.

The third reason why the UNSC statements were chosen is because of the UNSC's mandate of peace and security. The UNSC is an important part of both the UN system and its structural hierarchy. The foundational establishing principles written in the UN Charter, confer on the Security Council the "primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, and agree that in carrying out its duties under this responsibility the Security Council acts on their [Members on the UN] behalf" (Shepherd 2008, 392). Therefore, the Security Council enjoys "considerable institutional and legislative powers," is central in the conduct of global political relations and is of unique importance and authority (Shepherd 2008, 392; Butler 2012, 23). As discussed in chapter 1, this research understands FFP as an endeavour for building sustainable peace and borrows a lot from traditions of feminist peace research. Therefore, analysing India's statements on peace and security at the UNSC would reflect whether India employs any postcolonial feminist insights in its statements on peace.

Reason four to choose the UNSC statements was the institution's familiarity with debates on gender within peace and security contexts. The UNSC is the site where the UNSC Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 was passed in 2000, which is hailed as a "vital and innovative political framework that enables the consideration of gender issues during periods of armed

conflict as well as in the processes of peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction” (Shepherd 2008, 383). Although Shepherd (*ibid.*) problematises the production of the Resolution and challenges the particular configuration of political authority and legitimacy of the UNSC, it is clear that through Resolution 1325 and the wider Women, Peace and Security Agenda, that the UNSC is no stranger to debates on gender and feminism. This provides me an opportunity to study the UNSC debates from a postcolonial feminist position. These four reasons were coupled with the fact that keeping the time period 2021-22 (India’s time of election as a non-permanent member of the UNSC) would make the thesis timely and relevant, allowing me to contextualise the research in current international relations.

For the purposes of this research, all the statements the Indian delegation made in the UNSC from 2021-22 were taken into consideration. This raises the question as to why *all*, as opposed to the statements made only on feminism and gender. India does not label its foreign policy ‘feminist.’ As shown in Chapter 2, postcolonial feminists do not limit the analysis of FFP to only the labels — they analyse the silences, the non-implementation and the agency of the actors in not/labelling their foreign policy in particular ways. This research is therefore an extension of that principle: applying postcolonial feminist insights to broadly evaluate India’s foreign policy stances on various issues in the UNSC would give a clearer picture on India’s foreign policy, as opposed to only looking at the limited number of statements made on gender (the number of statements made on gender, and how that is an interesting a finding in itself, is discussed in chapter 6). Also, as shown by postcolonial feminist critiques of FFP, the scope must not be limited to only ‘women’ and ‘gender’ issues, but rather, feminist perspectives on a variety of international issues; the climate crisis, for instance, as seen in (Achilleos-Sarll et al. 2022, 13).

To summarise, the inclusionary criteria for the FCDA documents have been tabulated below:

No.	Qualifying Questions	Inclusionary Criteria	Justification
1	Which part of India's foreign policy will this research focus on?	Mandate of the MEA	Written function of foreign policy
		Part 18 of rules: Focus on UN policy	1. India's historical engagement with the UN 2. Foreign policy as it plays out through institutions 3. Transparency and access to documentation
2	Which part of India's UN policy will this research focus on?	Work of the Permanent Mission of India to the UN in New York	1. Traditional responsibility for advancing national policy 2. Documents reflective of India's policy priorities
3	What is the time period of the study?	2014 to 2023 (initially)	1. Sweden's official adoption of a FFP in 2014 2. Document collection completed for this research in June 2023
4	Which work of the PMNY will this research focus on?	India's UNSC Statements (2021-22)	This is the time period when India served as an elected non-permanent member of the UNSC 1. Practicality of number of documents and accessibility 2. To understand India's 'international positioning' 3. UNSC's mandate of peace and security 4. Familiarity with debates on gender in peace and security 5. Timeliness of the research

Table 3.1: Inclusionary criteria of the documents to analyse using the FCDA method

Following this, the exclusionary criteria were — other foreign policy mandates of the MEA, statements made by the Indian delegation in other UN organs like the UNGA, and other time periods of study.

After incorporating the inclusionary and exclusionary criteria as discussed above, the final number of documents that I analysed was 440. These were the final statements made by the Permanent Mission of India to the UN in New York during India's UNSC tenure (2021-22). I downloaded each of these statements in the PDF format and created a folder for the corpus of documents.

The goal of the thesis, as mentioned above, is to analyse India's foreign policy through postcolonial feminist theory. 'Postcolonial Feminism' as discussed in chapter 1, comprises five major themes or postulates, which this thesis will analyse. This is not to say that the theory does not comprise several other contributions. However, with respect to postcolonial feminist engagements with IR, these five postulates emerge that are central to the analysis of this thesis:

1. Gender, Coloniality and Race structure IR and Foreign Policy
2. Liberal themes like representation, 'add women and stir,' a market-based economic emancipatory strategy, etc., are not the solution to gender inequality
3. Representation of the Global South woman in foreign policy tends towards the construction of narratives of victimhood and homogenisation which are reductive and deny women's agency
4. Postcolonial states project foreign policy outwards in order to drive attention away from domestic feminist failings
5. The necessity of the inclusion/advocacy of bottom-up experiences/approaches/peace strategies of postcolonial women in policymaking

These postulates are intrinsic to postcolonial feminism, as discussed in chapter 1 and guide the FCDA. The FCDA is comprised of two parts. The first part involved the manual scoping of the corpus of documents; and the second part used the software 'Sketch Engine' to flesh out word associations and repetitions. It must be noted here that the first method, the manual scoping of each document, is the primary method of the FCDA. The findings are arrived at through this method. The second method, the Sketch Engine software, is used for two

Part One of the FCDA method involved manually scoping the documents. I define ‘manual scoping’ as reading the document word-for-word and looking for emerging trends and patterns. To conduct this phase of the research, I used three tools — Microsoft Excel for the coding and analysis, Acrobat Reader for reading and highlighting the PDFs according to the designated code, and Microsoft Word for jotting down qualitative observations. I began with constructing an Excel workbook titled ‘Document Corpus,’ and dividing the sheets month-wise from January 2021 to December 2022. In terms of coding, I colour-coded the 5 postulates of postcolonial feminism as follows: 1-Red, 2-Orange, 3-Yellow, 4-Green and 5-Blue.

Document Corpus — Saved

Search (Cmd + Ctrl + U)

Home Insert Draw Page Layout Formulas Data Review View

Paste Calibri (Body) 12 A⁺ A⁻ B I U Merge & Centre

General Conditional Formatting Format as Table Cell Styles Insert Delete Format Sort & Filter Find & Select Add-ins Analyse Data

A2

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
1		5 Key postulates of Postcolonial Feminist Theory:					
2							
S.No.	Article Code	1. Gender-colonality-race as structuring IR and foreign policy	2. Excessive focus on liberal themes (representation, 'add women and stir', economic emancipatory strategy)	3. Representation of the Global South woman in foreign policy: narratives of victimhood and homogenisation	4. Projections of foreign policy outwards to drive away from domestic feminist failings	5. Inclusion/advocacy of bottom-up experiences/approaches/peace strategies of postcolonial women	
3							
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Ready Accessibility: Investigate

JAN-2021 FEB-2021 MAR-2021 APR-2021 MAY-2021 JUN-2021 JUL-2021 AUG-2021 SEPT-2021 OCT-2021 NOV-2021 DEC-2021 JAN-2022 FEB-2022 MAR-2022

Image 3.1: Document Corpus Excel Workbook for the FCDA analysis

I then opened up the PDFs of the documents in Acrobat Reader, reading each document in-depth to observe if there are any of the five postulates were reflected in the texts. When words/sentences/phrases that potentially corresponded to one of the postulates were observed in a document, I highlighted them in the coded colour, while simultaneously

inputting the page number and observation in the Excel sheet, under the designated postulate. The following images are examples of the same as conducted for the month of July 2022:

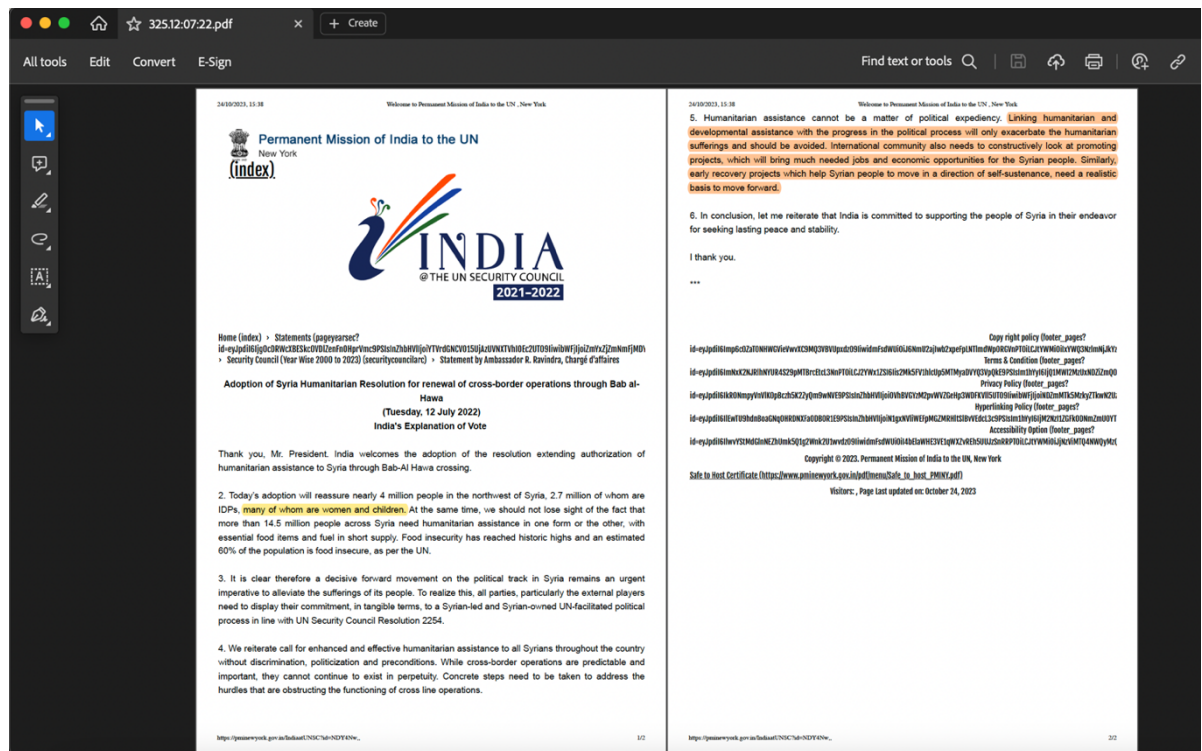


Image 3.2: Highlighted Statement 325 (made on 12 July 2022)

As visible in the image, in Statement 325, I found two postulates of postcolonial feminism. On page 1 of the statement, I found postulate 3 ('Representation of the Global South woman in foreign policy tends towards the construction of narratives of victimhood and homogenization which are reductive and deny women's agency'), which I highlighted in its coded colour yellow. On page 2, I found postulate 2 ('Liberal themes like representation, 'add women and stir,' a market-based economic emancipatory strategy, etc., are not the solution to gender inequality'), which I highlighted in its corresponding orange. Another example is below.

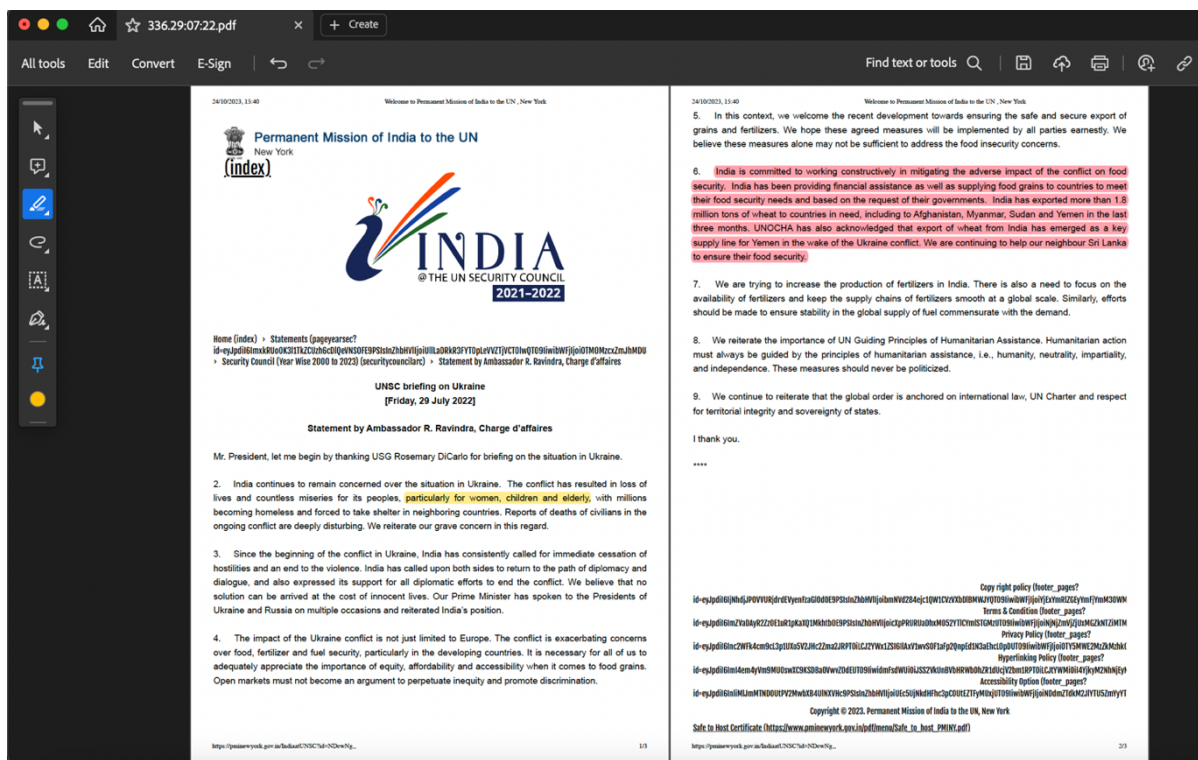


Image 3.3: Highlighted Statement 336 (made on 29 July 2022)

In this image, it is seen that I found postulate 3 on page 1 and postulate 1 on page 2 (Gender, coloniality and race structure IR and foreign policy). I then highlighted them with their corresponding colours, before inputting the exact page number of the finding, along with my observations in slightly more detail into the Document Corpus workbook as follows:

S.No.	Article Code	1. Gender-coloniality-race as structuring IR and foreign policy	2. Excessive focus on liberal themes (representation, 'add women and stir', economic emancipatory strategy)	3. Representation of the Global South woman in foreign policy: narratives of victimhood and homogenisation	4. Projections of foreign policy outwards to drive away from domestic feminist failings	5. Inclusion/advocacy of bottom-up experiences/approaches/peace strategies of postcolonial women
321	321.07/07/22			p1-miseries		
322	322.11/07/22					
323	323.11/07/22					
324	324.12/07/22			p1-tribute to all men and women in UNPK	p3- but exactly will women enhance the impact of peacekeeping	
325	325.12/07/22		p2-delinking aid to politics, but drafted in a different way	p1- internally displaces persons, many of whom are women and children		
326	326.14/07/22					
327	327.14/07/22			p2-mention of women and children along with indigenous afro communities		
328	328.15/07/22			p1- miseries		
329	329.19/07/22					
330	330.20/07/22					
331	331.25/07/22					p2- no external influence
332	332.26/07/22					
333	333.26/07/22					
334	334.27/07/22	p1,2- regional orgs and local complexities				
335	335.27/07/22	p2- developmental and women				
336	336.29/07/22	p1,2- concerns on disproportionate impact of ukraine war		p1- miseries		

Image 3.4: July 2022 sheet completed with postulates observed

After analysing each month, I wrote down broad trends in a Microsoft Word document titled ‘Observations conducting FCDA,’ which I then extrapolated to draft my findings.

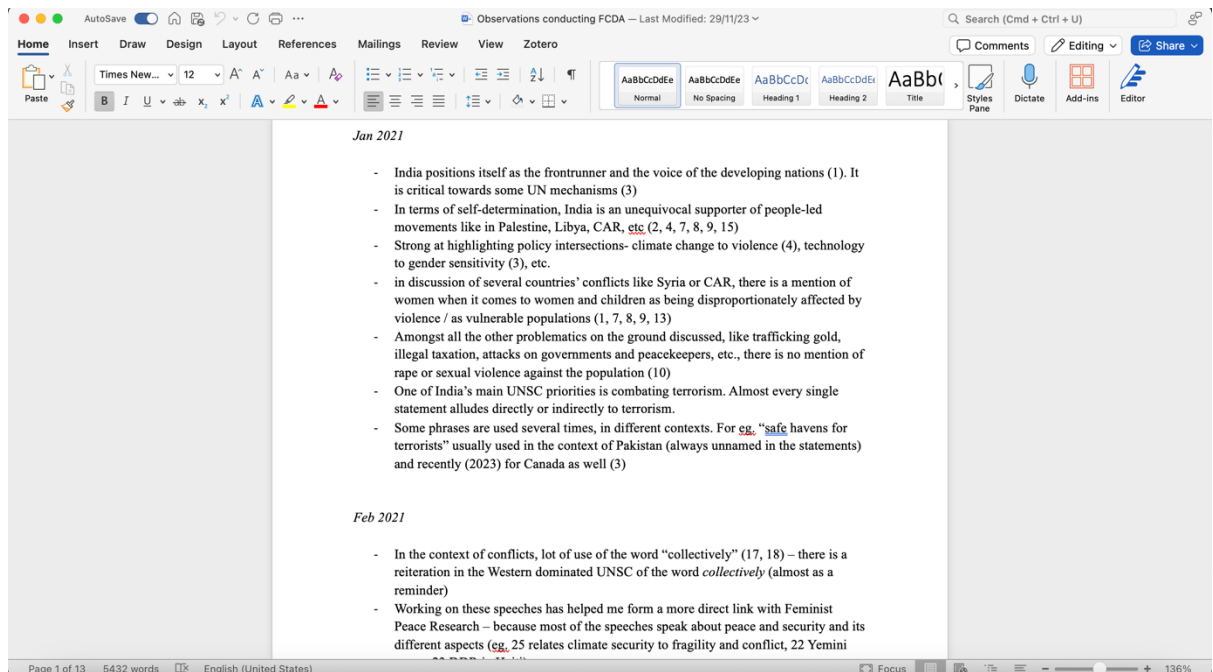
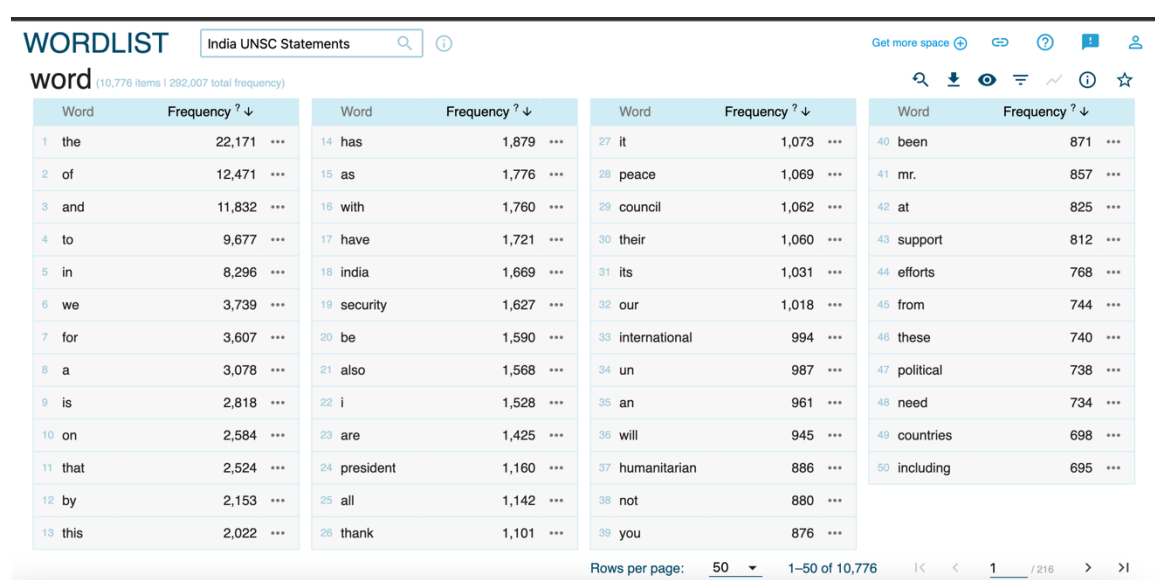


Image 3.5: ‘Observations’ document that would later be extrapolated as the findings

Part two of the FCDA involved usage of a software called ‘Sketch Engine.’ Sketch Engine is a software tool that analyses texts “to identify instantly what is typical in language and what is rare, unusual or emerging usage” (Sketch Engine 2016). The texts that it analyses are called ‘corpora,’ which are either in-built into the software, or can be created by the user (Kilgarrieff et al. 2014). For my research, I created a corpus titled “India’s UNSC statements” and uploaded the 440 statements (only their texts, thereby excluding headers, footers and website links). I used the software functions to explore the behaviours of words in this corpus. Sketch Engine has a variety of functions, of which I used the ‘Word List’ (which lists down all the words in the corpus in the order of frequency), ‘Keywords’ (which highlights unique words found in the corpus compared to common words in the English language) and ‘Concordance’ (which shows the usage of words in context). The following are some examples of the functions used:



WORDLIST India UNSC Statements

word (10,776 items | 292,007 total frequency)

Word	Frequency ? ↓	Word	Frequency ? ↓	Word	Frequency ? ↓	Word	Frequency ? ↓
1 the	22,171	14 has	1,879	27 it	1,073	40 been	871
2 of	12,471	15 as	1,776	28 peace	1,069	41 mr.	857
3 and	11,832	16 with	1,760	29 council	1,062	42 at	825
4 to	9,677	17 have	1,721	30 their	1,060	43 support	812
5 in	8,296	18 india	1,669	31 its	1,031	44 efforts	768
6 we	3,739	19 security	1,627	32 our	1,018	45 from	744
7 for	3,607	20 be	1,590	33 international	994	46 these	740
8 a	3,078	21 also	1,568	34 un	987	47 political	738
9 is	2,818	22 i	1,528	35 an	961	48 need	734
10 on	2,584	23 are	1,425	36 will	945	49 countries	698
11 that	2,524	24 president	1,160	37 humanitarian	886	50 including	695
12 by	2,153	25 all	1,142	38 not	880		
13 this	2,022	26 thank	1,101	39 you	876		

Rows per page: 50 1–50 of 10,776 1 / 216

Image 3.6: ‘Wordlist’ function of Sketch Engine [raw¹¹ image]

This function is useful to highlight how many times a word has been mentioned in the corpus, which can potentially indicate India’s policy focus. For instance, in this image, after the exclusions of prepositions, the first word used most often is ‘India,’ followed by ‘security.’ I use this function in chapters 5 and 6 contextually, to help flesh out the findings.

¹¹ Raw implies that this is a test-run image of the software usage, for the purposes of showing the function. This image is not a part of the findings.

KEYWORDS

Get more space

SINGLE-WORDS ✓ **MULTI-WORD TERMS** ✓

reference corpus: English Web 2021 (enTenTen21) (Items: 8,489)

Lemma	Lemma	Lemma	Lemma	Lemma
1 peacekeeper	11 peacekeeping	21 two-state	31 ocha	41 unsc
2 sahel	12 drc	22 briefing	32 yemeni	42 hudaydah
3 minusma	13 briefer	23 amisom	33 post-conflict	43 demobilization
4 isil	14 unmiss	24 yemen	34 malian	44 ecowas
5 srgs	15 ceasefire	25 minusca	35 reintegration	45 somalia
6 peacekeepe	16 mali	26 envoy	36 constructively	46 libya
7 madam	17 peacebuilding	27 terrorism	37 disarmament	47 non-discriminatory
8 unidad	18 non-state	28 counter-terrorism	38 un	48 sub-regional
9 humanitarian	19 reiterate	29 usg	39 sudan	49 unfccc
10 monusco	20 opcw	30 unscr	40 unrwa	50 icglr

Rows per page: 50 1–50 of 1,000 1 / 20

Image 3.7: ‘Keywords’ function of Sketch Engine [raw image]

The Keywords function highlights the set of words that occurs in the UNSC corpus more frequently than in general English, represented by the automated ‘English Web 2021’ corpus of the software. Finding Keyword lists, similar to Wordlists, are useful to highlight themes that stand out in the corpus and can help make inferences.

CONCORDANCE

Get more space

simple women • 481
1,454.95 per million tokens • 0.15%

☐ Details Left context KWIC Right context

1	all pdfs/102.07... tion and installation of a new government. 27 percent representation of women in the Council of Ministers is indeed a positive development.
2	all pdfs/102.07... on. Mr. President, 4. We strongly condemn the killing of women peacekeeper from Malawi and five civilians in North Kivu on the 10th of
3	all pdfs/1.04.0... ke terrorism. Peace-keeping, peace-building, maritime security, women and youth, especially in conflict situations, and technology with a huma
4	all pdfs/104.08... rds reconciliation, constitutional reforms and enhancing participation of women in governance structures. The political environment in West Afr
5	all pdfs/105.09... ia need humanitarian assistance in one form or another. Syrian women , children, elderly have severely impacted in disproportionate ways.
6	all pdfs/106.13... e the security of social leaders and human rights defenders particularly women leaders, indigenous and Afro-Colombian leaders. iv) Strengthening judi
7	all pdfs/110.02... ntribution to UN peacekeeping operations, including the involvement of women peacekeepers. We have contributed more than 250,000 troops
8	all pdfs/110.02... er between January and April. Targeted killings are increasing, women , girls and minorities are being systematically targeted. You also
9	all pdfs/110.02... y important, once again, that we respect the aspirations of the Afghan women , the youth and the minorities. They need a safe and a democra
10	all pdfs/110.02... ty Council to authorize a peacekeeping force for Afghanistan under the women peace and security resolution. Is this an idea that India supports

Rows per page: 10 1–10 of 481 1 / 49

Image 3.8: ‘Concordance’ function of Sketch Engine: using the example word ‘women’ [raw image]

Within broad CDA, analysis of ‘concordance’ is the analysis of the context of the word in its own textual environment, which may help uncover and interpret possibilities of words that may not have otherwise been realised (Cheng 2013, 1, 2). Therefore, I use this function to see how the words are used in context, which will help make claims about the findings.

Using these three functions of the software, I added to the main findings from the manual scoping. Together with the manual scoping, these make up the Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis, the findings of which are discussed in chapters 5 and 6.

3.4 Postcolonial Feminism as a lens for analysing India’s Foreign Policy

As seen throughout chapter 2, postcolonial feminism not only highlighted the gendered, colonial underpinnings of FFP, but also helped expose the spatialisation of power in scholarship. It furthered an alternative way of looking at FFP, by being strategically sceptic about Western-originated liberal policies, leading to expanding and deepening the scope of FFP study. Therefore, the potential of postcolonial feminism to critically engage with foreign policy broadly and FFP in particular, cannot be overstated. In this context, I’d like to briefly discuss why I choose to apply this theory to the case study of India.

India doesn’t officially adopt a Feminist Foreign Policy. However, there is another form of progressive representation in its foreign policy that this research focuses on — that of postcolonialism. India’s colonial experience has shown to influence its foreign and security policies (Chacko 2013, 11), and is seen India’s behaviour in the international policy sphere (Chiriyankandath 2004, 200; Cohen 2004, 40; Bajpai 2003, 241, Miller 2029, 69). Its “postcolonial rationality” that gives primacy to the politics of self-determination (Jabri 2013, 3) can be viewed as a progressive form of politics.

In terms of feminist interventions in this form of politics, despite not having an FFP, dialogues on a potential FFP have begun in India. I observed that most of these works that discuss a potential Indian FFP engage in some way or the other with postcolonial feminism. For instance, scholars historically focus on feminist movements in India predate even the word feminism, and comprise a rich history of women’s rights movements (Vishwanath and Mukund 2022, 146). Some scholars have gone as far as to looking for blueprints of FFP in India’s women’s international thinking from the early history of India (Rathore

2024). Such studies have excavated ignored histories and highlighted how early Indian feminist thinking worked in foreign policy, and how those feminist anti-racist principles can still be relevant to feminist policymaking today (*ibid.*).

Thus, looking at India's current foreign policy through the lens of postcolonial feminism is a ripe field of study that would have several implications. One of revealing the gendered colonial and racial hierarchies in the foreign policy, and two, of critically analysing to what extent constructing its foreign policy as 'postcolonial' is really progressive. Therefore, using postcolonial feminism as a lens to look at this topic opens the potential of putting India's postcolonial foreign policy under scrutiny. The findings chapters (5 and 6) discuss what this analysis reveals, and how that may help us have a sharper understanding of what postcolonial feminist ideas reveal about the limits of India's progressive FP.

3.5 How Strategic Scepticism is Being Applied to the Case Study of India's UNSC Statements

This section discusses how the thesis employs strategic scepticism in its methodology. In the previous chapter, I conducted a critical cartography that revealed two findings: the first being that existing postcolonial feminist scholarship on FFP reproduces the spatialisation of power in academia. Defined as a segregation that normalises the spatial location of the academy as the epitome of knowledge-production, thereby creating insiders and outsiders as those who can and cannot know, the spatialisation of power creates a border around the academy (Alexander and Mohanty 2010, 28, 29). In the scholarship, I argue that this is because of its privileging of institutional sources of knowledge production, and the location of the scholarship itself in the Global North. Thus, I argue that the spatialisation of power is limiting current postcolonial research on FFP by distancing subalternity as a source of knowledge production. The second finding is that all the articles meet FFP with 'Strategic Scepticism,' which I conceptualise as a sceptical approach towards Western-originated liberal policies, but strategically sceptic for its lack of an entire rejection of FFP. This strategic scepticism I argue is seen through the emergence of four themes in the scholarship: one, authors do not limit FFP analysis to liberal feminist themes like representation, two, they analyse the silences in non-/engagement with FFP, three, they scrutinise adoption of feminist principles without the FFP label, and four, they study links between FFP and other policy intersections like healthcare, migration and climate change.

I have employed the philosophy of strategic scepticism as part of my methodology. This is to ensure that the strategically sceptic approaches of postcolonial feminism, which is the theoretical framework of this thesis, are *applied* in this research. In the following table, I briefly show how the work of this PhD thesis is strategically sceptic towards FFP, thereby expanding the scope of FFP analysis and applying the conceptualisation in its own work in approaching the UNSC case study.

No.	Strategic Scepticism's four themes	How this thesis applies it to India's UNSC statements
1	Not limiting FFP analysis to liberal feminist themes like representation	By analysing UNSC statements on all themes across the 2 years, not limiting to statements about gender/women/representation of women
2	Analysing the silences in non-/engagement with FFP	By analysing India's engagement (or lack thereof) with gender in its UNSC statements
3	Scrutinising the adoption of feminist principles without the FFP label	By analysing the case study of another progressive representation, that of India: A country that does not have an official FFP
4	Studying the links between FFP and other policy intersections like healthcare, migration and climate change	By situating this FFP study within FIR and FPR, specifically intersections of gender issues in the UNSC statements with issues of peace and security

Table 3.2: How strategic scepticism is being applied to the case study of India's UNSC statements

Thus, by approaching the case study of India's UNSC statements with strategic scepticism, this thesis is adding to the postcolonial feminist scholarship in the FFP field. It is also attempting to expand the study of FFP to countries without an official adoption of the policy and linking it to other policy intersections like peace and security at the UNSC. In the case of India being a postcolonial Global South country, strategic scepticism will add value to the choice of study by being attentive to if and how Indian foreign policy is reproducing Western conceptions of feminism.

3.5 Reflections on Feminist Ethics and Positionality

In this section I briefly discuss some ethical questions I had to contend with throughout this PhD research, in the form of some reflections on the bibliography, my own positionality in this research, and how a feminist methodology helped deepen my research focus.

Approaches to feminist ethics are varied, with some focussing on how gender operates with our moral beliefs and others on marginalised perspectives that are disregarded: but they all have one thing in common— “their commitment to better understand the experience of persons oppressed in gendered ways” (Norlock 2019). Thus, feminist ethics requires the researcher to attempt to learn more from the voices of the oppressed and marginalised. Viewing my research as a feminist endeavour, I proceeded with a critical lens to unravel gendered and racialised modes of power operating in foreign policy structures. This critical lens informed not just the methodology of the research, but also of the types of scholarship studied, and ensuring that a diverse range of feminist perspectives were accommodated in the bibliography.

In this context, I struggled with finding peer-reviewed academic sources of knowledge-production on the topic of Feminist Foreign Policy in India. Thus, I found my bibliography wanting of more diverse forms of research produced. While FFP by itself is a nascent field, as illustrated in chapter 2, most of the scholarship is still being produced in the English-speaking Global North. Guillame (2019) calls this the economy of epistemic violence in IR, since the political economy of the publications industry conforms to the infrastructure of the English-speaking academic world. I combated this issue by opening up to different non-peer reviewed scholarship on FFP, to give space in my work to voices not captured by the peer-review system. For instance, my work also derives from García (2023) and Khillare (2023) which are research blogposts from Global South scholars. But even so, I remain aware that due to limits of time and resources, my methodology remained focused on institutional sources of discourse and not on the voices of the marginalised. This spatialisation of power in work is a limitation of the research. However, future research would ideally take this direction.

Perhaps the biggest ethical reflection that will stick with me even after this research project is my positionality. As an upper caste Indian woman conducting this research in Ireland, I

consider myself incredibly privileged. At several points during my work I asked myself: what implication does my positionality have on my work?

As agonised as I am with my privileged positionality, especially with respect to other Indian women back home, my positionality is what led me to this research topic. Being from a postcolonial nation and watching postcolonialism and feminism intersect and unfurl in modern Indian society has always piqued my interest. However, each location carries its own history and marking in the present (Bahri 2004). Locating my positionality in postcolonial feminist scholarship would, as Mani (1990) articulates, help me remain alert to the social construction of my own identity in the precise context of my scholarly practice. Through my work, I have always attempted this: to remain alert to my own identities and how they may seep into my work. I looked at my research as an active practice of learning about and checking my own privileges, as opposed to a passive neutral praxis of conducting the methodology. Theoretically, I align this thinking with Tickner (2006, 28) who writes, “feminists believe in one’s own awareness of one’s own personal position in the research process to be a corrective to ‘pseudo-objectivity.’ Rather than seeing it as bias, they see it as strengthening the standards of objectivity’, resulting in ‘strong objectivity’ or ‘robust reflexivity’.” Thereby, acknowledging my positionality in my research has helped me strengthen my research and myself as a researcher.

An instance of how being reflexive directly helped even improve my research is with respect to caste. As an upper caste researcher, I am acutely aware of my privileges and the injustices that the hierarchical caste system metes out in Indian society (Bapuji and Chrispal 2020, 536). Being reflexive through the research praxis helped me look closely for the caste element in India’s UNSC Statements. I did not find mentions of caste, and I have discussed this in the findings of the research (Chapter 6).

The final reflection is about how a feminist methodology helped deepen the research focus. Discourses are not only the main source of my research here, but are also at the very core of the professional activities of academia, given the discursive nature of knowledge production (Alejandro 2021, 153). By doing a feminist CDA, I had to train myself to pay attention to structures of power and ideology throughout the discourse. Over time, I also began noticing such structures operate in the academic literature I was reading as well. This is an aspect I struggled with as a researcher: I had to draw a line of separation between

when I was conducting the FCDA method on the UNSC statements, and when I was critically reading scholarship. I found myself assessing scholarship by academics with the same analytical lenses that I was using for the FCDA. While that is not a negative habit (and it even derives from postcolonial feminist ways of problematising the mainstream), as a researcher, I had to be clear about my FCDA focus. This is also where the idea of a ‘critical cartography’ germinated, which led to me conducting a discourse analysis in the form of a critical cartography of FFP scholarship, separating it from the discourse analysis of the UNSC statements. I explored this discourse analysis of the scholarship in chapter 2. Therefore, operationalising a feminist methodology sharpened the way I processed not only the discourses, but also academic literature as well. It made me attentive to the gendered way power operates in general, which I believe has also influenced the way I look at the world.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the methodology of the research. It began with a theoretical discussion of feminist epistemologies and how they inform feminist methodologies. I discussed how my approaches are derived from two of feminist epistemology’s traditions: one of offering a deep critique of mainstream approaches; and two of developing innovative, insightful alternative strategies of ways of knowing. The next section discussed Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis as proposed by Lazar (2014) and its guiding principles as being the main methodological tool. I then showed how I conducted the FCDA method step-by-step with images and also discussed the DA software Sketch Engine as adding to the analysis. I highlighted the usefulness of postcolonial feminism as a lens to study India’s foreign policy and how I’ve applied strategic scepticism to the methodology of this thesis. Finally, I ended with some reflections on feminist ethics in my bibliography, my positionality in the research, and how a feminist methodology deepened the research focus.

This chapter is followed by a context-setting discussion of the case study of India, after which the findings chapters 5 and 6 detail what the methodology of FCDA revealed about Indian foreign policy.

Chapter 4: Background to the Case Study: Colonial History, Women in Contemporary India and Indian Foreign Policy

Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the methodology used to investigate the second research axis: a postcolonial feminist analysis of India's foreign policy at the UNSC. The research findings of the same are discussed in chapters 5 and 6. Before delving into the findings, the current chapter explains the context of the Indian case study in which the research findings may be situated and understood.

As discussed in chapter 1, FPA and more recently, IR as well, are not viewing foreign policy in silo, but as intermeshed with domestic policy. This is in line with research showing the relevance of domestic developments to foreign policy. For instance, Strüver (2016) shows how similarities in domestic regimes' characteristics can influence countries to make similar foreign policy choices in the UN. Other scholars like Adnan (2014, 674) highlight some of the domestic constraints that influence a country's foreign policy, which include public opinion, the history of the country, the social system, to name a few. The importance of the domestic context to the development of foreign policy is also seen in the case of Sweden, where regime change domestically led to the revocation of their feminist foreign policy, for the reason of it not being aligned to the new government's policies (see chapter 2). This theme of the significance of domestic policy in shaping foreign policy priorities, is a thread explored throughout this chapter. I show how India's foreign policy evolution was also often influenced by domestic development throughout its history, and vice versa.

The chapter provides a detailed background of the case study, India, specifically focussing on three parts of its biography: one, how colonialism shaped the political history of India, two, the social dynamics of women in India and three, the evolution of Indian foreign policy. Each of these three parts are relevant to the findings of the research and will thus work to provide a background against which the findings may be read.

The chapter begins with a brief biography of India, followed by how colonialism in India manifested. I then discuss feminist approaches to this part of India's history. The next part discusses an account of Indian women today: outlining their dynamics in Indian society, along with social expectations and how the impact of colonialism has shaped some of these. This is then followed by an analysis of the domestic feminist political and legal developments in the India of 2021-22 (the same time period of analysis of the FCDA). In the final section, I detail India's foreign policy evolution through the years (from its independence in 1947 to the years of 2021-22), and its historical relationship with the United Nations (UN).

Combining political history, contemporary feminist dynamics and a foreign policy overview, this chapter seeks to provide a snapshot of India. While the issues discussed here are by no means exhaustive, the idea is to spotlight some that concern postcolonial feminism and foreign policy, to be better able to understand the findings of the next few chapters.

4.1 How Postcolonial India came to be

Located in South Asia, India (officially the Republic of India) is the seventh largest country in the world in terms of land area (Government of India 2023b, 1185, 65). Due to its physical separation from the rest of Asia because of the Himalayan mountains in the north, and the bodies of water around its South, the country is a "distinct geographical entity," with environmental and geographical features unique to itself (Government of India 2023b, 65). This distinctness implies a certain degree of cutting off from its neighbours due to the physical geographical barriers (Malone, Mohan, and Raghavan 2015, 34). Some analysts have argued that this has had an impact on Indian diplomacy, because throughout Indian history, it has had trouble arousing interest in the world beyond its borders — so the geographical separation and a sense that India sufficed unto itself could be potential reasons for India being "inward-oriented" (Malone 2011, 1).

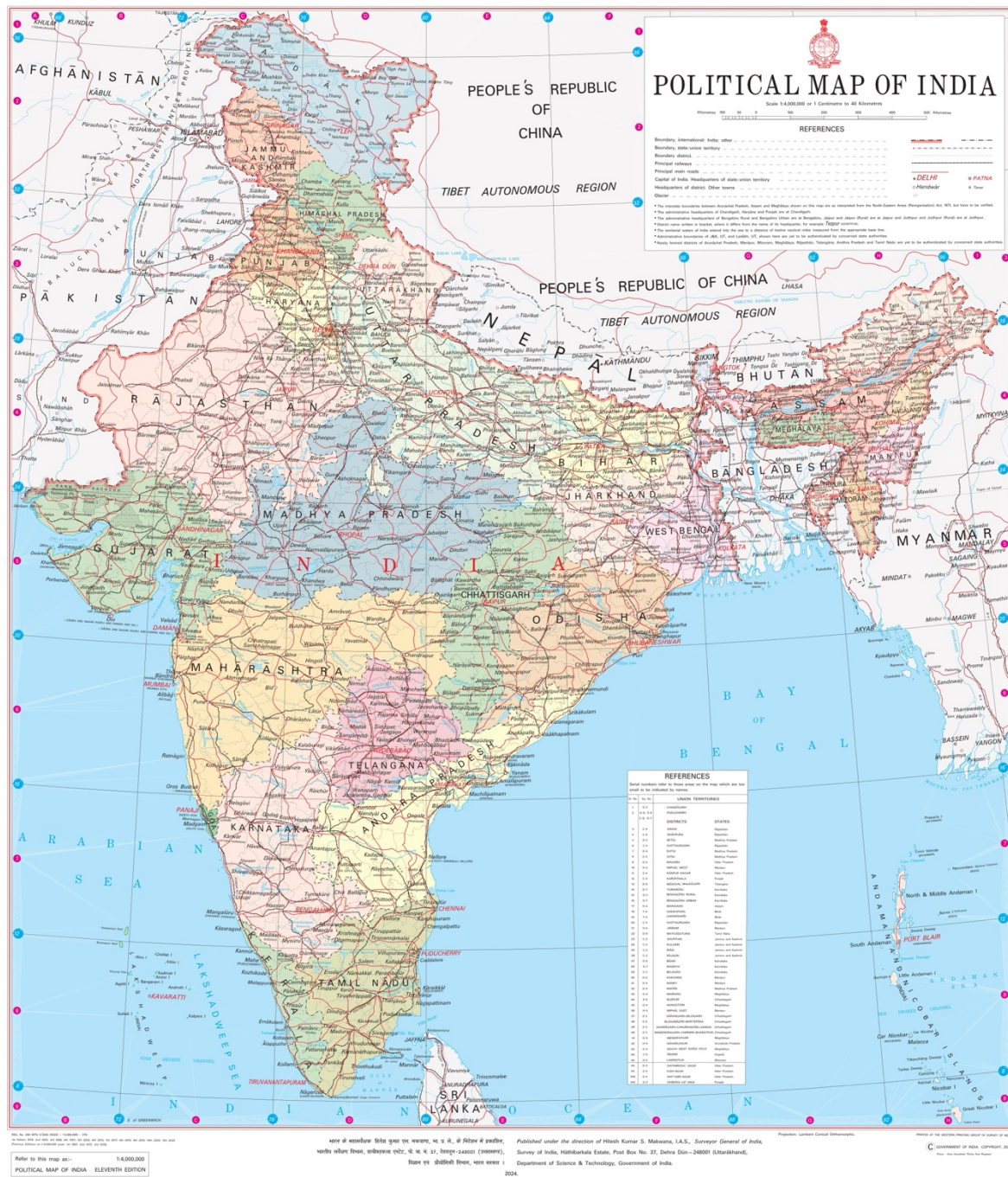


Image 4.1: The official political map of India (Survey of India 2018)

India shares a border with eight countries — West to East as follows: Pakistan, Afghanistan, China, Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar, Bangladesh and [a maritime border with] Sri Lanka (*ibid.*, 65, 66). As of October 2023, India comprises 28 states and 8 union territories (Know India 2023). These geographical units are termed linguistically and culturally distinct by some scholars (Hardgrave Jr 1993, 55). However, that is not the case.

Territorial distribution of language was used as a major criterion to reorganise states in India after independence from British rule, which was motivated by the quest to make the Indian states as unilingual as possible, for purposes of administrative efficiency and economic development (Singh and Dhussa 2020; Mawdsley 2014, 127). However, today Indian states are still multilingual, with all states having sizeable linguistic minorities. Thus, India is home to over 22 official languages and 1600 language groups (Jayal 2006, xv).

According to its Constitution (India 1950), politically, India is a “Sovereign, Socialist, Secular, Democratic, Republic” with a parliamentary system of government. Being a constitutional democracy, India conducts free and fair elections to its government (Kumar 2024). The Constitution of India gives to its citizens Fundamental Rights, and its drafting was a culmination of decades of anticolonial struggle (Bhat 2022). The Preamble to the Constitution is considered the soul of the country, and it commits to universal principles of liberty, equality and fraternity (India 1950, Choudhry, Khosla, and Mehta 2016, 58). Despite this, India is termed a collective society where rights of individuals are sacrificed for the larger benefit of the group (Razvi and Roth 2004, 83). This is because of a tension represented by individual rights on the one hand and community rights on the other. The Indian state’s practice of legal pluralism, which recognises religious freedoms (Article 25, Constitution of India), and its commitment to individual rights to equality (Article 14, Constitution of India), represents this tension (India 1950). This is another manifestation of the freedom struggle ideologies in India, when BR Ambedkar, known as the father of the Indian Constitution, and Mahatma Gandhi, known as the father of the nation, had differing contradicting ideas of what makes a nation: Gandhi’s view was that the Indian village represented a utopian traditional community, whereas for Ambedkar villages spurred casteism, and thus individual fundamental rights needed to be guaranteed (Singh 2014). With Articles 14 and 25 both being fundamental rights, this tension is expressed in the Constitution. This is important for women’s dynamics in the Indian population as well — this is discussed in section 4.2 of this chapter.

According to projections released by the UN, India has a population of 1.4 billion (as of October 2023), giving it the distinction of being the most populous country in the world (United Nations 2022a, i). It is also the world’s largest democracy (Jakobsen et al. 2019). In 2022, India became the fifth largest economy in the world, as measured in current dollars

(Government of India 2023a, vii). The Economic Survey of India 2022-23, released by the Ministry of Finance, Government of India, highlighted India's potential to influence the course of world events, with its peaceful and democratic emergence; and in the process, "fulfil its aspiration to be a global power of relevance" (Government of India 2023a, x). Paradoxically however, despite higher economic growth rates, declining fertility rates and improved access to infrastructural facilities like drinking water and cooking gas, the National Sample Surveys documented a decline in women's work participation rates, particularly for rural women¹² (Desai and Joshi 2019, 55). Despite rising education levels, youth employment has also been falling (Mehrotra and Parida 2019). Studies have shown that while globalisation has helped India's growth, poverty reduction has only been "modest" (Sharma 2014, 285).

These seemingly incongruent growth trajectories are highly characteristic of India. Scholars have often contended that broad theories of development, or economic and social modernisation, do not fit the circumstances of India, the reason of which is credited to its vast size, diversity and complexity (Mellor 2019, 10, 11). In his book titled "India After Gandhi," Guha discusses how India's vastness, diversity and complications make its persistence as a nation-state somewhat surprising:

"Notably, India's existence has been a puzzle not just to casual observers or commonsensical journalists; it has also been an anomaly for academic political science, according to whose axioms cultural heterogeneity and poverty do not make a nation, still less a democratic one" (Ramachandra Guha 2017, 31, 32).

The next section attempts to unpack some of these complexities that make India, with emphasis on the impact of colonialism on the nation and its women.

4.1.1 A Brief Political History of India: Colonialism as a shaping factor

Having introduced some basic geographical, demographic and economic characteristics of contemporary India, it is necessary to understand the role that colonialism has played in

¹² Work participation rates are often critiqued for not adequately capturing informal sector work or self-employment. Thus it can be argued that these surveys do not adequately measure women's contribution to the economy, especially since many Indian women are engaged in informal work (Desai and Joshi 2019, 57, 58).

shaping these present circumstances. In doing so, I will discuss some aspects of India's political history, particularly focussing on the colonial period.

There are many schools of Indian history that document and periodise the colonial times. For instance, there are the mainstream schools of history, that privilege nationalism as the lens with which to study Indian history, working with a frame of thinking that Anagol (2008, 603) terms "Imperialism-Nationalism." This frame focusses on the power relationship between the metropole or home country (Britain) and the periphery or colony (India), situating much of its chronicling of history within the contest between these two (*ibid.*). Other schools like the subaltern school have their own accounts of history. The subaltern school has its origins within the Marxist traditions, and it focusses on voices of the marginalised sections of the society and periodises history through their experiences (Pervaiz 2017, 25). The subaltern school critiques the mainstream school for its periodisation that focusses mainly on the growth of nationalism, rather than a focus on bottom-up concerns of people (Guha 1989). It is critical of the mainstream for neglecting the politics of the people or the subaltern classes, thus being elitist (Chaturvedi 2007, 9).

However, both these schools of Indian history are often contested by feminists. With respect to the mainstream schools, Indian feminists argue that nationalism as a frame of understanding Indian history obfuscates women's agency and neglects the gendered history of modern India. And despite the existence of the subaltern school that claims to represent marginalised voices, feminists argue that women were still absent from their considerations, "...subaltern scholarship to some extent did recover the male peasant's mythic visions, insurgent consciousness, kinship and community bonds but did not extend it to the woman peasant" (Anagol 2008, 605).

For the purposes of this chapter, I will first begin with a history of colonialism in modern India through what are considered by feminist theorists as the mainstream approaches. I will then discuss feminist historiographical approaches to Indian political history in the next sub-section. Thus, the chapter doesn't delve into the subaltern school's accounts of Indian history and its feminist critiques for the reason of the paucity of space to explore it in depth.

(i) An Account of Indian History: Mainstream Approaches

British colonialism in India lasted for almost two centuries, with indirect political control between 1757 and 1857, and a more direct administrative and political control from 1857 to 1947 (Choudhry, Khosla, and Mehta 2016). Historians write that initially, enormous profits made through trade in India attracted the British East India Company¹³. The British then saw the political factionalism at that time in India, which then prompted them to take more territory, morphing into a clear desire to establish an empire (Ahir 2017, 89). Before indirect control was established in 1757, the East India Company focussed on getting permissions from Indian rulers to trade in the country, and over time, began obtaining trade concessions, exemptions from inland tolls and permissions to set up factories (Ahir 2017, 45). In 1757, the Company won an armed conflict¹⁴ in the Battle of Plassey and defeated the Nawab of Bengal, thereby acquiring Bengal (Guha 1998, 85). Thus began indirect rule, which involved political control of the Crown through the British East India Company, where commercial interests of the company intermeshed with an expansion of the empire through existing indigenous political structures — for instance, Company agents being incorporated as advisors within the regional courts of princely states (Fisher 1984, 393, 394). In 1765, the Company secured *diwani*, or the right to collect taxes, in the region of Bengal. This mode of indirect rule differed from practices of British rule in the West, which involved subordination of internal (native) and external (slave) populations to secure the freedoms and the economy of the settler society (Datla 2015, 323). In India, the British sought decrees from the regional rulers to collect taxes, and secure lands in exchange for maintaining the troops of the rulers. Indirect rule carried on for the next century, till 1857.

In 1857, the British faced one of their most formidable challenges in India — the revolt of 1857 by the Indian soldiers of the British troops, which led to the killing of European

¹³ The British East India Company was established by the British Crown, with exclusive rights to pursue trade in and it focused especially on India (Sahni 2013, 317). The Company required active assistance of successive governments in Britain, and was a powerful engine driving forward British imperialism through its overseas possessions (Bowen 2005, 30, 31). The entity sought profit maximization, the quest for which led it to launch an administrative and military presence in India, for accessing territories and extracting revenue—“As a result, the British Empire expanded” (Sahni 2013, 317).

¹⁴ The Company controlled its own army, which was a private army twice the size of the British Army at the time (Duignan 2018).

officers and the capture of Delhi, with proclamations of Bahadur Shah, the Mughal¹⁵ descendant as the emperor (Chandra et al. 2016, 29, 30). Historians write that the causes of this mutiny are unclear, and so is the question of whether it happened in a planned manner, or if it was an uncoordinated uprising. The causes could have been anything ranging from soldiers feeling a threat to their religious and traditional practices, to demands for increased pay and greater career opportunities (Iyer 2004, 4). The revolt did not have a single leader, but rather several rebels from different places with a common interest against British military authorities and civil administration—this revolt also paved the way for nationalism and patriotism (Akhtar 2017, 207; Habib 1998, 7, 8). The British were able to suppress the mutiny by 1858, after which the administration of India was officially taken over from the East India Company by the British Crown (Iyer 2004, 5). This ‘direct’ political control involved one central government in India, which was presided over by the British Parliament in London (Carey 2012, 38). The next paragraphs discuss some of the major developments in this phase, up to independence in 1947.

Through this period, there was a centralised structure to the empire in India and there was little autonomy to the local government, with the few Indians who sat on the Council being nominated (not elected) and with no legislative power (Tomlinson 1975, 338). Over time, to direct Indian wishes and aspirations through constitutional channels, the Indian National Congress (INC) was formed in 1885 (Rajan 1969, 92). This organisation would ultimately grow into a “mighty instrument for ending British rule in India” (*ibid.*, 92). Often critiqued for its elite-intellectual confines, early Congress resolutions could not find resonance amongst the peasant millions, and it was largely restricted to the “upper crust of English-educated professional groups” (Sarkar 1989, 2). However, by a decade before independence in 1947, the Congress had turned into a national organisation in the truer sense — by becoming the largest organisation of the common people, drawing amongst its participants villagers, peasants, and even industrial workers (*ibid.*, 2), and by moving from constitutional struggles to large scale political mass struggles. Today the Indian National Congress stands as the largest opposition party in the Indian government.

¹⁵ The Mughal Empire was the dominant rulers of most of India from the sixteenth century (Richards 1993, 6). The decline of the Mughal Empire and the subsequent anarchy and power vacuum is often cited as one of the reasons for the British to have stepped into the Indian political scene—however, this is not without challenge (Blackwell 2008, 37).

From 1903-08, the Indian national movement, or the freedom struggle, took a major leap forward, through the Swadeshi movement. ‘Swadeshi’ means ‘of one’s own country,’ and it was a movement against the British announcement of the partition of Bengal on religious lines¹⁶ (Tasneem 2015, 25). It involved economic nationalism, calling for the Indian population to boycott British goods and to direct consumption to local products and services (Manjapra 2012, 54). Large sections of the urban and rural population participated actively in politics for the first time. The Swadeshi movement laid the foundation for future more defined national movements. It also led to the emergence of several political trends — conservative moderation, political extremism, passive resistance, boycotting, etc. (Chandra et al. 2016, 172). However, one of the drawbacks of this movement was that it wasn’t able to garner support from the Muslim population. Chandra et al. (2016, 185) argue that this was largely because of the British policy of using communalism to turn the Muslims against the Hindus.

In 1919, the Khilafat issue¹⁷ was used by the Indian nationalist leaders to overcome communal tensions and cement Hindu-Muslim relations. After the First World War, the Ottoman Empire was dismembered as part of the treaties signed with the British and French, among others (Krishna 1968, 37). Indian Muslims saw in the Turkish Khalifate their leader since it was the only surviving Islamic Empire at the time (Qureshi 1973, 5). Thus, its dismemberment by the British not only further aggravated the feeling against the British, but also was the beginning of the Khilafat movement of the Indian Muslims. This led to the INC leadership calling for a nationwide ‘Non-cooperation’ movement which involved several elements of the Swadeshi movement — a boycott of government schools and colleges, and of foreign cloth, non-payment of taxes, to name a few — all using non-violent measures (Ahir 2017, 370). This movement was led by Gandhi, whose personal philosophies of *ahimsa* (non-violence) and *satyagraha* (passive resistance) formed the core of the movement (Sarkar 1989, 154, 155). Gandhi called off the movement in 1922 after a mob turned violent in their clashes with police officials (Kumar, 2021, 112).

¹⁶ The Partition of the region of Bengal in 1905 into the Muslim-dominated East Bengal and the Hindu-dominated West Bengal sowed the seeds of the ultimate partition of the Indian subcontinent (Shah 1996). East Bengal would eventually, become East Pakistan, and then in 1971, become Bangladesh, a sovereign nation bordering India (Ferdous 2021).

¹⁷ The Khilafat issue began when the British dismembered the Turkish Khalifate after the first World War (Qureshi 1973, 5). The Turkish Khalifate was seen as the leader of Muslims around the world and its dismemberment led to anger and resentment against the British.

In 1930, the Congress launched the Civil Disobedience Movement, which involved a set of demands presented to the government, failing which the people would not pay taxes and seek to establish complete independence (Ahir 2017, 412, 413). Gandhi launched the movement by marching with a band of his people to the coast at Dandi to violate the salt law by collecting salt from the beach (*ibid.*, 414). The salt law imposed tax on salt and secured the British government's monopoly on salt collection and manufacturing (Shani 2015, 32). Salt was chosen as the symbol of resistance against the British because in Gandhi's words, salt is the "only condiment of the poor" (Shani 2015, 32). Gandhi's *Dandi* march inaugurated the Civil Disobedience Movement, which remained unsurpassed in the history of the Indian freedom movement for the country-wide mass participation it unleashed (Chandra et al. 2016, 400).

The final straw was the Quit India movement of 1942 — which moved the freedom movement to particularly rebellious and total confrontation with the British (Sarkar 1989, 332). The revolt was triggered by the continuance of British rule in the middle of the Second World War (Greenough 1983, 354). The demand made was for the British to give up the Government of India, with the threat of a mass movement to secure the same. Several Congress members were arrested, accompanied by prohibitions on newspaper editors on publishing articles in support of the movement (*ibid.*, 355). The Quit India movement created a crisis of survival for the British since it was at that time deeply entrenched in the Second World War (Muni 1977, 158). The mass upsurge was brutally suppressed, but the release of the congress leaders like Nehru led to a resurgence of nationalist sentiments (Chandra et al. 2016, 707).

A year later in 1946, British withdrawal seemed imminent because nationalism had penetrated into even the previously untouched areas of the country (Ahir 2017, 527). The officials also feared a revival of the 1942 Quit India movement but more dangerous this time round (Sarkar 1989, 359). In February 1947, the British Prime Minister Clement Atlee declared the British intention of leaving the Indian subcontinent. Thus the British, the INC and the Muslim League¹⁸ held several "tortuous" negotiations, which were accompanied

¹⁸ The All India Muslim League was formed in 1906 to protect and advance the political interests of Muslims in India (Malik 2012, 169). Over time, the party committed itself to a goal of a separate Muslim homeland, which it achieved in 1947 when the British partitioned India into India and Pakistan (Talbot 1993).

by communal violence, culminating in a tragic partition into India and Pakistan (Sarkar 1989, 355). Popular action made British rule untenable, leaving the Congress leaders to accept Partition as a necessary price for anti-imperialism (Sarkar 1989, 355). The Independence-Partition duality reflects the bittersweet success-failure dichotomy of the Indian anti-imperialist movement (Chandra et al. 2016, 728). India gained freedom on 15th August 1947.

British colonialism has had a deep and long-lasting impacts on India, politically, economically, and socio-culturally, some of which are discussed here. During their time in India, the British governed using a ‘Divide and Rule’ policy, which was done to avoid a united mass action challenging their authority (Ahir 2017, 597). The policy involved pitting region against region, caste against caste and Hindus against Muslims (discussed in the Bengal Partition section before). The most long-lasting impact of this policy in today’s postcolonial South Asia is seen in its very map—the creation of India and Pakistan (and later Bangladesh). The antagonism is also seen within each of these states even today, for instance, in the marginalisation of Muslims in India, and Hindus in Pakistan and Bangladesh (Rahman, Ali, and Kahn 2018, 5).

Despite the Partition however, scholars write that the “single greatest and most enduring impact of British rule over India is that it created an Indian nation” (Rajan 1969, 94). Historically, the region was governed by several dynasties over centuries, but the closest it got to unifying as a nation was under the British Rule, when they brought the entire subcontinent into one political authority (*ibid.*).

Economically, large expenditure on the military and civil administration left little to be spent on social services like education, sanitation and health and this is a colonial legacy that continues to this day (Ahir 2017, 599). This, coupled with the British economic policies of deindustrialisation (ruin of handicrafts and artisans by a process of ruralisation, making India a net importer from a net exporter, and no steps towards modern industrialisation), led to poverty and frequent famines throughout the region (Ahir 2017). This also influenced independent India’s state-led capitalism, along with a commitment to development, redistribution and poverty alleviation, with the poor being construed as the main subjects of the state (Gooptu and Parry 2017, 48). However, the British also brought with them

Western science, which also led to the development of Indian Railways, post, manufacturing and automobiles, which postcolonial India inherited (Rajan 1969, 98).

Socio-culturally, the British took some reformative measures like developing educational institutions and a structured legal system (A. Rahman, Ali, and Kahn 2018). Social reforms were done with the advocacy of Indian reformers to better the position of women in the country (discussed in the next section) and against caste-based exploitation (Ahir 2017). The social equality at the basis of these laws and reforms are integral to the Constitution of free India today. In terms of education, English as the medium of instruction is a legacy of colonial rule.

One of the other major impacts of the colonial rule is seen in the growth and application of the ideologies of the national freedom struggle, some of which are still used in independent India. For instance, Gandhian ideals of civil disobedience and mass protest, along with the political tool of a hunger strike, were used in the 2011 anti-corruption protests in India (Sengupta 2012, 593).

India's colonial experience has also shaped its role in the world order today. For instance, Chacko argues that India's identity as a postcolonial nation-state strongly influences its foreign and security policies (Chacko 2013, 11). This identity, which takes the form of embracing modernity to rid itself of backwardness, yet repudiating modernity for being exploitative (as it saw through its colonial experience) is a classic postcolonial dilemma (*ibid.*). Other scholars argue that there's a sense of victimhood in India's foreign policy conduct because it has been traumatised from the imperial agendas in the past (Miller 2019, 12). This is also visible in the country's advocacy for the agency of the people in determining their own future, which Jabri (2013, 3) calls a "postcolonial rationality" that gives primacy to the politics of self-determination. As will be discussed in chapter 5, these trends are also visible in the findings of this research.

Not only does postcolonialism shape the country's foreign policy in specific ways, but research has also shown that it influences current populist politics. For instance, "postcolonial melancholia" is conceptualised as a longing for the fulfilment of what is often believed to be an ethnic past in which the territory of the nation and the people were one (Kinnvall 2018, 533). This fuels an emotional populism that often leads to an increased

right-wing discourse. In the case of postcolonial India, memories, places and symbols of narrative construction are often used in populist discourse to construct a collective homogenous identity of the nation (Kinnvall 2019, 283, 286; Cash and Kinnvall 2017). This preoccupation with national identity is informed by a collective anxiety and perceived threats to core values (Kinnvall 2019, 286). Postcolonial anxieties seek a form of ontological security: where ontological security is about finding a safe (although imaginary) haven and thereby ontological insecurity is the lack of such a space (Kinnvall 2019, 283). In this context, anxieties about borders or what Cash and Kinnvall (2017, 270) term postcolonial bordering, expose lost identities that are incomplete or whose narratives have been ruptured because of colonialism.

This section outlined the mainstream articulation of Indian modern history, highlighting forms that colonialism took and how it impacted (and continues to impact) the Indian consciousness today.

(ii) Feminist Approaches to India's Political History

Indian feminists critique different schools of history for their inbuilt tendency to deny agency to *certain*¹⁹ subaltern groups like Indian women (Anagol 2008, 604). This tendency is cemented through mainstream schools' way of periodising history, with privilege given to certain events like the setting up of the Indian national Congress in 1885, or the nationalist struggle. Some feminist scholars however, argue that it is not sufficient to say that Indian women have been "hidden from history" since they also fought for independence (Gupta 2020, 192). This section highlights some of the major arguments put forth by Indian feminist historians, including the role of social reforms in improving women's positions in society, contestations between feminism and nationalism and between women and Gandhian ideals.

In the nineteenth century, the British undertook several social reforms codified through law aimed at changing the status of Indian women. These are the abolition of *sati* (widow burning), beginning of female education, allowing widow remarriage, raising the age of consent, eradicating *purdah* (veiling) and ending obscene representations of women in literature and art (Gupta 2020, 193). This period is often called the 'Indian Renaissance'

¹⁹ Italicised for emphasis

and the activism and advocacy for these reforms began with educated Indians appealing to the British (Ahir 2017). However, early feminist writings point out that these reformers were mainly upper caste elites, who distanced themselves from popular cultural practices of women, and focussed on the problems of the upper caste-middle class Hindu society (Gupta 2020, 194).

As British rule solidified further, Indian women began accessing institutions established by the law, like the courts, for instance, for purposes varying from divorce to employment (Anagol 2008, 613). Thus feminists demonstrate that Indian women's quest for civil, political and religious rights arose from these religious and social reform movements (Anagol 2008, 616). The opportunities thrown up by the reforms allowed for a re-questioning of religion as well, with newer choices of religions like Christianity presenting themselves. Hindu women who chose not to reject their religion began embracing modernity and began building their own networks and organisations, leading to the women's movement. This is seen for instance in the western state of Maharashtra, where Hindu ceremonies provided a place to further the cause of female education (Anagol 2008, 617). Feminist scholars argue that patriarchies (British and Indian) were in this way subverted and questioned in colonial India (Gupta 2020).

Thus, law in colonial India is perceived as a double-edged sword in feminist histories. This is because on the one hand, it became a tool through which various social reforms to improve women's positions in the society were conducted. On the other hand, it did not bring out significant changes in gender relations (Gupta 2020, 198). In fact, several scholars have shown how existing inequalities were not only enhanced, but were also "irrevocably institutionalised" in the colonial period (Gupta 2020, 196, 197). In some cases, as shown by Anagol (2008, 620), Indian women used the strategy of backing the British state, because colluding with colonial rule was important to widening the remit of women's agency.

Feminists argue that mainstream Indian history's assumptions have been that Indian women's voices were only retrieved during the Gandhian era, where women were introduced in the public sphere (Anagol 2008, 621). It is widely acknowledged that Gandhian nationalism from the 1920s did bring women into the realm of nationalist politics, although without radically recasting the patriarchal order of the family (Nair 2008,

178). Participation in Gandhian movements was perceived as a religious duty, after which women would revert back to traditional roles (Gupta 2020, 194). Thus women's issues that did not threaten patriarchal society could comfortably co-exist with the nationalist movement (Forbes 1981).

Indian feminist historiography therefore focusses primarily on issues of agency in history across the colonial and nationalist periods, and retrieving feminist voices. Rege (2006) for instance, argues with empirical evidence, that 'the women's question' often continued to dominate debates in the journalistic publications by women of the lower caste associations during the pre-independence period. Feldman (1999) uses feminist critique to make visible the binaries of Partition: just as the colonised space is seen as feminine and the coloniser as masculine, hegemonic narratives of history see the Partition of Bengal as feminine and the partition of Punjab as masculine. In doing so, she renders visible a process of othering in the construction of the national border. Thapar-Bjorkert (2000) analyses the simultaneous twin processes of the domestication of the public sphere and the politicisation of the domestic sphere, that enabled women to participate in the national movement.

Therefore, a feminist lens to understand India's past focusses just as much on private sphere as the public sphere—since the reform of the 'private' issues like sati and widow remarriage were important milestones to the Indian feminist movement. At the same time, feminist historiography cautions against homogenising Indian women's experiences of colonialism and highlighting also contributions and agency that women had at the time. One of the biggest contributions of this field is also to further nuance the Indian feminist movement in present day India, by retrieving voices of feminism from the past. Another contribution is to complicate the search for a grand explanation or narrative of the past, thereby supporting a complex and contradictory view of history, not embodied in a male universal subject (Feldman 1999). Therefore feminists argue that what is assumed as an apparent lack of women's agency does not have to do with actual reality, and scholars can engage with a different assessment of women's agency when they step outside of the older paradigms of classifying Indian history (Anagol 2008, 622).

The feminist critique of mainstream and subaltern historiography and the furthering of feminist perspectives to understand colonialism and its impacts, is important to this thesis. This is because it underpins the main theoretical lens of this research: postcolonial

feminism. It also helps contextualise the India of today and the social dynamics of Indian women therein. Having provided feminist historical insights, the next section thus shifts the focus of the chapter to over seven decades later, to the contemporary India of 2021-22 (the period of analysis of this research).

4.2 Indian Women: Social Dynamics in Indian Society

Women comprise 48.2% of India's current population (Batra and Reio 2016, 89). The representation of women in the parliament has been slow and not linear: with 14.36% of women parliamentarians after the 2019 election, it has four fewer women after the 2024 election, dropping to 13.63% (Sengupta 2024). The current President of the country, Droupadi Murmu, is India's second female President and first tribal President (Government of India 2022a). Recently, the country also passed the Women's Reservation Act 2023, which requires that 33 per cent of the seats in the state assemblies and the national assembly (Lok Sabha) be assigned to women (discussed towards end of the chapter) (UN Women 2023). India's Ministry of Women and Child Development is currently implementing several schemes for women's empowerment (Government of India 2024b).

Despite these political strides, in several measures of human development, there's a gap between Indian females and males. For instance, India's female Human Development Index (HDI) is 0.57, which is significantly behind the male HDI of 0.67 (Shrawan, Gupta, and Raj 2023). While scholars have often highlighted the shortcomings of such indices to adequately capture the relative deprivation of females, Indian society's male bias in the socio-economic context is uncontested (Tisdell 2021).

The male bias translates to "son bias" or "son preference" which is seen through the widespread practice of selective abortions of female foetuses (Tong 2022). Today the country stands at 92.7 per cent of gender parity at birth, which translates to a 105 male babies for every 100 female babies (PTI 2023; Tong 2022). However, rising education and wealth, coupled with the government's massive advertising campaigns to save the girl child, have shown a significant improvement in this regard (Tong 2022).

Crimes against women in India are high. These include rape, kidnapping, dowry deaths, mental and physical torture, molestation, sexual harassment and trafficking (ICRW 2004,

4). Recent studies on rape show how national and international media accounts of women in India have raised legitimate concerns of a “rape crisis” in the country (Manian 2023, 789). Despite rape being regarded as heinous and criminal, the instances and level of inhumanity of this crime has been on the rise (Sharma, Pardasani, and Nandram 2014, 362).

However, Manian (2023) shows that sexual violence in India is not just a recent phenomenon, and has been used as a tool to control marginalised groups in India including Muslims, Dalits, Adivasis and peoples of Northeastern India, with women from these communities bearing the brunt of the gendered sexual violence. Chakraborty (2017, 53,54) argues that the power dynamics between men and women are worsened by the power relations between the state and the subject civilian population on the margins, thereby leading to women who are at the margins of the state to experience the worst form of oppressions. She gives the example of how rape is used by postcolonial states to discipline and even punish the dissenting population who are at the margins (*ibid.*).

As an acute and persistent problem, gender inequality in India stems from the social construction of unequal power within a relationship, which sees contributions by men as decidedly more valued than contributions of women (Batra and Reio 2016, 90). Although gender inequality is a worldwide phenomenon (ICRW 2004; Jacobsen 2011, 192), it manifests differently in developing nations. For instance, in the case of the labour market, gender discrimination against women in developed countries is usually seen in the context of differential wage rates; but in developing nations, it takes the form of differential *access* to wage employment (Razvi and Roth 2004). In the case of India, some of this differential access can be attributed to the country’s historical patriarchal values, because of which equality of women isn’t much of a priority (Batra and Reio 2016, 90). Thereby, work performed by Indian women, fails to be recognised by either the family or the nation (Batra and Reio 2016; Bhattacharya 2013). According to the World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap Index 2023, India has closed 64.3% of the overall gender gap but has reached only 36.7% parity on economic participation and opportunity (PTI 2023). Differential access to the labour market however is only one of the manifestations of gender inequality.

Feminist scholar Menon (2009, 91) has analysed that at the base of India’s deep patriarchal culture, lies the institution of the heterosexual patriarchal family structure based on the sexual division of labour. Forming the basis of the Indian social order, there is a patriarchal

anxiety around maintaining and protecting the institution of marriage (and therefore the family), since it is inextricably linked to legitimate procreative sexuality (Menon 2022, 4). This leads to a strict policing of women's sexuality, to ensure the purity and continuation of crucial identities like caste, race and religion (*ibid.*).

The experience of colonial rule too has influenced gender inequality. For instance, Chaudhuri (2012, 284) argues that during/right after colonialism, the West simultaneously became a world to be both emulated and disparaged. This paradoxical response was more evident in the treatment of women. The new educated Indian middle class of the 19th century sought to reinterpret traditional institutions and culture, to do away with discriminatory practices like sati, child marriage and maltreatment of widows, drawing inspiration from some Western liberal ideals (*ibid.*). At the same time, the figure of the woman has been central to the making of India's national imaginary (*ibid.*, 284). The Indian state is viewed as "Bharat Mata" (Mother India), while the Indian land is seen as the body of a woman, which must be "protected at any cost" (Chakraborty 2017, 55). Therefore, changes in women's attire and demeanour are condemned as threats to culture, tradition (Chaudhuri 2012, 284) and even the nation itself.

Similar to the tensions between individual rights and community rights in the Indian Constitution as discussed at the beginning of this chapter, Indian women find themselves at the juncture of modernity and tradition. Indian women were granted formal equality in the forms of Articles 14 and 15 of the Constitution that prohibit discrimination and allow for welfare measures to be taken (Sharma 1998, 2). Despite this, the ideal Indian woman, just like India itself, is caught between the contestations of being 'traditional' and 'modern' simultaneously:

"The ideal woman would be a judicious blend of traditional qualities of domestic skills, knowledge of religious rituals and practices and modern abilities acquired through education and employment opportunities. In common parlance the perfect Indian women ought to be smart but not too smart, traditional but not too much" (Chaudhuri 2012, 282).

Thus, it can be argued that priorities for Indian women have always been in contestation with several identity markers. Indian women are certainly not a uniform category (Channa 2004, 39). Thus, to broadly get a sense of the social dynamics of Indian women, one must

understand their locations and identities within Indian society, the debates in the public discourse that foreground them, and the issues that they face, like violence. This section aimed to give a brief background of the same.

4.2.1 Feminist Political and Legal Developments (2021-22)

This section outlines a few domestic developments that occurred during the years 2021-22, that concern postcolonial feminist issues. The developments discussed involve feminist issues comprising — empowerment through increasing representation, schemes and policies rolled out for the benefit of women, and bills proposed and acts passed that directly impact women. The goal of this section is to give a snapshot of policies and law that were unfolding domestically during the same time period as the UNSC statements were being given (2021-22). These provide a better understanding of the government’s domestic policy priorities when it comes to women, which would help understand the same in the context of foreign policy priorities.

(i) Political Developments

One of the biggest political developments in the years 2021-22 was the appointment of Droupadi Murmu as India’s first Adivasi²⁰ and second woman President of India. Hailing from a Santhal²¹ tribal family from the state of Odisha, she worked as a teacher before advancing in her political career (Chandel 2023, 25). Prime Minister Modi called her election a “watershed moment for India especially for the poor, marginalised and downtrodden” (Reuters 2022). Both Murmu and Modi hail from the same ruling political party, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

The President of India is elected by an Electoral College consisting of members of parliament and members of all state legislative assemblies, and Murmu stood as the BJP’s

²⁰ Literally meaning ‘indigenous people’ or ‘original inhabitants,’ Adivasis comprise 67.7 million people belonging to India. The administrative term for Adivasis, although not completely coterminous, is ‘Scheduled Tribes,’ implying certain constitutional privileges, protections and benefits and issued to specific sections of society that are mentioned in the Schedules of the Indian Constitution. Adivasis were historically relegated to the lowest rung of the social ladder since the upper caste and class always controlled the mainstream (Bijoy 2003, 55).

²¹ Hailing from the West of India, Santhals are the largest tribal community of the country (Dey 2015, 31).

candidate (Esteves 2022, 730). The post is often considered a nominal, ceremonial or titular post, since the Indian Constitution lays down that the President must act on the advice of the Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers (*ibid.*). Thus analysts write that since the presidential post is largely ceremonial, her election is not expected to make any significant difference to the tribal community, which has been marginalised for long (Al Jazeera 2022). Others saw her elevation to this highest constitutional post as an important gesture of goodwill to the tribal communities that make up 8 percent of India's population, especially ahead of the 2024 general elections (Reuters 2022).

There has largely been agreement in the public discourse that Murmu's advancement must be considered a milestone, since tribal groups are often discriminated against, with women being doubly oppressed (Malieckal 2023). However, questions have also been raised about tokenism. Warning against merely ticking boxes of the identity politics checklist, Parihar (2022) writes that political representation does not necessarily assure the introduction of policies that can benefit tribals or women. In a critical assessment of her work a year after she became the President, Mukhopadhyay (2023) writes that her silence on the Manipur riots of 2023²² can only be interpreted as tacit endorsement of the same, but that it's "never too late" for her to be truer to her office.

In a similar vein of increasing the representation of women in the political arena, the ruling party in 2021 reshuffled their cabinet of ministers, including eleven women of a total of fifty three ministers—the highest since 2014 (Sanyal 2021; The Wire Staff 2021). However, it is important to note that this is still a scant representation of 7 percent, when the average of 156 countries is 23 percent (K 2021). Affirmative action to deal with underrepresentation is not new in India. In 1992, the parliament ratified a bill that reserves one-third of the seats of rural and urban democratic bodies for women (Pal 2014, 118). A similar bill that reserved 33% of the seats for women in the lower house of the national parliament and the state assemblies was pending for decades, and was only recently passed in 2023 (UN Women 2023). However this law has been criticised for several reasons. While

²² The Manipur violence of 2023 (still continuing as of September 2024) refers to the violent ethnic clashes between various tribal communities in the northeastern state of Manipur. Not only did the violence claim hundreds of lives, but also led to a nationally condemned incident of two tribal women being paraded naked and sexually assaulted, which was caught on camera (The Indian Express 2023; Gupta 2023).

granting reservations in 1992 to women has shown great uptick in their participation at the local and regional bodies, the same being implemented in the national and state parliaments would require an analysis of the census results of 2021, to finalise the total number of seats for elections (Goyal 2023; Apurva Vishwanath and Sharma 2023). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic however, the Indian census of 2021 has been delayed, and due to the general elections scheduled for mid-2024, can now only take place in late-2024. This means that women's reservations in the parliament may not be operationalised before the general elections of 2029 (Apurva Vishwanath and Sharma 2023). This has led to criticisms about the tokenistic passing of the bill just before the general election of 2024, with no details on how the seats to be contested would be identified. Opposition to the bill also raised questions of “quota within a quota,” i.e., would this lead to empowered, liberated and elite women monopolising the reservations, and thereby no benefits reaching the “backward”²³ classes and castes (Mustafa 2023). The debates on women's representations and reservations was therefore a major part of the public discourse in the years 2021-22.

These two years also saw the passing of a large scheme intended for women. In India the Ministry of Women and Child Development is tasked with promoting the social and economic empowerment of women through cross-cutting policies and programmes and mainstreaming gender concerns (Government of India 2024b). In 2022, the Ministry issued detailed guidelines for “Mission Shakti²⁴,” an umbrella scheme for the safety, security and empowerment of women (PIB Delhi 2022). The scheme aims to “realise the Government's commitment for ‘women-led development’” by establishing One Stop Centres, Women Helplines for emergencies, along with women's collectives to facilitate alternative dispute resolution. It also includes the National Creche Scheme for children of working mothers and anti-human trafficking units in districts (Government of India 2022b).

²³ The Backward Classes is an official term used by the Indian Constitution. They comprise around 30% of the Indian population. The Indian society is segregated into castes, which are placed hierarchically, with each caste having its own privileges and disadvantages with respect to each other. These caste rankings ensured that those castes placed at the bottom were historically disadvantaged. When India became independent, it wanted to create a new social order through egalitarian ideals. Therefore, it sought to give reservations and other benefits to the historically disadvantaged backward classes. Today the backward classes officially comprise: the Scheduled Castes (SCs), the Schedules Tribes (STs) and the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) (Yadav 2002, 4495; Jaffrelot 2000, 86).

²⁴ The word Shakti in the context of women is a reference to the divine feminine power or the Hindu goddess Shakti (Sugirtharajah 2002, 103). It is defined as the dynamic energy or strength that is equated with the feminine (Merriam-Webster 2024). This equation of women to god-like femininity is also seen in the findings (chapter 6), and will be problematized by this thesis in chapter 6.

Some analysts argue that despite these promises, the funds allocated for the protection of women as part of Mission Shakti are less than 0.1 percent of the government's total budgetary expenditure (Prasad 2024). The money allocated to the Ministry of Women and Child Development has only been 0.5 percent of the total budget. "The lack of political will for augmenting infrastructure for protection of women has resulted in weak and tardy implementation of legislations against domestic violence and sexual harassment" (*ibid.*). However, others write that there has been direct economic benefit to some states. For instance, Odisha has seen an increasing number of start-ups led by women entrepreneurs after Mission Shakti, which stands at 43 percent against the national average of 18 percent (Patnaik 2023).

On the Parliamentary front, there were a few bills introduced and acts passed that deal with feminist concerns, of which this section discusses two. The Prohibition of Child Marriage (Amendment) Bill, 2021, was introduced in the parliament to increase the minimum age of marriage of females from 18 to 21 years (PRS 2021b). Child marriage among girls is defined as any formal marriage or informal union under the age of 18 years, and India has made remarkable progress on reducing the numbers of child brides (Paul 2020, 304, 305). For instance, between 2005 and 2016, the prevalence of girls getting married below the age of 18 declined from 47 to 27 percent (UNICEF India, n.d.). Yet, the figures are still high — with estimates suggesting that each year, 1.5 million girls below 18 get married in India (*ibid.*).

However, this timely Bill hasn't been passed into an Act yet. Some arguments against the Bill highlight that 18 is considered the minimum age to be an 'adult' and restricting marriage amongst consenting adults is a restriction on their right to marry (PRS 2021b). Other arguments show that there have been prohibition laws against child marriage since before independence, and yet there is a continuance of the practice leading to questioning the efficacy of this law (*ibid.*). The marriageable age of a woman therefore remains a debated topic in India.

Another oft-debated question is abortion rights for women. In 2021, the Parliament passed the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) (Amendment) Act, 2021, which amended the previous act of 1971 (Anand 2023). The amendments were considered progressive, since they sought to remove anomalies in the old law. The 2021 amendments increased the

permissions for abortions from 12 weeks to 20 weeks, and in some cases, 24 weeks (*ibid.*). The amendment also replaced the word “by any married woman or her husband” to “any woman or her partner,” thereby bringing pregnancies outside marriage institutions into the legal framework (PRS 2021a). This is a big step for India because of perceptions around the institutions of marriage and the “continuing hold of marriage in Indian society” (Dhar 2021, 2). Calling these amendments “a breath of fresh air,” medical scholars write that not only do they strengthen the rights of pregnant women, but also inevitably improve the field of foetal medicine (Arora and Verma 2022, 1). However, despite it being progressive compared to its Western counterparts, this amendment is also critiqued by Dalit feminists for not dealing with the question of access (Rao 2022). Rao (2022) writes that Dalit women’s experiences of reproductive healthcare are very different than what is enshrined in law, and that the Indian feminist movement has been a “colossal failure” in representing Dalit concerns, since the cost of this reproductive care supersedes any gains.

The MTP amendment, even when seen as a step forward, reveals some contradictions. Especially in the context of India’s current right-wing government, it seems interesting that the latter took this step in times of increasing policing of women’s reproductive rights in other countries like the United States of America, for instance (Pandey 2022). Scholars like Purewal (2018) and Farris (2017) point to critical lenses to analyse these developments. Purewal (2018, 33) writes that state laws in India are performative, and operate on an abstracted notion of universal justice, in the context of broader structures that are still patriarchal (sons are still preferred in Indian society, for instance); thereby there is a granting and denial of rights simultaneously. This leads to what Farris (2017) terms “femonationalism,” which is defined as the exploitation of feminist themes by neoliberal nationalist campaigns that advance xenophobic and racist agendas under the banner of gender equality. While Farris’ work is in the European right-wing context, Purewal (2018) applies this to the Indian context and argues that right wing governmentality, neoliberalism and Hindutva²⁵ converge to ‘protect’ women’s bodies, under the guise of gender equality.

Based on this brief outline of some political developments, the years 2021-22 have been characterised by feminist issues like representation in political bodies, empowerment

²⁵ Hindutva refers to the project of achieving a Hindu state in India. Termed a sociopolitical phenomenon, this form of ‘Hindu nationalism’ is used interchangeably with ‘Hindu extremism’ and advocated the restoration of Hindu culture to mainstream political parties (Leidig 2020, 216).

through government schemes, the minimum age and the right to marry for women, and reproductive rights, to name a few. It can be argued that these political developments reflect some of the government's domestic policy priorities when it comes to feminist issues. Some of these ways of understanding women's empowerment will also be seen in the findings around how India brings gender into its contributions to discussions at the UNSC. They will also be subject to postcolonial feminist critique in the course of chapter 6.

(ii) Legal Developments

This section discusses some legal developments in the form of cases on gender equality in the Supreme Court of India (SC), India's apex constitutional organ and highest court. The reasons that these cases are discussed are: One, the SC cases reflect the pulse of feminist issues on the ground. Baxi (Baxi 1985, 107) writes that the transition of the Indian Supreme Court from a traditional agency with a low social visibility to a liberated agency acting as the last resort of the oppressed is a development in the SC's growth story. The court thus has moral authority, attempts to give justice to the poorest of the poor, and its cases are often covered in detail by the media. Thus, understanding these cases give an idea of how feminist issues are seen in public discourse. The second reason to discuss these cases is the role of the SC in developing into a "forum for policy evolution" (*ibid.*), since it's being seen no longer as an institution that merely dealt with politically significant issues, but as assuming political salience in its own right (Rajamani and Sengupta 2010, 84). Thus its role in interpreting the law, and in challenging the constitutionality of legislation puts it in direct tension with the government and its structures; and is argued holds the executive accountable (Mehta 2015, 236). With the distinction between law and policy seeming "for the most part to be dead," I discuss some legal cases here to drive the point that they reflect policy development as well, helping me expand on the previous section on political developments and policy for women (*ibid.*).

The first legal case I discuss here — the Hijab ban case — reflects two issues relevant for the postcolonial feminist study of Indian foreign policy. They are: one, the mirroring of liberal tendencies of Global North FFPs in India's Hijab ban; which leads to two, the tensions between women's rights as part of community rights and women's rights as human rights. In September 2021, a Government college banned women students from wearing the hijab or the customary Islamic headscarf worn by Muslim women (Saraogi 2022;

Saraogi and Narendran 2022). In January 2022, when six girls wearing the hijab were barred from entering the college premises, the justification given was that educational institutions have the right to prescribe a uniform to their students (Varma 2023). This decision was vocally supported by the then in-power BJP government and several pro-Hindu groups. What followed was a government order banning the Hijab in educational institutions across the state (Saraogi 2022; Saraogi and Narendran 2022). The issue then took legal form: it was referred first to the Karnataka State High Court, which upheld the ban, and later, was appealed to the Supreme Court. In October 2022, the SC delivered a split verdict in the case, with one judge ruling for the ban, and one against. The case is now pending with the Chief Justice of India who will reassign it to a 3-judge bench for a fresh hearing (Saraogi 2022; Saraogi and Narendran 2022).

Among others, the issues at contention here were: Does the Hijab ban violate Muslim students' Fundamental Right to Freedom of Religion? Or does the ban violate their right to freedom of speech and expression or their Right to Privacy? (*ibid.*) While the fresh hearing of the Hijab ban case is yet to be conducted, public discourse was filled with competing ideas. Voices for the ban argue that the hijab is a sign of the subordination of Muslim women by Muslim men, and that no exceptions should be made to a dress code, just to suit the custom of a minority (Varma 2023). Other opinions for the ban include Karnataka's higher education minister, who said that the rules were being misinterpreted and the hijab was banned only because the covering could lead to malpractices in exams like cheating using Bluetooth devices (The Wire Staff 2023). Opinions against the ban say that it was unwarranted because the wearing of a hijab does not affect any legitimate state interest, public order, health, or morality (Rahman 2024). For instance Rahman (2024) asks, citing the example of some Muslim women students who chose to give up their education because of the ban, what makes young Muslims prioritise religious symbolism over something as important as education to the extent of giving it up? In academic circles, scholars focus on different protest strategies of Muslim women, highlighting how they centre their nationality and gender while defending religious rights (Anand 2023). Other scholars show how the politics of hate by Hindu groups is targeted at Muslim women, and not only diminishes the power of the constitutional democracy, but also undermines educational institutions and positions them as perpetuating hegemonic oppressive cultures (Haseeb 2024). Feminist protestors in India also highlight that this was yet another instance of the preoccupation with women's bodies, and how they are weaponised for political gains (Hussain 2022).

Some analyse how India's secularism is becoming antireligious. Traditionally, recognising the value that religion played in people's lives the Constitution makers defined Indian secularism as meaning that the state wouldn't ignore the existence of religion and that it would treat all religions equally (Chandokhe 2010, 335). This is unlike Western conceptions of secularism, in which religion is separate from the state, which is considered a classical liberal conception of both the religion and the state (Modood 2010, 4). Indian feminists are arguing that India's secularism is transforming into an anti-religious perspective that is leading to Muslim women having to make a choice between education and self-identity (Junaid 2022). The banning of the Hijab by Karnataka seems similar to the French government's banning of the hijab, that scholars show is motivated by the Western conception of secularism, racialised sexism and gendered Islamophobia (Hamdan 2007, 2). Interestingly, France has a Feminist Foreign Policy in place. Eroukhmanoff (2024) troubles the French FFP by arguing that France banned the Hijab because of liberal ways of considering all women the same, while at the same time using feminism to stigmatise Muslim women. This pattern is also mirrored in India's case. These liberal notions underpinning FFPs have been problematised in chapter 2. The Hijab ban and the associated debates therefore have interesting implications for a potential Indian FFP.

The Hijab ban took the headlines, but it highlights a wider issue that India has often struggled with: where does India situate its women's rights: does it view women as citizens with fundamental rights or does it view its women through their membership of various religious communities? This tension is seen in the Fundamental Rights granted to Indian citizens: Article 14 (Right to Equality) and Article 15 (Right against Discrimination on the basis on religion, sex, etc.) protected citizens while Article 19 (Freedom of Speech and Expression) and Article 25 (Freedom of Religion) protect citizens and religions (India 1950). I chose to discuss the Hijab ban case in this chapter to highlight specifically this tension, since it reflects a policy and society-level viewing of Indian women. Debates on Muslim women's rights are not new to the public discourse in India. Beginning with the Shah Bano case of 1985, the SC has dealt with issues of the rights of Muslim women for decades (SCR 1985, 3). In the Shah Bano case for instance, the Supreme Court was lauded for asserting a divorced Muslim woman's right to maintenance. In doing so however, the court interpreted the Muslim personal law. It departed from traditional interpretations of Islam by appealing to a more egalitarian Islam (Mullally 2004, 672). However, this was followed up by the government overruling the judgement because of the claims of the

cultural conservatives within the Muslim community and the outcome was that “gender equality was subordinated to religious claims as the Government yielded to a discourse of communalism that defined individual identities solely through religious membership” (Mullally 2004, 672). Thus gender equality is subordinated to other political considerations (Parashar 2008, 105), and in the case of Shah Bano, it was her religious membership.

This juggling between women’s community membership and their fundamental rights will also be seen in the FCDA of UNSC statements. I found that in the statements, India speaks several times about women’s rights as human rights, but at the same time, links these to community rights. This thinking is reflective of its internal struggle and the balancing act between these two as reflected in the Hijab case.

The second legal case I discuss here—the marital rape exception case— reflects two issues relevant for the postcolonial feminist study of Indian foreign policy, which is the persistent problem of sexual violence faced by women in India, and the hold that the institution of marriage has on the society. Both these features of India have been discussed in the section on Indian women in this chapter, and they intersect in the marital rape case. Section 375 of the Indian Penal Code criminalises rape, but has two exceptions: one being that a medical procedure or intervention shall not constitute rape, and exception two which states: “Sexual intercourse or sexual acts by a man with his own wife, the wife not being under fifteen years of age, is not rape” (Indian Penal Code 2013)²⁶. Thus, in India, non-consensual sexual acts in a marriage are not termed rape. This exception of marital rape from criminalisation has been challenged in several courts by several petitioners from 2017. However it hit the headlines again because in February 2022, while the Karnataka High Court held this exception as regressive, in May 2022, the Delhi High Court delivered a split verdict on the same (Supreme Court Observer 2024). While one judge stated that the exception was discriminatory and violated the bodily autonomy of a woman, the second judge argued that sexual relations (consensual or not) are a legitimate expectation from the institution of

²⁶ In July 2024, India replaced the older Indian Penal Code with a code, because the former was informed by “Victorian-era ideas of morality,” since it was inherited from the British rule (Dhillon 2024; 2023). The government’s idea for the new penal code was to base it on modern aspirations and realities, especially the altered status of women and remove the older code that was tainted by imperialism (Dhillon 2024). Despite this code however, marital rape is still not criminalised, leading to campaigns against the new code (*ibid.*).

marriage, thereby making marital rape legal (*ibid.*). In early 2023, all the cases moved to the Supreme Court, which will club the petitions together and hear them afresh.

The key issues in these cases were whether this exception violates a married women's right to equality by denying her the same legal remedies as an unmarried woman or as men in the marriage; and whether it violates her right to privacy (*ibid.*). Bhatnagar traces the colonial history of this exception to 1736, when Sir Matthew Hale, Lord Chief Justice of the Court of King's Bench said that by agreeing to matrimony, women are deemed to have given irrevocable consent to sexual acts (Bhatnagar 2022). This colonial history of the exception complicates the idea of it being continued because of the Indian society's preoccupation with the Indian institution of marriage. Yet, the Government of India has argued to the Delhi High Court in this case that since India faces unique problems due to lack of literacy, financial dependence of women, poverty, diversity and the broader mindset of society, the exception to rape must not be criminalised (H. Mohanty 2022). Journalists show that men's rights group are arguing that making non-consensual sex a criminal offense would be making husbands "rapists" and would lead to the breakdown of the institution of the family (Masih 2022). Human rights scholars have argued that the justification of the importance of the institution of marriage due to socio-economic and cultural characteristics doesn't fit in with the fact that countries like Nepal, Bhutan, Japan, Kenya and Iraq, who share some characteristics with India, have explicitly criminalised marital rape (Akram 2023; H. Mohanty 2022). In her article titled "Sacrificing Woman's Sexual Autonomy to Save Marriage," Vadekkethil (2022) says that the Delhi High Court split verdict nullifies the sexual agency of women, discriminates against married women and: "In this verdict, the marriage-is-precious objective appears to triumph everything else."

In their intersecting analysis of the status of women in India, Kadyan and Unnithan (2023, 1) argue that since India is a patriarchal society, and women lack power and voice in the familial space, there is a normalization of violence as well as non-consensual sex within marriage. Other scholars highlight that the issue must be examined through the lens of the everyday lived realities of women, while simultaneously situating this within the larger issue of the violence against women in India (Nigam 2015). In the intersection between sexual violence and the institution of marriage, what comes out clearly through the public discourse that is against the criminalisation of the exception are the perceptions of women

in India and the expectations that they have to juggle. This is discussed in this chapter (section 4.2), where I show how the ‘ideal’ Indian woman is caught between the contestations of being ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ simultaneously (Chaudhuri 2012, 282).

In the chapters to follow, I will observe these tensions in the Indian UNSC statements as well. I notice the portrayals of Indian women in binaries: as either victims or as leaders, or as being traditionally closer to nature, while at the same time being elected to represent the country. I will also show that the statements have several references to sexual violence in conflict, how it must be combated and how it both perpetuates and is caused by gender inequality, but make no references to India’s own struggles with sexual violence. This has implications for a feminist foreign policy too. For instance, similar struggles are also seen in Mexico, which deals with one of the highest rates of gender-based violence in the world (García 2023). Mexico has a FFP, but because of not resolving or acknowledging the contradictions within its borders, its FFP not only lacks ownership among its domestic actors, but also has estranged its feminist civil society because they were also not consulted in its drafting (*ibid.*).

Thus, the issues that the marital rape exception case spotlights are sexual violence, and the role of the marriage institution, with both bringing different feminist aspects to this research. This section thus highlights the expectations from and lenses through which Indian women are viewed as juggling between tradition and modernity, yet whose rights are still subservient to the institution of marriage. At the same time, sexual violence against women continues, which is a domestic failing of the government. It is among these contestations that were happening domestically, that India made its statements at the UNSC. While the topics listed here are not exhaustive, and the years 2021-22 had several other women’s issues in the domestic arena, due to paucity of space and the narrowed focus of the thesis, I discussed these particular cases. The themes brought forth by these political and legal developments work as laying the foundation to the findings of this research and will be referred to in the following chapters.

As discussed in previous chapters and reiterated in a footnote in this chapter, the distinction between domestic and foreign policy is blurred, since they both inform each other’s changes over time. Drawing from this theme, and having just discussed India’s domestic developments, the chapter will now move into India’s foreign policy evolution, and

highlight how it has changed over time, being informed by both foreign policy considerations, and domestic developments over the years. To do so, I trace the country's foreign policy beginning from its independence in 1947.

4.3 Indian Foreign Policy through the years

After its independence in 1947, Indian foreign policy makers had to deal with an ideologically divided world — with the Western (liberal-capitalist) blocs led by the United States of America (USA) and the Eastern (communist) bloc led by the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) (Ranjan 2022, 381). Navigating this new reality as an independent nation was a primary challenge for the Indian leadership to contend with. After over 75 years of independence, these challenges have morphed. Today, India's foreign policy challenges include dealing with border issues with China, the stability of its neighbourhood, relations with the West, along with confronting global issues like non-proliferation, climate change and global trade (Ranjan 2022, 383; Pant 2017, x).

This section unpacks the evolution and practice of Indian foreign policy over the past 75 years, from independence in 1947 to the current times (2023). Indian IR scholarship classifies the history of independent India's foreign policy in chronological phases, primarily on the basis of the priorities of Indian leadership and the motivating ideology underlying their diplomacy. However, scholars haven't reached a consensus as to how many phases this history must be divided into. While some scholars like Dutt (2009) categorise it into five broad phases, others like Ogden (2014, 18), Wagner (2005) and Rauch (2008), classify it into three phases. Indian IR scholars who contributed to the Oxford Handbook of Indian Foreign Policy (Malone, Mohan, and Raghavan 2015), broadly classify it into four phases. Despite these theoretical differences however, the broad contours remain the same, beginning with the post-independence Nehru era, moving into the Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi eras, followed by the economic liberalisation era of the 1990s. For the purposes of this thesis, I draw upon these broad divisions, while also adding the Modi era as a new phase. The following are the four phases of the history of Indian foreign policy that I will discuss:

Phase 1. The Nehru Era — Post-independence Idealism [1947-1965]

Phase 2. The Indira Gandhi Era — Hard realism & the Cold War [1966-1989]

Phase 3. The Post-Liberalisation Era — Economic Growth & Re-strategising [1990-2013]

Phase 4. The Modi Era — Hindu Nationalism & the ‘New India’ [2014-present (2023)]

It must be noted that the phases as presented here are broadly taken from the mainstream Indian IR perspectives and not feminist perspectives. This is primarily because in my research on the evolution of Indian foreign policy, I came across very few feminist and/or postcolonial feminist approaches to the *evolution* of Indian foreign policy. Some notable works in this regard examine the concept of national security in India’s foreign policy between the years 2004-2020 (Gopi 2023), anti-imperialist feminist ethics of care ideas from early Indian women diplomats (Rathore 2024), and understanding predominant gender mainstreaming efforts in current South Asian IR (Khullar 2023). However, these works don’t specifically focus on the evolution, but are perspectives on different aspects of Indian foreign policy. Thus, feminist accounts of the evolution of India’s foreign policy are largely scattered and not chronicled chronologically. This presents a large gap for future research to fill. It is for this reason that I focus on the phases of evolution as documented by mainstream Indian IR. What this telling of the evolution of Indian foreign policy does show is that postcolonial ideas have always been at play in Indian foreign policy down the years, but so too have other theories and political considerations. This ambiguous relationship to postcolonialism in FP will reappear in the findings chapters to come.

4.3.1 Phase 1. The Nehru Era — Post-independence Idealism [1947-1965]

Considered the chief architect of India’s early foreign policy, Jawaharlal Nehru, India’s first Prime Minister, was driven by idealism (Ranjan 2022, 381; Pant 2017, ix). In Nehru’s view, peace, anti-racism, international cooperation and disarmament should occupy centre-stage (Rauch 2008, 6).

Nehru was a leader of the Indian National Congress alongside Mahatma Gandhi at the time of the freedom struggle (Malone 2011, 44). When he became India’s first Prime Minister, he was influenced largely by the philosophical and cultural heritage of India’s anticolonial struggle, which reflected in his foreign policy outlook (Dubey 1993, 117). The non-violent attainment of independence by India made Indian leaders craft a foreign policy of *purna swaraj* (complete independence) based on principles of *swadeshi* (economic self-reliance) and *ahimsa* (non-violence) (Ogden 2014, 20). Practically, this was reflected in the doctrine

of non-alignment, which became the “hallmark of India’s international interaction” (*ibid.*). In the context of the developing two power blocs of the USA and the USSR, India’s non-alignment acted not as a negative or neutral concept of keeping out of the rivalry, but as a positive form of exercising independence of judgment and action in foreign policy matters (Dubey 1993, 117). Initiated by Nehru in 1955, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) as a formal movement helped India gain a leadership role with developing and postcolonial states across the world. As much as possible, India sided with other ‘Third World’ countries “against imperialist forces of the West” (Malone 2011, 49).

Simultaneously in the domestic sphere, post-independence India had to contend with several “negative legacies” of British rule, like the loss of lives and resources due to partition between India and Pakistan, ambiguous borders and the aftermaths of separatist movements germinating from them, and the burden of poverty (Ogden 2014, 19, 20; Malone 2011, 49). Since the domestic challenges were such, only few leaders “wasted much time on the country’s international relations and profile,” resulting in scant public scrutiny, with Nehru increasingly relying on his own instincts in formulating foreign policy (Malone 2011, 48).

The Nehruvian policy of international independence and non-alignment was followed up until the Chinese aggression of 1962, which forced the Indian leadership to face the realities of power politics in the international system (Malone 2011, 49). The surprise Chinese invasion into India, called into question the efficacy of India’s two-pronged approach of strategic preparedness and trust (*ibid.*). While Nehru did lament China’s betrayal of “good faith,” India realised that it could no longer avoid taking sides internationally, since its domestic limitations meant that external help was required for security (Pant and Super 2019, 130). In the war, the ill-equipped Indian military lost troops and territory to China, the latter of which China holds to the present day (Rauch 2008, 22).

Some scholars contend that India’s decision to remain non-aligned was less about idealism and closer to realism, based on an assessment of its geopolitical situation (Pant and Super 2019, 129). Some contend that Nehru secretly conspired with international powers to enhance India’s security (Karnad 2002). They imply that Nehru was always focussed on Indian security and power. Some others point to his usage of the military is inconsistent with his ideals (Maxwell 1973). While another set of scholars argue that his efforts to save

the world through moralistic non-alignment and disarmament led to a neglect of Indian interests closer to home (Kapur 1988). However, it cannot be denied that Nehru's "remarkably bold diplomacy" reflected a belief that his country had a unique capacity to promote international cooperation (Kennedy 2015, 148). The ideals and themes he evoked as Prime Minister became integral and have left an indelible mark on Indian foreign policy.

In May 1964, Nehru died, immediately following which Pakistan initiated a war in Kashmir. India won this conflict and a UN ceasefire was put in place (Kennedy 2015, 148). During this time, Lal Bahadur Shastri briefly succeeded as the Prime Minister, and he upheld India's 'moral duty' to eradicate colonialism and imperialism (Malone 2011, 49). However with his untimely passing away, Nehru's daughter, Indira Gandhi²⁷ became Prime Minister, ushering in a new era of Indian foreign policy (Rauch 2008; Malone 2011).

4.3.2 Phase 2. The Indira Gandhi Era — Hard realism and the Cold War [1966-1989]

Although this phase saw the rise of the multi-party coalition of the Janata government (1977-1980), and later Gandhi's son, Rajiv Gandhi (1984-1989), this phase is considered an era dominated by Indira Gandhi, and is therefore justifiable to consider it as decisively marked by her (Malone 2011, 50; Rauch 2008, 7). Indira Gandhi has been described as a practitioner of *realpolitik*, "expedient, unprincipled, and ruthless in her pursuit of power" (Mansingh 2015, 151). The practice of her *realpolitik* was seen both internationally and domestically through some major events of this phase—the third Indo-Pakistani War (1971), the "Peaceful Nuclear Explosion" (1974) and regional interventions into Maldives and Sri Lanka (Rauch 2008, 8).

In 1971, Nehru's NAM policies were again put to the test, when India was forced to reckon with global forces, at the time of the war with Pakistan for Bangladesh (Pant 2017, 5). Since Pakistan had always been a close ally of the United States, it became clear to India that the West wouldn't support India against Pakistan. This, combined with the 1965 victory against Pakistan, and a growing awareness of superpower politics, led Gandhi to "court" the Soviet

²⁷ Indira Gandhi was not related to Mahatma Gandhi, the freedom fighter and father of the Indian nation. She gets her family name from her marriage with Indian politician and journalist Feroze Gandhi (Rauch 2008, 7).

Union, to ensure that she'd be able to carry forward her war without involvement from the great powers (Ogden 2014, 22; Pant 2017, 5). In 1972, Indira Gandhi approved the building of a nuclear explosive device, and conducted India's first nuclear test, which the government called the "Peaceful Nuclear Explosion" (Mansingh 2015, 159; Malone 2011, 50; Pant 2017, 6). She was also credited with the 'Indira Doctrine,' which comprised a quest for hegemony in South Asia, and her conduct of successful bilateral peacekeeping operations in Sri Lanka and Maldives (Mansingh 2015, 158; Ogden 2014, 23). These were followed up by her son and successor Rajiv Gandhi, who sent Indian Peacekeeper Forces (IPKF) to Sri Lanka to watch over the devolution of power to the local Tamil government (Malone 2011, 72). It has been argued that these peacekeeping forces of India were sent through mutual consent because of the Indo-Sri Lankan Accord of 1987 (Bullion 1997, 148). However, scholars have analysed that the political and strategic background indicates India's policies were intended to assert itself as the regional hegemonic superpower (*ibid.*). Despite the civil security situation in Sri Lanka warranting the dispatch of UN peacekeepers, India and Sri Lanka did not want to involve the UN for fears of 'internationalising' the conflict, so retaining its internal character (Rupesinghe 1988, 349).

Domestically, Indira Gandhi declared a state "Emergency" from 1975-77, and thwarted criticisms of the government and censored the press, along with suspending the Constitution and democratic process (Datta 1999, 577; Ogden 2014, 23). The Indian Constitution posits that the justifications of a National Emergency can only be war, external aggression or armed rebellion (Epari 2022). During an Emergency, the state takes on an absolute power, there is a suspension of some fundamental rights of Indian citizens, and thereby a change in the nature of the federal democratic system. According to the government, imposing an Emergency in 1975 was a necessary measure to combat the threat that was building against the unity and integrity of the country, and to deal with inflation (Kaviraj 1986, 1704). The threats to the unity and integrity were classified as an "internal disturbance," which was owed to the protest movement started by JP Narayan, a freedom fighter who called out the government's corruption (Roychowdhury 2018). Calling it independent India's first experiment with authoritarianism, Jaffrelot and Anil (2021, 1, 4) argue that the second reason for the announcement of Emergency had to do with the festering conflicts between the executive (parliament) and the judiciary, which culminated in the Allahabad judgement. Just before the Emergency, the Allahabad High Court ruled that Indira Gandhi had engaged in corruption that violated an election petition, thereby

declaring her ineligible for public positions (Epari 2022, 5, 6). This led to eruptions of more protests, calling for her resignation. She declared Emergency soon after, and revoked it only in 1977. Congress Party's dominance briefly declined after the Emergency, leading to the opposition parties joining forces to form the Janata Party. However, Gandhi returned to power in 1980 after the Janata Party fell apart due to ideological divisions (*ibid.*). Internal instability led to her assassination in 1984, a fate similar to her son and successor, Rajiv Gandhi, who was assassinated in 1991.

Scholars analyse that while the rhetoric of non-alignment could not be formally abandoned by Nehru's successors, it did take on a realist orientation over time (Ganguly and Pardesi 2009, 8). Indira Gandhi's stance differed from her father, which she made clear in a speech in 1970, where she asserted that the problems of developing countries had to be faced "not merely by idealism, not merely by sentimentalism, but by very clear thinking and hard-headed analysis of the situation" (Malone 2011, 49, 50).

In terms of foreign policy priorities, India continued to support the cause of decolonisation, and lead the charge on behalf of weaker states in the international system (Ganguly and Pardesi 2009). This was seen in its opposition to the apartheid regime in South Africa, its support of the Palestinian cause, and its hostility to the continuing Portuguese colonialism in Angola and Mozambique. However the country 'realigned' in terms of conducting military interventions and arming itself through nuclear weaponry, which some scholars (Basrur 2017, 25) call "aggressive policies." Other scholars are kinder to Gandhi and argue that her foreign policy only responded to international developments of the 1970s and 80s in a realistic way, like the Cold War and the oil price crisis (Mansingh 2015, 162). Malone (2011, 50, 51) sums up this phase of Indian foreign policy as an era,

"...characterised by lip service to anti-imperialism, Third World solidarity, and non-alignment abroad, and secularism, democracy, and socialism at home. However, in both spheres, there was a marked drift in practice towards power politics, in spite of which Mrs. Gandhi remains a tremendously popular, indeed iconic, figure..."

The next phase of Indian foreign policy marked a new era of pragmatism for India, which involved domestic electoral alliances, and a different economic orientation and which led

to an “undeniable” transformation in the direction and scope of foreign policy (Malone 2011, 151; Raghavan 2015, 168).

4.3.3. Phase 3. The Post-Liberalisation Era — Economic Growth and Re-strategising [1990-2013]

Considered a significant turning point in Indian politics, the year 1991 coincided with the collapse of the post-Second World War world order characterised by Cold War confrontation, the economically motivated and geo-strategically significant Gulf War, the USA’s ascendancy to unipolarity, and the rise of China (Malone 2011, 51; Rauch 2008, 8). The collapse of the USSR meant the redundancy of Indian foreign policy’s crucial anchor for the past two decades, which meant that policy makers had to adapt quickly to a transformed international arena, where the USA was the centre (Chiriyankandath 2004, 199). Domestically, unlike Indira and Rajiv Gandhi, the prime ministers who followed them did not command parliamentary majorities, but had to work within coalition governments (Mohan 2015, 187). This meant that this phase was characterised by many prime ministers from different parties, with trends of the declining hegemony of the Indian National Congress and the rise of caste-oriented and religious-revivalist parties (Candland 1997, 20, 21).

A major domestic event that shaped this phase is the liberalisation of the Indian economy. In 1991, in the thick of a major economic crisis, prime minister PV Narasimha Rao conducted an economic restructuring through a “rhetorical disavowal of the Nehruvian framework that had dominated the political landscape” (Varadarajan 2019, 244). Ganguly and Pardesi (2009, 5) offer an interesting insight that the memories of colonial rule contributed to a political culture that privileged the concept of national autonomy. However, when Rao liberalised the financial sector, privatised a chunk of the public sector and paved the way for globalisation, it was a big step away from a pure *swadeshi* or economically self-reliant, socialist, state-subsidised growth (Chiriyankandath 2004, 202; Ogden 2014, 24).

All these factors together, led to a reorientation of India’s foreign policy. Typical of this new approach was the ‘Gujral Doctrine,’ named after the Prime Minister IK Gujral (served between 1997-98), who moved Nehru’s idealism into a more pragmatic and concessionary

framework, to gain better trade, energy and security relations with its neighbours (other than Pakistan)—thus leading the foreign policy approach shift from attempts at gaining regional hegemony to an approach based on goodwill, benevolence and reciprocity (Ogden 2014, 24).

Drawing a close to the Nehruvian moral high ground, and completing a process that started with Indira and Rajiv Gandhi, India shed its anti-Western ideologies in favour of a pragmatic foreign policy that normalised traditionally antagonistic relationships (Malone 2011, 52). For instance, with the USA (especially after the nuclear tests of 1998), with China (through the Look East Policy of 1992), and with Israel (diplomatic relations established in 1992).

More critically, India's leaders also began to talk about an extended strategic neighbourhood that encompassed control of the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), and policies that go hand-in-hand with Africa and Asia-Pacific (Ogden 2014, 25). These new directions represented new policy interest for India. On the multilateral level, India also became more involved with discussions concerning climate change, for instance, and projected her values of commonalities with emerging economies through proactive groupings like BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) (*ibid.*, 26). This phase also saw high economic growth after economic liberalisation, which translated into expansions of military capabilities, and India became the world's largest arms importer.

India's traditional foreign policy of keeping its nuclear weapons option open saw a renewed commitment, through the nuclear tests conducted in 1998 at Pokhran (Malone 2011, 167). Simultaneously, Pakistan conducted its own nuclear tests. Both events led to attention being sharply focussed on South Asia. Immediately following the nuclear tests was another major event that characterised this phase—the Kargil War with Pakistan in 1999. The then prime minister Atal Behari Vajpayee was the first government leader of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led coalition, that swiftly dealt with invasion of Kargil by Pakistan (Malone, Mohan, and Raghavan 2015, 41; Ogden 2014, 56). This war was an exception to the postulate that nuclear weapon states do not engage with one another (Chari 2009, 363).

Rauch (2008, 9) argues that this phase is still ongoing, and is associated with important adjustments of India's global and regional position. However, based on works by Pant

(2017), Basrur (2017), and Pant (2018), among others, and for the purposes of situating this thesis in a deeper discussion on contemporary India, I will analyse a fourth phase, which studies Indian foreign policy in the two terms of prime minister Narendra Modi.

4.3.4 Phase 4. The Modi Era — Hindu Nationalism and the ‘New India’ [2014-present (2023)]

The election of prime minister Modi in 2014 was viewed as leading to and signifying a decisive new phase in Indian foreign policy, especially when he launched his tenure by visiting several small and large powers alike (Basrur 2017, 7). Personality-wise, Modi is characterised as being charismatic and authoritative, having side-lined the older leadership of his party (Basrur 2017, 7, 8). In the previous phase, the aftermath of the Cold War saw the rise of the ‘Hindu nationalist’ BJP, which was a significant break with India’s historically dominant Nehruvian heritage (Miller and Sullivan de Estrada 2017, 29, 30). This phase saw BJP come into power with Modi as its leader. Scholars write that Modi has an image as a strong, decisive leader with a proven record of ‘growth-friendly’ economic development policies (Gupta et al. 2019, 5). Domestically, he focussed on “ambitious economic initiatives” like ‘Make in India,’ which aimed to develop India as a global production hub and ‘Digital India’ for connecting government public service providers digitally to consumers for efficient service delivery, to name a few (Palit 2015, 15).

However, Modi’s rise and subsequent claim to power symbolised India’s political right wing gaining traction. A central feature of this rule is seen in the government blaming the minorities (in this case, majorly the Muslims) for structural problems of the country, leading to an othering in the right-wing imagination of the country, with violence seen across the nation against Muslims (N. Kaul 2017). An analysis of Modi’s political discourse shows an execution of Islamophobic narratives (Waikar 2018, 162). This ideology is increasingly visible in governmental policies like the building of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya²⁸, reflecting what scholars term Hindu ethnonationalism (Yadav 2024.; Mashal, Kumar, and Loke 2024).

²⁸ After a long legal battle over a holy site of importance to both Hindus and Muslims in the city of Ayodhya, the Supreme Court of India ruled in favour of the construction of the temple of the Hindu god Ram on that site. This issue is traced back to 1992, where the same holy site had a mosque called Babri Masjid, which

In terms of foreign policy, one of the primary issues during this phase was and continues to be, relations with China. India witnessed serious political and military tensions with China, for instance the military stand-off at Doklam (2017), or the clashes between soldiers in the Galwan valley (2020) (Ranjan 2022, 382). Along with these more direct confrontations at the borders of these neighbouring countries, there have been more subtle policy-level economic confrontations. India has been playing a strategic balancing game with China, countering an enhanced Chinese profile in South Asia by building its own military cooperation with countries of the West, and those in the Indian Ocean Region (Gupta et al. 2019, 9).

Like every phase of foreign policy, this one too witnessed rocky relations with Pakistan. This phase saw defining moments in India's Pakistan policy, for example, the 'surgical strikes' by Indian special forces inside Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (2016), and the 'airstrikes' by the Indian Air Force against terrorist²⁹ training camps at Balakot inside Pakistan (2019) (Kaura 2020, 277). While the former was a response to the Uri attacks by terror camps based in Pakistan, the latter was a reaction to the terror attack in Pulwama (Kaura 2020). At the same time, in his initial days as prime minister, Modi did take the initiative to travel to Pakistan in 2015 to break the deadlock between the countries, but to no avail (Gupta et al. 2019, 9). Therefore, the Modi government balances between exploring reconciliation measures with Pakistan, while simultaneously convincing the Indian public that Pakistan must be "taught a lesson" through military strikes (Kaura 2020, 284).

A major foreign policy feature of this phase is a shift from India's traditional 'strategic autonomy' and 'nonalignment,' to what Hall (2016, 271, 272) terms "multi-alignment" suggesting that India under Modi is using multi-alignment to boost its economic

was demolished by a mob arguing that the site was originally a Hindu temple, leading to the beginning of a decades-long legal battle. The recent verdict supporting the construction of the temple, along with the government's involvement in the building of the temple, is seen as a symbol of Hindu resurgence and a rejection of India's socialist and secular traditions (Yadav 2024, 1051).

²⁹ The term 'terrorist' is often controversial. For example, feminists take issue with the words 'terrorist' or 'terrorism' especially with respect to definitions by the state. They question how the state can be the legitimate protector of the marginalized, especially when the state's security is won at the price of the security of the marginalized: thus feminists argue that the difference between terrorists and counterterrorists is artificial (Sjoberg 2009, 71) However, in this case it is known that the Pakistani security establishment has long-supported terror organisations, that have attacked India many times (Kaura 2020; Bajpai 2003; Ogden 2013).

development and national security. This involves bids for new multilateral institutions (India applied for the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation), pursuit of partnerships in multiple issue areas (India has a strategic partnership agreement with Mongolia, a uranium-rich, geo-strategically significant country) and “normative hedging” (seeking to be a norm leader in IR through becoming South Asia’s ‘first responder’ in disaster relief or taking a lead on climate change) (Hall 2016, 281). Other similar initiatives include changing the Look East to the ‘Act East’ policy and the ‘Neighbourhood First’ policy, suggesting a new energy in regional partnerships (Pant and Super 2019, 141; Chandra 2017, 99). However Hall (2016) also argues that this began previously during the prime ministership of Manmohan Singh, and Modi’s strategy only builds more energetically on his predecessor’s approach, albeit with a more ambitious normative agenda.

In the previous phase, Singh began promoting India’s soft power, which too, Modi continued with full gusto. This is seen for instance in the government’s efforts aimed at celebrating 21 June as the International Day of Yoga, being accepted by the UN (Chandra 2017, 107). Diaspora is another integral part of this phase’s soft power promotion strategy. Unlike previous governments, Modi’s foreign policy has engaged with diaspora more directly (Parameswaran 2015). This could be because Indian diaspora today constitutes the largest migrant population in the world, and economic ties through sending remittances back to India remain unsurpassed (Varadarajan 2019, 249).

Scholars are divided on their analysis on Modi, with some saying that there is a ‘Modi Doctrine,’ which comprises a special impetus to foreign policy through his “unique entrepreneurial flair and coherent set of ideas” (Chaulia 2016). Other scholars like Gupta et al. (2019) and Hall (2015) are more critical, and argue that Modi is only continuing the foreign policy of his predecessors, although with more energy and a personal stamp. In his article on anticolonial Nehruvian ideology, Ranjan calls Modi the most ‘non-Nehruvian’ Prime Minister of India, and yet he argues that even Modi has not succeeded in steering Indian foreign policy away from the shadows of Nehruvianism (Ranjan 2022, 382). In somewhat an opposing vein, Pant and Super (2019, 148) argue that Modi’s government has become more assertive and less attached to the ideals and rhetoric of non-alignment.

The previous four sub-sections outlined the phases of Indian foreign policy evolution through the years up until today. Since this thesis examines Indian foreign policy statements

at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), a brief understanding of India's evolving relationship with the UN will help contextualise the research further. The next section will briefly unpack India's relationship with the UN, situating the discussion within the foreign policy phases discussed above.

4.3.5 India and the UN

India's relationship with the UN predates its independence. While still under British rule, India was among the 51 original members of the UN during the formation of the organisation in 1945 (Mukherjee and Malone 2013, 111). India was granted this original membership just two years before its independence, because it was accorded recognition for its notable contribution in the effort to win the World War. While the official delegation sent was named by Britain, an unofficial delegation (which did not get access to the proceedings) was sent by the Indian National Congress (Murthy 2020, 7).

Through the post-independence Nehruvian era, the UN was seen as having the potential to be the instrument of peace in the world, the protector of human rights and the liberator of dependent peoples (*ibid.*, 8). This was called the "airy idolization" of the UN (Rana 1970, 52). Scholars analyse that this could also be because the UN was "used" by India as a means for protecting her hard-won sovereignty (Michael 2019, 150). Over time this approach has changed. While initially India turned to multilateralism as a way of influencing international affairs, more recently India engaged with smaller groups of powerful nations, preferring bilateral over multilateral relationships (Mukherjee and Malone 2011, 311, 312). Especially in the case of relations with neighbours, bilateralism is India's preferred mode of engagement (Michael 2019, 160). This is evidenced in phase two of Indian foreign policy as discussed above, where Rajiv Gandhi sent Indian peacekeeping troops into Sri Lanka without involving the UN, although the situation warranted its involvement.

India's first brush with the UNSC occurred over Kashmir in 1948, after an invasion by tribal forces backed by the Pakistani military. Nehru was however disappointed because the Western states in the UN treated the matter as a dispute between two states, rather than an invasion of one into another's territory (Mukherjee and Malone 2013, 112). During its tenures in the UNSC, India focussed on advocating peaceful, non-military resolutions to conflicts. This was seen in case of the Korean War in 1950 (*ibid.*). In its tenure in the 1970s,

India advocated strongly for decolonisation in Africa, and also adopted a tough stance against Israel. In the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War, India argued that it would not support an arbitrary boundary line drawn by the Council between Iraq and Kuwait but changed its stance to vote in favour of the same in what was seen as an assault on Iraq's sovereignty (Murthy 2020, 96, 97). With respect to nuclear issues, India was strongly opposed to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT) and the comprehensive test-ban treaty (CTBT). It was against the former on grounds of fairness and the sovereign equality of states, and the latter (it was revealed later) because it intended to conduct its own tests in 1998 (Mukherjee and Malone 2013, 113). This opposition frustrated major states in the UN, but they began to recognise India's emerging status as a rising power especially after the nuclear tests of 1998, and the economic reforms of 1991.

Throughout and after the 1990s, India began to voice its demands for greater representation. One of India's consistent claims has been its bid for a permanent seat in the UNSC. Although the prospect of this change is not close, India's claim has been backed up by a large number of UN member states, which, scholars argue, is half the battle won (Basrur 2017, 23). Another consistent claim stemming from the previous claim, is regarding the reform of the UN institutions. India has argued for making the UN more representative of changing global realities (Pant 2017, 225, 226). In 2015 for instance, Modi spearheaded the move for reforms with leaders of Brazil, Germany and Japan (together called the G-4) (Basrur 2017, 23).

Scholars like Murthy (2020, 2) argue that India's commitment to the larger principles of the international community (represented in the UN) has not been and cannot realistically be either complete or consistent. Rather, its diplomatic effort has always been to better align the UN principles to suit its interests, thereby playing a balancing act between its interests and its principles (*ibid.*). Through his research on India's 75-year-long engagement with the UN, Murthy (2020, 249) highlights two striking features. One, that the range of issues that interest India is ever-growing: while the list initially had protection of human rights and nuclear disarmament, now items like sustainable development and climate change have been added. Secondly, India always prioritised its own security and economic interests, while pragmatically assessing issues at the UN on a case-by-case basis for their adherence to UN principles of international relations. This is seen even in the Nehruvian era, during which the country supposedly privileged idealistic principles over

national interest. Murthy (2020, 250) argues that the reasons for the pursual of non-alignment were not only for ideology, but also were driven by the need to create a peaceful environment for India's economic advancement.

A similar argument is put forth by Mukherjee and Malone (2013, 116) who study India's engagement with the UNSC in 2011-12. They write that Indian policymakers today are pragmatic, viewing the UN as one avenue among others through which to advance their own interests, as evidenced by their demand for a permanent seat in the UNSC or their call for the need for domestic resolutions in domestic conflicts, reiterating that "force is not the only way to protect civilians" (PMUN 2011). Scholars like Shyam Saran argue that the logic behind the latter argument is simply that India's interests are best served when there is a rule-based, multilaterally structured and democratically governed international system (Mukherjee and Malone 2013, 116). Therefore, India sees the UN as the better platform for this, even though the country has matured beyond viewing the UN's systems as utopian.

India's second most recent term in the UNSC in 2011-12 had mixed reviews. While some critiqued the Ministry of External Affairs for wasting an opportunity to demonstrate responsible diplomacy on the international front (Srinivasan 2013; Malik 2012), others highlight the constraints of the country that limited its influence (Mukherjee and Malone 2013). After this stint, India's next entry into the UNSC as a non-permanent member was for the two years of 2021-22, which this thesis looks into.

The biggest gap in the literature analysing India's engagement with the UNSC is the lack of feminist analysis on the same. In my research, I found that feminist analysis with regards to India and UNSC is usually about the WPS Agenda and debates surrounding the agenda, like the works of Basu (2016); Sapiano and Singh Raghuvanshi (2023); and Manchanda (2020). There was no feminist, especially postcolonial feminist analysis on India's debates and priorities within the UNSC, or even an analysis of whether these debates included feminist issues. This thesis hopes to bridge the gap between these two sets of literature, namely the Indian and UNSC literature, and WPS Agenda literature, by analysing India's UNSC engagement in 2021-22 through a postcolonial feminist lens, with the aim of contributing to a postcolonial feminist analysis of Indian foreign policy.

Conclusion

This chapter was divided into three parts. Part one briefly discussed the mainstream account of Indian political history, primarily highlighting the manifestations of colonial rule. It also gave some feminist perspectives on the same. Part two discussed the social dynamics of Indian women, followed by some recent feminist political and legal developments in the India of 2021-22 (the same period as the FCDA which follows). Part three touched on the four phases of Indian foreign policy evolution from independence to present times (2021-22), along with India's relationship with the UN, laying the foundation of understanding the findings that focus on India's UNSC statements.

The goal of the chapter was to provide an understanding of the background of the Indian case study studied by this thesis. Throughout the findings chapters, references to this chapter will be made, in order to tie in foreign policy critical analysis to the country's biography and current experiences.

Chapter 5: Research Axis 2 Part #1: India's Construction of its Postcolonial Identity at the UNSC — Continuities and Contradictions

Introduction

This thesis' central concern is a postcolonial feminist engagement with claims of progressive FP approaches. Its first axis was concerned with FFP, detailing, analysing and offering original conceptualisations of how postcolonial feminism engages with Feminist Foreign Policy. The second axis is a similar critical engagement with India's ostensibly postcolonial articulations of FP. Chapter 3 explained the methodology behind this part of the work, FCDA, and then the case study in chapter 4 provided the background to the original findings which are presented in this chapter and the next.

This thesis's second axis investigates India's foreign policy articulations at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) through the lens of postcolonial feminist theory. This is done by using the methodology of Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) on India's UNSC Statements of 2021 and 2022. The findings from the same are broadly divided into two parts. The first part deals with the finding of the continuities and contradictions in India's construction of itself as a *postcolonial* country in its UNSC statements, and this is covered and critically engaged with in detail in this chapter. The second part is a more explicit postcolonial feminist analysis of the UNSC statements, that reveal limits and vulnerabilities in the way that India approaches gender in its UNSC policy. This is dealt with by the next chapter. Both these chapters (5 and 6) must be read together to get the overall postcolonial feminist analysis of India's engagements with the UNSC. They answer the research question of this thesis: How do progressive representations of foreign policy do under the scrutiny of postcolonial feminism?

The findings are arrived at through the FCDA. The main method of the FCDA comprised the manual scoping, following which, I ran the documents through the Sketch Engine software to check the word frequency, identification, repetition and adjacency. Thus, the themes and findings that emerge are primarily through the manual scoping. The Sketch Engine software, as discussed in the methodology chapter 3, is used for two purposes —

one to introduce all the statements and two, to help corroborate what I found through the manual scoping.

This chapter begins with an introduction to the UNSC statements. Here I use the Sketch Engine software for the first time for the purpose of discerning a broad overview of all the statements. The section functions as a foundation to both this and the next chapter since it explains what the statements are all about.

This chapter then addresses the first finding, that to some extent India does construct itself as a postcolonial state through its foreign policy as articulated in its UNSC statements. I argue that this is because of four themes seen in the statements. These are: one, India sees itself as an advocate for and leader of the Global South; two, it calls for region-specific and local-led solutions to global problems; three, there are patterns of India challenging the West through an anti-colonial foreign policy; and four, there is a continuity in foreign policy with respect to the NAM principles. However, I also complicate this construction of itself as postcolonial by discussing how some UNSC foreign policy stances are not just because of India's colonial experience, but a pragmatic decision to instrumentalise the concept of postcolonialism for India's international positioning. Thus, India's postcolonial identity seems to derive from its own brand of what it understands as 'postcolonial,' which involves not only advocating for decolonisation, but also being assertively nationalist, based on different instances at the UNSC. Although this foreign policy behaviour doesn't depart far from the various historical phases of foreign policy evolution discussed in chapter 4, what is seen in this chapter is an overt instrumentalisation of India's own brand of postcolonialism to justify and solidify its international positioning.

Keeping these pointers in mind, before presenting the findings, I will briefly discuss the contents of the UNSC statements in the following section.

5.1 Contents of the UNSC Statements

India was elected to be a non-permanent member at the UNSC for a term of 2 years, 2021-2022. During this term, the Government of India was represented by the Permanent Mission of India in New York (hereafter referred to as the Indian Delegation). This Mission comprises, as an outpost of the Government of India, the Permanent Representative (PR),

their two deputy PRs, and a team of officers (Permanent Mission of India to the UN 2024b; Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations 2020). The PR guides, supervises and instructs the Mission, and its head (Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations 2020, 1, 2). The PR, also referred to as the Ambassador of India to the United Nations was, at the time of this research, Ruchira Kamboj, the first woman to assume this position from India (Express News Service 2024). She took over this position from 2022, during the time period of analysis of this thesis. She followed Ambassador T. S. Tirumurti (2020-2021) who was previously in-charge of development partnerships and Africa (United Nations 2020). The functions of the Mission include “interaction with the United Nations, multilateral fora and representative of other member states of these organizations to pursue and safeguard India's interests at the political and economic spheres of works” (Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations 2020, 1).

The UNSC Presidency is on a rotating basis, and India assumed the presidency twice in its two-year tenure — in August 2021 and December 2022. In its first Presidency, India set three major focus areas — maritime security, peacekeeping and counterterrorism (Statement 110, 2021). The justifications of these issue areas were that maritime security has always received a “very high priority in India’s foreign policy” and must be addressed in a holistic manner (*ibid.*, 2). Peacekeeping is “an issue that is close to our hearts. India is proud of its long and rich tradition of contribution to UN peacekeeping operations, including the involvement of women peacekeepers.” Thus, peacekeeping is a consistent policy priority (*ibid.*, 2). Similarly, counterterrorism has also been India’s “national priority,” and reflects in their presidency (*ibid.*, 3).

In their December 2022 presidency, India set forth two major focus themes — reformed multilateralism and a global counterterrorism approach (Statement 415, 2022). While the latter is a continuation of the previous presidency’s policy priority, the former is justified through India’s consistent calling for reforms in the UN, also evident in several of the statements examined in this research.

These policy priorities are aligned with the “India at the Security Council 2021-2022” document released by the Permanent Mission before beginning their tenure. The title of the document is “NORMS: New Orientation for a Reformed Multilateral System” (Permanent Mission of India to the UN 2021, 2), which highlights the primary priority for India during

this tenure. The priorities outlined in that document call for effective responses to international terrorism and reforming the multilateral system to reflect contemporary realities (Permanent Mission of India to the UN 2021, 4, 5). They highlight the consequences of rapidly evolving technology and how India would encourage the use of technology to reduce human suffering, enhance ease of living and build resilient communities (*ibid.*, 7). The policy priority document also has a section titled “New Opportunities for Progress” (*ibid.*, 3). This section highlights India’s willingness to work with partners to bring innovative and inclusive solutions to foster development, especially as a rule-abiding democracy and a positive contributor to the security of the global commons. It calls for a “greater involvement of women and youth to shape a new paradigm” (*ibid.*, 10). It highlights both traditional and new security challenges that demand an effective platform for collaboration to ensure sustainable peace, and India calls for this role to be taken by the Security Council, especially in the post-COVID-19 context. These priorities will be referred to through the following findings discussions, since there are several statements that spotlight them.

The functions of the UNSC are to “maintain international peace and security,” “to investigate any dispute or situation which might lead to international friction,” and “to recommend methods of adjudicating such disputes or the terms of settlement” among others (United Nations 2024). Procedurally, the UNSC carries out these functions through meetings during which there are thematic agendas that are discussed in detail. Participating members of the UNSC release statements as part of these discussions. During its eighth term at the UNSC (2021-22), the Indian Delegation made 440 statements. On most occasions the statements were made by the PR, but in others by the Deputy PR and the Counsellor. For instance, Statement 27 (2021) on the attacks on peacekeepers in the Central African Republic, and Statement 161 (2021) on the political developments in Mali were both made by the Deputy PRs. Statement 136 (2021) on illicit trade in small arms and light weapons was made by the Counsellor. Occasionally, some statements were made by Indian Ministers visiting the UNSC to speak on certain themes. For instance, Statement 25 (2021) was given by the Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change on the UNSC Open Debate on Climate and Security. Statement 362 (2022) was delivered by the External Affairs Minister on the topic of the fight against impunity in Ukraine.

The topics of these 440 statements were usually in response to the UNSC agenda items, which range across various international issues of the day. The UNSC considered a total of 45 agenda items in 2021 and 49 in 2022 (United Nations 2022). These items included Women, Peace and Security; the situations in Ukraine, Palestine, Afghanistan, Libya, Liberia, Ethiopia, etc.; threats to and maintenance of international peace and security; UN Peacekeeping Operations; cooperation between the UN and regional organisations, etc. (*ibid.*). Therefore, India's statements comprised the Indian stand, explanation of vote and response to all these topics.

These statements not only discuss the issues on the UNSC agenda but also highlight India's policy priorities. I noted that most of the statements followed a common structure. They began with an acknowledgement of the issue being discussed and highlighting India's views on the same. They would then bring in India's policy priorities and how those would link to the issue at hand. The statement would end with a broad goal that the UNSC must strive to achieve within the context of the issue.

For instance, Statement 86 (2021) was made in the UNSC Meeting on MINUSMA (UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali). The statement begins with an acknowledgement of the issue at hand — that the repeated interventions of the Malian military in the transition process to peace has resulted in challenges like the military arresting the President and Prime Minister of the transitional government (Statement 86 2021, 1). India then puts forth its views:

“We welcome the timely actions of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU) which have helped to partly redeem the deteriorating political situation. We have also taken note of the commitments expressed by the new President on the transition process...It is indeed worrisome that terrorist activities in Central Mali continue unabated” (*ibid.*, 1, 2).

Finally, the statement puts forward the Indian government's policy priorities within this context:

“In the backdrop of the attack on the MINUSMA camp in Aguelhok on 2 April, we reiterate our call to MINUSMA to further enhance measures to ensure the safety and security of peacekeepers. This recent incident again underscores the urgent need to upgrade the security infrastructure

of camps of UN peacekeepers. We also call on the Government of Mali to bring to justice perpetrators of attacks against UN peacekeepers. We take positive note of the recent conviction for the killing of a MINUSMA peacekeeper in 2015.” (Statement 86 2021, 2).

As discussed above, UN Peacekeeping has consistently been an Indian UN policy priority, as reiterated in this statement, along with a discussion of the agenda at hand. The statement ends with a broad goal, in this case that Mali’s Peace Agreement requires a renewed commitment by all stakeholders (*ibid.*, 3).

The following chart and table contain the number of statements issued for the duration of the two years, along with the codes used through the analysis. For instance, Statement 144 would be a statement issued in October 2021.

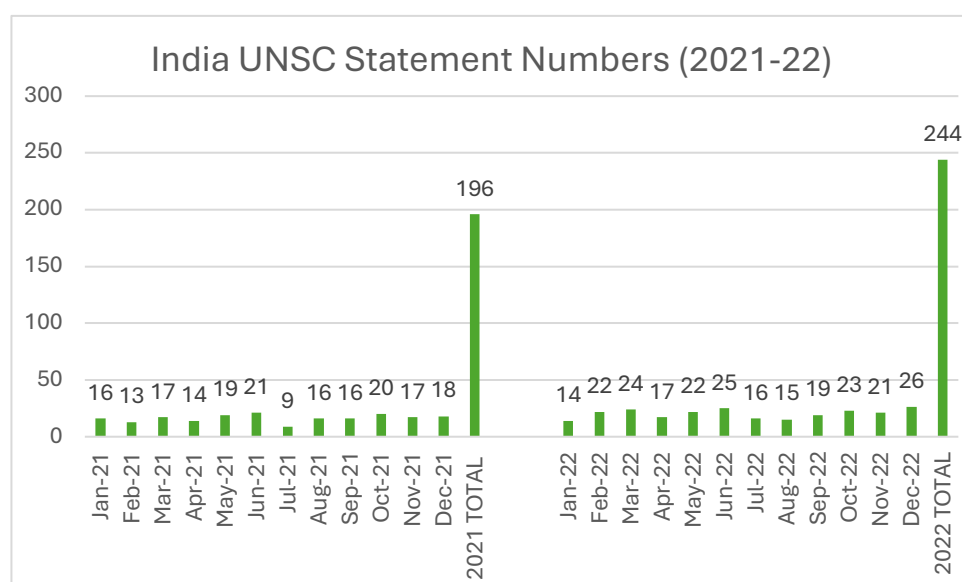


Chart 5.1: Number of Indian UNSC Statements month-wise

2021	MONTH-YEAR	NUMBER OF STATEMENTS	STATEMENT CODES
	Jan-21	16	1 to 16
	Feb-21	13	17 to 29
	Mar-21	17	30 to 46
	Apr-21	14	47 to 60

	May-21	19	61 to 79
	Jun-21	21	80 to 100
	Jul-21	9	101 to 109
(Presidency)	Aug-21	16	110 to 125
	Sep-21	16	126 to 141
	Oct-21	20	142 to 161
	Nov-21	17	162 to 178
	Dec-21	18	179 to 196
	2021 TOTAL	196	
2022	Jan-22	14	197 to 210
	Feb-22	22	211 to 232
	Mar-22	24	233 to 256
	Apr-22	17	257 to 273
	May-22	22	274 to 295
	Jun-22	25	296 to 320
	Jul-22	16	321 to 336
	Aug-22	15	337 to 351
	Sep-22	19	352 to 370
	Oct-22	23	371 to 393
	Nov-22	21	394 to 414
(Presidency)	Dec-22	26	415 to 440
	2022 TOTAL	244	
TOTAL 2021+2022 = 440 documents for FCDA			

Table 5.1: India's UNSC Statements at a Glance

The following chart outlines the numbers of statements made by the Indian Delegation on different thematic agenda items of the UNSC during their tenure:

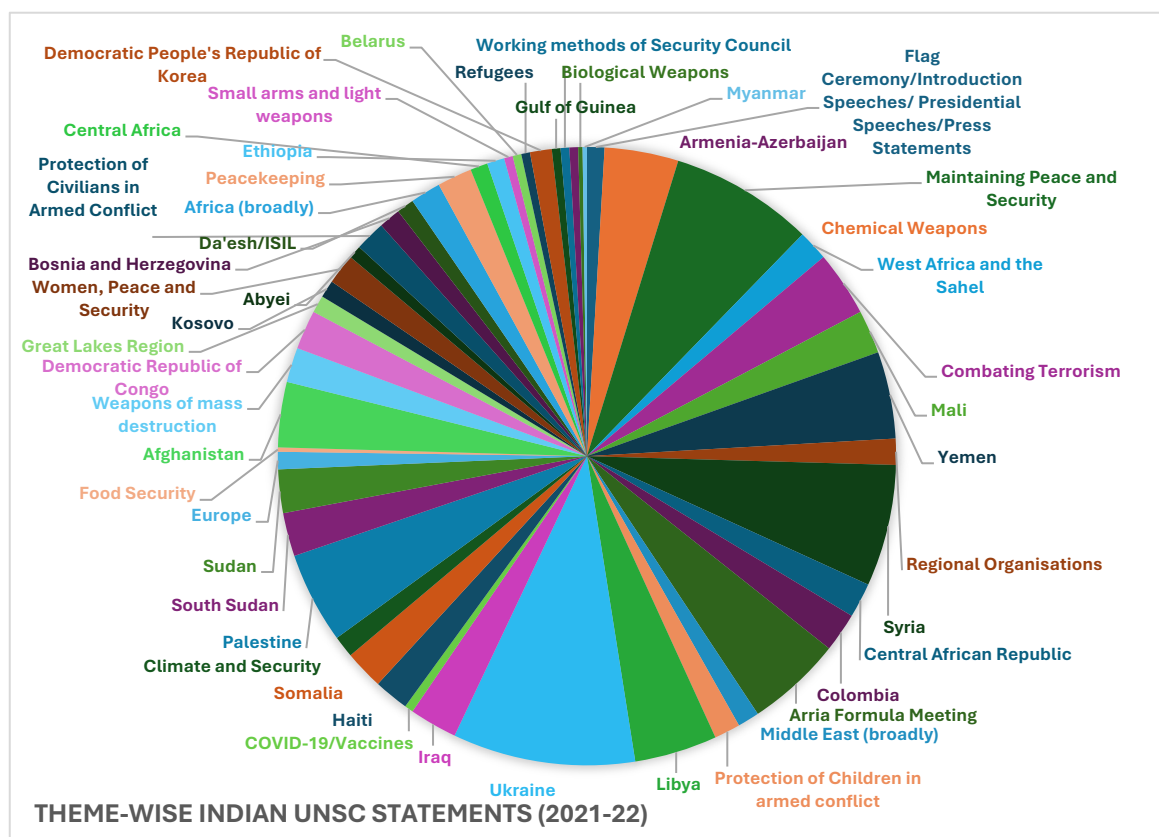


Chart 5.2: Statements and their themes

The total number of topics dealt with (as per the titles of the statements) is 49. As the chart shows, most of the statements were made on 'Ukraine' (42 statements), followed by 'Maintaining Peace and Security' (33) and then 'Syria' (28). The smallest number of statements were made on 'Food Security' (1), 'Biological Weapons' (1) and 'Myanmar' (1). Although food security is a theme India deals with in several other statements, especially when it comes to the impact of the Ukraine war on food security in the Global South (Statement 336 2022, 1), I have categorised those statements into the 'Ukraine' section in this chart, since they broadly deal with the latter. Therefore, it is important to note that while most of the statements have dealt with several themes together, I have categorised them here in terms of what the title of the statement (and thus the predominant theme) is.

In this time period, the theme ‘Women, Peace and Security’ has a total of 7 statements, although the ‘Arria formula meeting’³⁰ dealt with 2 statements that are women-centric, bringing the total number of statements dealing with women to 9 out of 440. However, several other statements do discuss the gendered aspects of conflicts, for instance, Statement 249 (2022) or Statement 271 (2022). However, since they don’t explicitly address women’s issues, I’ve categorised them into ‘Combating Terrorism’ and ‘Great Lakes Region’ respectively.

The following chart shows the statements made with the time distribution. I reduced the number of data points to be accommodated in the chart to make the overall chart clearer. Therefore, I grouped the themes into broader topics as follows:

1. **UN and its working**
Flag Ceremony/Introduction Speeches/ Presidential Speeches/Press
Statements
Regional Organisations
Arria Formula Meeting
Peacekeeping
Working methods of Security Council

2. **Peace, Security and International Issues**
Maintaining Peace and Security
Protection of Children in armed conflict
COVID-19/Vaccines
Climate and Security
Food Security
Women, Peace and Security
Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict
Refugees

3. **Weaponry and Terrorism**
Chemical Weapons

³⁰ Informal meetings of the UNSC which allow a frank exchange of views, usually without an outcome (Security Council Report 2020).

Combating Terrorism
Weapons of mass destruction
Biological Weapons
Small arms and light weapons

4. **Africa**

West Africa and the Sahel
Mali
Central African Republic
Libya
South Sudan
Sudan
Da'esh/ISIL
Abyei (border region in Sudan/South Sudan)
Africa (broadly)
Gulf of Guinea
Central Africa
Ethiopia
Great Lakes Region
Democratic Republic of Congo
Somalia

5. **Americas (Central, South)**

Haiti
Colombia

6. **Asia (Central, West, South, East)**

Iraq
Palestine
Afghanistan
Democratic People's Republic of Korea
Armenia-Azerbaijan
Myanmar
Yemen

Syria
Middle East (broadly)

7. **Europe**
Bosnia and Herzegovina
Europe
Kosovo
Belarus
Ukraine

Arranging the themes broadly would lead to the following chart:

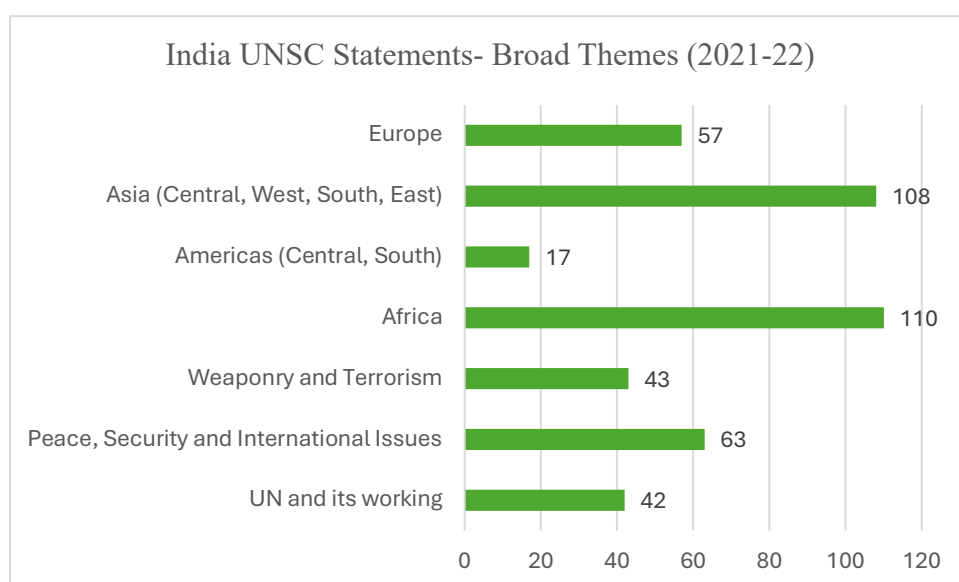
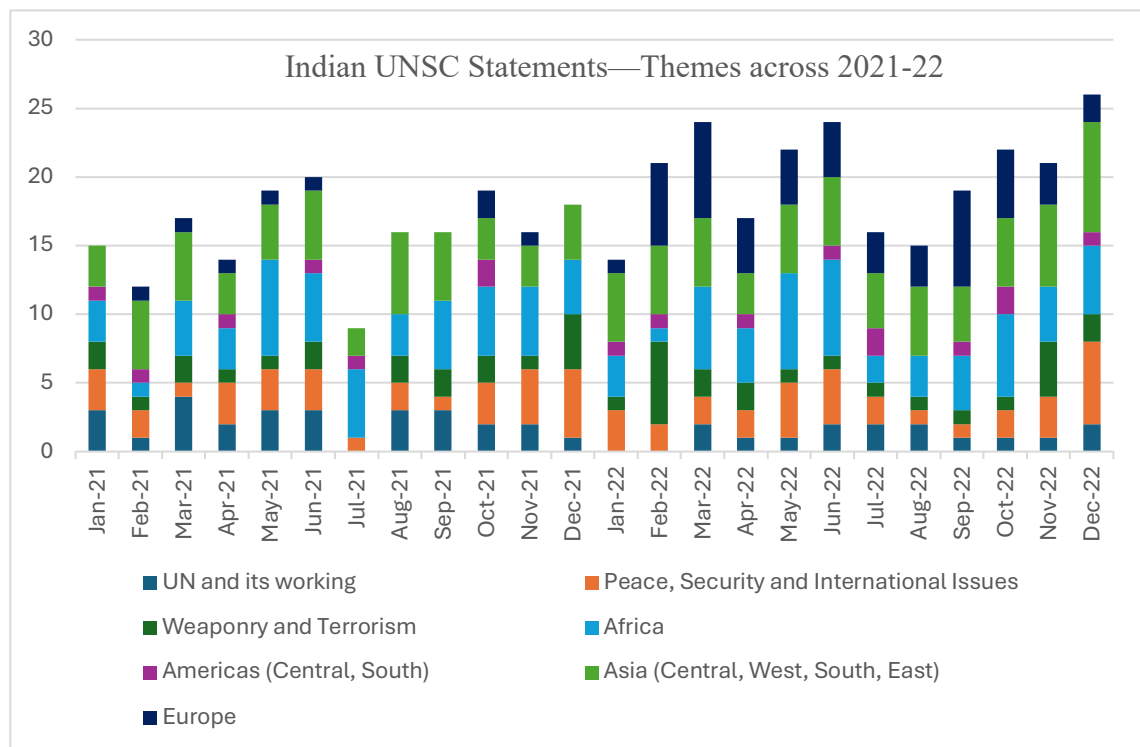


Chart 5.3: Statements and their themes—Categorised broadly

The highest number of statements is on the theme ‘Africa,’ followed by ‘Asia.’ Whereas the lowest number of statements is given on the ‘Americas.’ This is significant to my research since it indicates that Africa is not only a strong agenda item of the UNSC, but also an important theme in India’s UNSC policy. This is reflected in the statements that advocate for African representation, Global South cooperation and a shared history of colonialism. The findings sections in this chapter explores India’s articulations of African interests as a postcolonial tenet.

It must be noted that the UNSC decides the agenda for the UNSC meeting, therefore most of these topics are pre-decided based on the agenda of the UN. However, India was the President of the Council twice (August 2021, December 2022), during which it set the agenda on some issues like maritime security, peacekeeping, etc. To understand which themes were discussed during which part of the UNSC tenure, I made the following chart. I used the broad themes as categorised above, to get an idea as to which themes dominated



which months, and why.

Chart 5.4: Themes with Time Period

One of the biggest observations I made through this chart is the increased number of statements on ‘Europe’ starting February 2022. This is because of the war in Ukraine³¹, due to which several UNSC meetings had Ukraine on the agenda. February 2022 also has the greatest number of statements on ‘Weaponry and Terrorism’ (6 statements), which could also be attributed to the Ukraine war. Another trend that stands out is that the theme of Africa is consistently referred to through the course of the two years, despite the decreased

³¹ The Russian invasion of Ukraine started on February 24th 2022, leading to huge amounts of violence, leading to several casualties, displacements and deaths. It continues till date (July 2024) (Mearsheimer 2022)

statement numbers in February 2021 and February 2022. Another consistent topic spoken about is ‘Asia (Central, West, South, East),’ which can be alluded to the statements on Syria³² (28 statements overall- refer Chart 1), which was the third most spoken about topic overall.

It must be noted that the number of statements to be given per month is based on the number of UNSC meetings held. These meetings are at the discretion of the President of the UNSC, which is on a monthly rotational basis. The meetings of the UNSC shall be “held at the call of the President any time he (sic) deems necessary” (United Nations 1983). Therefore, the number of meetings per month are not fixed, and can vary based not only on the President of the UNSC, but also the situations that unfold internationally. This is because the President shall also call a meeting if a “dispute or situation is brought to the attention of the Security Council” (*ibid.*). This explains why there were an increased number of meetings in 2022 because of Ukraine. This would also explain the choice of meeting themes monthly. For instance, July 2021, having the least number of meetings, doesn’t focus on ‘UN and its working’ and ‘Weaponry and Terrorism.’ This is because France was the President of the UNSC that month, and their UNSC agenda included “Syria, Yemen, Lebanon, the Middle East, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, West Africa, Cyprus, Colombia and Central Asia” (étrangères 2021).

Monthly, December 2022 had the greatest number of statements overall. It also had the greatest number of statements on ‘Asia (Central, West, South, East)’ (8 statements) and ‘Peace, Security and International issues’ (6 statements). This month also coincided with India’s UNSC presidency. India’s agenda during its presidency of reformed multilateralism reflected in the ‘Peace, Security and International issues’ theme, with the greatest number of statements made in this theme for the entirety of the two years. However, on the second

³² In this case, Syria is categorised in ‘West Asia.’ ‘West Asia’ is not synonymous with the ‘Middle East’ even though both terms signify more or less the same geographic region (Shahid 2024). The term ‘Middle East’ has its genealogy in the post-imperial politics of the 20th century and is more a political term than geographic (Marsden and Mostowlansky 2019, 4). This is seen in the fact that the area is physically in the east only from the perspective of the US and Europe, but technically is in the Western part of the continent of Asia. Thus there has been a turn towards the term ‘West Asia,’ which not only contests previous names of the area, but also signifies a reconsideration of longstanding American policies that name the area Middle East (Freeman 2023). In India’s case, despite some statements having the title set by the UNSC as ‘Middle East (Syria)-chemical weapons,’ India still uses West Asia throughout its speeches (for instance: Statement 31 2021). Thus, Syria has been put in the ‘West Asia’ category.

agenda — global counterterrorism approach — there were not too many statements, overtaken by statements on Asia and Africa.

Extrapolating larger trends in these statements works as an introduction to the findings. It also gives an idea of broader UNSC workings, and why India's statements were made at a certain time. As mentioned in my methodology (Chapter 3), I conducted a discourse analysis of these UNSC statements (hereby collectively referred to as 'the corpus') through both manual scoping and the Sketch Engine software. Before moving into the detailed findings, I highlight some more broad statistics of the corpus found through the software, to conclude this section on the overview of the statements. These statistics add to the summary of the statements given above and give a brief snapshot of the kind of words used in the statements. I first used the function 'Wordlist,' which lists down all the word occurrences and the frequency with which they occur in the documents. Excluding prepositions like 'the, an, at,' etc., I found the following list of words occurring through the Indian delegation statements, arranged in order of frequency:

WORDLIST India UNSC Statements Get more space ? ! 👤

word (10,716 items | 167,316 total frequency)

Word	Frequency ? ↓	Word	Frequency ? ↓	Word	Frequency ? ↓	Word	Frequency ? ↓
1 india	1,669 ...	14 conflict	659 ...	27 women	473 ...	40 government	354 ...
2 security	1,627 ...	15 people	644 ...	28 process	458 ...	41 armed	351 ...
3 president	1,160 ...	16 terrorism	633 ...	29 resolution	440 ...	42 africa	346 ...
4 peace	1,069 ...	17 region	571 ...	30 development	421 ...	43 challenges	335 ...
5 council	1,062 ...	18 situation	559 ...	31 against	416 ...	44 violence	335 ...
6 international	994 ...	19 continue	559 ...	32 implementation	401 ...	45 work	335 ...
7 un	987 ...	20 terrorist	536 ...	33 syria	395 ...	46 issues	334 ...
8 humanitarian	886 ...	21 states	529 ...	34 parties	390 ...	47 needs	313 ...
9 support	812 ...	22 community	526 ...	35 national	371 ...	48 hope	311 ...
10 efforts	768 ...	23 assistance	510 ...	36 agreement	364 ...	49 attacks	308 ...
11 political	738 ...	24 through	509 ...	37 global	363 ...	50 ensure	308 ...
12 countries	698 ...	25 other	490 ...	38 under	357 ...		
13 including	695 ...	26 groups	486 ...	39 afghanistan	356 ...		

Rows per page: 50 1-50 of 10,716 1 / 215

Image 5.1: Word Frequency in the corpus

Thus, 'India' has been the word occurring through the statements the greatest number of times (1669 times). The other words that stand out are 'security' (1627 times), 'peace' (1069 times) and 'humanitarian' (886 times). The word 'women' is the twenty seventh

most frequent word used — it was used 473 times. Although this wordlist is not fully indicative of the nature and themes of the statements, and neither can one directly link it to policy priorities, it is still insightful for the purposes of a discourse analysis. Frequency can identify, very simply, a problem or issue in the corpus that occurs many times (De Simoni et al. 2014, 178). It can also be indicative of “attributive words” — which are words associated with the primary words — these can reveal patterns, ideologies and powers at play within the foreign policy statements (Iqbal, Danish, and Iqbal 2014, 1). Some of these attributive words will be shown in the findings sections to follow.

Similarly, to flesh out some broad statistics of the corpus, I also used the function ‘Keywords,’ which highlights the set of words that occurs in the UNSC corpus more frequently than in general English, represented by the automated ‘English Web 2021’ corpus of the software. Finding Keyword lists, similar to Wordlists, are useful to highlight themes that stand out in the corpus and can help make inferences.

KEYWORDS India UNSC Statements

reference corpus: English Web 2021 (enTenTen21) (Items: 8,489)

Lemma	Lemma	Lemma	Lemma	Lemma
1 peacekeeper	11 peacekeeping	21 two-state	31 ocha	41 unsc
2 sahel	12 drc	22 briefing	32 yemeni	42 hudaydah
3 minusma	13 brifer	23 amisom	33 post-conflict	43 demobilization
4 isil	14 unmiss	24 yemen	34 malian	44 ecowas
5 srsq	15 ceasefire	25 minusca	35 reintegration	45 somalia
6 peacekeepe	16 mali	26 envoy	36 constructively	46 libya
7 madam	17 peacebuilding	27 terrorism	37 disarmament	47 non-discriminatory
8 unidad	18 non-state	28 counter-terrorism	38 un	48 sub-regional
9 humanitarian	19 reiterate	29 usg	39 sudan	49 unfccc
10 monusco	20 opcw	30 unscr	40 unnwa	50 icglr

Rows per page: 50 1–50 of 1,000 1 / 20

Image 5.2: Keywords in the corpus (single-word)

As seen in the image, ‘peacekeeper’ is the most frequent keyword in the corpus. Although this does align directly with India’s policy priorities at the UNSC, a detailed context-analysis of the usage of peacekeeping in the corpus will be conducted in the later part of the findings to make this inference stronger. It is also to be noted that the words like ‘women,’ ‘gender’ and ‘feminist’ don’t feature in the top fifty keyword list.

5.2 Finding #1: India Constructs its Identity as Postcolonial in its UNSC Statements

The first part of the findings of my research is that India constructs its identity as postcolonial in its UNSC statements. While the more explicitly *postcolonial feminist* critique of these policies will come in the next chapter, in this chapter I demonstrate the continuities and contradictions in India's identity constructions as postcolonial. I will also argue that there is an inherent instrumentalisation of its own brand of postcolonialism: one that involves Global South advocacy (which is a progressive form of foreign policy, along with a form of assertive nationalism operating simultaneously) to help justify its foreign policy stances and international positioning at the UNSC. Some of the findings seen here reflect the different phases of foreign policy evolution discussed in chapter 4. India's foreign policy has moved through phases of idealism and realism both, seen in its NAM championing and its prioritisation of national security and aspirations of being a regional hegemon. All these phases are reflected in the following analysis.

Within this broad finding, four themes arrived at through manual scoping are presented in sub-sections here and together they form the major finding that Indian constructs itself as a progressive postcolonial foreign policy actor through its UNSC policies. I will also corroborate some of these findings with analysis from the Sketch Engine software.

5.2.1 India constructs itself as an advocate for and leader of the Global South

In the analysis of the statements, I found that India advocates very vocally for the rights of the Global South, presenting itself as the leader of the Global South. I noted that this positioning of India is clear across several debates conducted in the UN, with topics ranging from UN Peacekeeping, climate change or the situation in Afghanistan — in most cases, India argues from the point of view of the Global South, in some cases saying that it will be the “voice for the developing world,” which it declared in the very first statement at the beginning of its UNSC tenure (Statement 1 2021, 2).

I discovered that one of India's pillars of this advocacy is based on spotlighting the deprivation of rights of the Global South. This is seen for instance in statement 15 on the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL). India highlights that it conveyed its reservations

on the way the earlier resolutions on Libya were rushed at the UNSC, and that enduring peace still remains a dream for the Libyan people, who continue to bear the brunt of actions taken by the Council and the international community (Statement 15 2021, 2). India always attempts to spotlight how an issue impacts vulnerable people, for instance when it speaks of how fragile and conflicted affected states with weak governing institutions and faltering health systems, have seen a worse impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially among their vulnerable populations (Statement 13 2021, 2).

India not only speaks of the deprivation of the rights of the Global South as a whole, but also of populations within the Global South. In statement 150 (2021, 1, 2) India praises the enactment of a law in Colombia for creating special electoral districts for peace because they provided “opportunity for historically excluded populations to participate in the next elections.” In the same statement, they also spotlight how some aspects of the peace agreement must still be implemented better, without which the cycle of violence that has led to killings of human rights defenders, indigenous and vulnerable populations, will not be broken (*ibid.*, 2).

A pattern detected is that this advocacy extends especially to the continent of Africa. India recognises the “complex challenges that African countries face in holding elections” (Statement 82 2021, 1). Often in these statements the words “complex” or “multidimensional” are used to describe the nature of the situation in Africa:

“The multidimensional nature of challenges faced by Mali is rooted in the long-standing imbalances in its constitutional, administrative, and security set up, that have been largely left unaddressed for decades. For such a complex crisis, there cannot be a quick-fix solution therefore” (Statement 259 2022, 2).

Thus, there is a highlighting of the historical deprivation of rights, but also recognition of the complexity of the multidimensional nature of challenges that Africa faces today. This is especially seen in the debate “ISIL in Africa: nature of threat and responses.”³³

³³ The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant/The Islamic State (ISIL) is an increasingly powerful terrorist organization that continues to pose a threat in North and West Africa (Mearsheimer 2022).

“...the trajectory of ISIL and its affiliates in Africa discloses an insidious ambition to continue to extend its influence by exploiting armed conflicts, vulnerabilities, and ethnic fault lines and undermining the peaceful aspirations of the societies upon which it preys.

ISIL’s exploitation of local contexts, pre-existing tensions, and grievances has underlined its propaganda and recruitment tactics.

It is important to understand these complexities in order to bring appropriate and effective responses...In several African States where terrorist groups, including ISIL affiliates, have preyed upon local grievances and tensions, globally aligned and operationally connected terrorism is being pursued as a part of, and alongside, other local movements pursuing specific political and economic goals at the local and national levels.

This has meant that attempts to resolve local conflicts are sometimes undertaken alongside counterterrorism operations and strategies” (Statement 260 2022, 1, 2).

In this statement, India has taken an analytical approach to the expansion of ISIL in Africa. It has linked the absence of institutional presence that resolves local conflicts, to the terrorist organisation ISIL, arguing that the latter is using the former to grow. In making this inference, India is recognising that the challenges faced by Africa are not simplistic and are in fact multidimensional and complex.

An interesting analytical point India makes extends this concept of multidimensional complexities to the concept of identity, and how sustaining peace in post-conflict societies in the developing world is challenging because of the multiple identity markers (Statement 148 2021, 1). India argues that building peace is becoming more complex than ending conflict, because this diversity of identities must be fostered along with ensuring political and socio-economic development. India also highlights this in the case of Mali, that its multidimensional challenges are rooted in long-standing imbalances in its administrative, constitutional and security set-up that have not been addressed for decades (Statement 199 2022, 2). “For such a complex crisis, there cannot be a quick-fix solution therefore...Mali’s challenges need to be addressed through a comprehensive approach” (Statement 259 2022, 2).

I noticed that the example of nations in this regard are not restricted to developing nations in Africa or Asia. In statement 162 (2021, 2), India highlights that Bosnia and Herzegovina

has been facing challenges in building sustainable peace due to its multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-cultural and multi-religious nature. India argues that through “dialogue, mutual understanding and empathy towards each other’s positions,” these divisions can be overcome (*ibid.*).

In all these cases, India highlights the multiplicity of identities of the Global South, and how that might complicate the post-conflict peacebuilding process. It also recommends that in order to build sustainable peace in such societies, one must look to overcoming mutual difference through dialogue, among other measures.

One of the biggest pillars of India’s advocacy for the Global South is in its sustained movement for UN reforms. This is reflective in its policy priorities document titled, “NORMS: New Orientation for a Reformed Multilateral System” (Permanent Mission of India to the UN 2021, 2). This stance also clearly reflects in the corpus. India’s argument is that the current system of the UN with only some permanent members who hold the veto does not reflect current geopolitical realities. “The Council must be made more representative of developing countries if it is to continue to engender trust and confidence in its ability to provide leadership to the entire world” (Statement 65 2021, 2). It says that this lack of representation in the UN is the main issue plaguing the institution today, especially in the case of Africa: “It is a matter of continuing regret that the voice of Africa is not given its proper due in this most pivotal institution...That is why, Mr. President, the issue of reformed multilateralism should be given utmost priority” (Statement 73 2021, 1, 2). In several statements, it voices its concern that Africa is being denied rightful representation. For instance, in Statement 164 (2021, 2), India asks: “How long rightful voices of the developing world including Africa can be denied?”

Other than the statements quoted here that bring up multilateralism in different contexts, there are six statements that specifically only deal with arguing for a reformed multilateralism and a more representative UN: Statements 127 (2021), 137 (2021), 170 (2021), 340 (2022), 343 (2022) and 429 (2022). One of them is a G4 Ministerial Joint Press Statement (Statement 137 2021, 1), which comprised the foreign ministers of India, Brazil, Japan and Germany underlining the urgency of UN reforms and supporting each other’s candidatures as aspiring new permanent members in a reformed Security Council. They

end the statement with a support to the Common African Position (CAP)³⁴. However, it is notable that despite the declared support for Africa at the end, the G4 is a partnership with two Global North countries (Germany and Japan) and Brazil — this does seem to be on the contrary to India's reflected priorities for being the voice of the Global South. It raises questions as to why the G4 is itself not expanding to include other countries from the Global South, especially Africa. Also, does this grouping fully reflect the changed global order that they argue for, or is it merely a bid for permanent seats? I argue that certain positions that India takes through its tenure are more pragmatic and less aligned with its normative ideals, building on a certain brand of postcolonialism that India instrumentalises. This blend of pragmatism with idealism was seen in the various foreign policy phases discussed in chapter 4. This will be analysed further in section 5.3 of this chapter.

In Statement 127 (2021, 2), India highlights the UNSC's structural inequality and also the consequences of interventions made recently without regional mediation efforts, noting that "...when considering preventive diplomacy...the member states have to be convinced that the decision taken by the Council is impartial, carefully considered and is not just a political tool." Other arguments put forth by India are that the institutional architecture that's primarily responsible for international peace and security remains frozen (Statement 170 2021, 2), whether the UNSC is relevant today (Statement 343 2022, 1) and that failing to make its working methods more objective and transparent would only charge the Council with politicisation (Statement 429 2022, 2). Statement 340 (2022,1,2) critiques the working method of penholdership, which is an informal arrangement for Council members to initiate and chair an informal drafting process. India argues that the elected members have repeatedly asked to take the pen on files of their interest and expertise but have been ignored — "Penholdership cannot be based on archaic factors or colonial past" (*ibid.*).

Therefore, India not only argues for a reformed UN, but is vocally critical of current UN processes. This is seen in several cases of the Global South when India has been openly critical of the UN approach. In Statement 22 (2021, 2) it tells the UN to not get bogged down by technicalities and react nimbly in the case of Yemen. It is also critical of the closure of major UN aid programs and said that Yemeni women and children are bearing

³⁴ The Common African Position (CAP) on the post-2015 development agenda is a document written by the African Union that seeks to realise the Agenda 2063. The CAP outlines transformation in critical Pan African priority areas like peace and security, people-centred development, etc. (African Union 2014).

the brunt of this scaling down of aid (Statement 243 2022, 2). In the case of Myanmar, it argues that the UN should play its role and not be found wanting in this crucial phase (Statement 50 2021, 2). In the case of Mali, India declares that the “indecisiveness of the Council unfortunately has allowed the terrorist groups to expand their area of influence” (Statement 167 2021, 2). Similarly in Syria, the delegation argues that the continuing neglect of this issue by the international community will cause ‘irreparable damage to our collective fight against terrorism’ (Statement 209 2022, 2).

Structural inequalities in the UN’s approach are also pointed out in statements about arms, noting that benchmarks³⁵ prescribed on conflict-ridden developing countries are even higher than some developed countries have achieved and “this is uncalled for” (Statement 211 2022, 2). With respect to the UN reporting mechanism, India says that it is regretful that the present reporting mechanism does not treat all member states’ inputs on an equal footing and continues to be plagued by political biases (Statement 215 2022, 2). In another case it calls out “selective filtering,” when the Secretary General’s report didn’t consider the proscribed groups that target India repeatedly (Statement 339 2022, 2).

Thus, based on the evidence shown above, I argue that India sees itself as the advocate for Global South interests. I also found that India positions itself as the leader of the Global South. This is partly seen in its UNSC reforms advocacy seen above, but also in seen in the emphasis given to South-South cooperation that is discussed below. India argues that it is committed to ensure the rise of Africa for true multipolarity in the global order, “We have always worked with Africa as per Africa’s priorities-both through bilateral and multilateral mechanisms. Even as we meet our own development targets, this tradition of south-south solidarity continues to strengthen...” (Statement 374 2022, 2).

This discourse about leadership of and solidarity with the Global South is also visible in statements on issues such as vaccination and post-pandemic assistance; developmental assistance; food security; and peacekeeping. In statement 13, India highlights how it responded to UN calls and assisted over 150 countries through urgent health and medical supplies. In this context, it draws specific attention to how it helped countries from the

³⁵ The benchmarks India is referring to here have to do with measures regarding arms embargo and assets freeze (Statement 211 2022, 2).

Global South. “In the spirit of South-South cooperation, through the US\$150 million India-UN Development Partnership Fund, we have responded to member states’ requests for COVID-19 related assistance” (Statement 13 2021, 2).

In a similar vein, India writes, “Just as India and Africa fought colonialism together, India will continue to support South Sudan, and its people in this journey towards sustainable peace and a prosperous future.” (Statement 90 2021, 3) This idea also extends to development partnerships for peacebuilding with countries of the Global South, particularly Asia and Africa; “We will continue to be a pillar of strength for all developing countries in their transition to development, progress and prosperity” (Statement 148 2021, 2, 3). India portrays itself as a pillar of strength for all peacebuilding efforts, particularly for its ‘African brothers’ (Statement 397 2022, 3). The usage of ‘brothers’ in this context stands out. In the entire corpus, it uses ‘brothers’ nine times, but each time it is accompanied with ‘sisters.’ A quick analysis of the usage of the word is seen below:

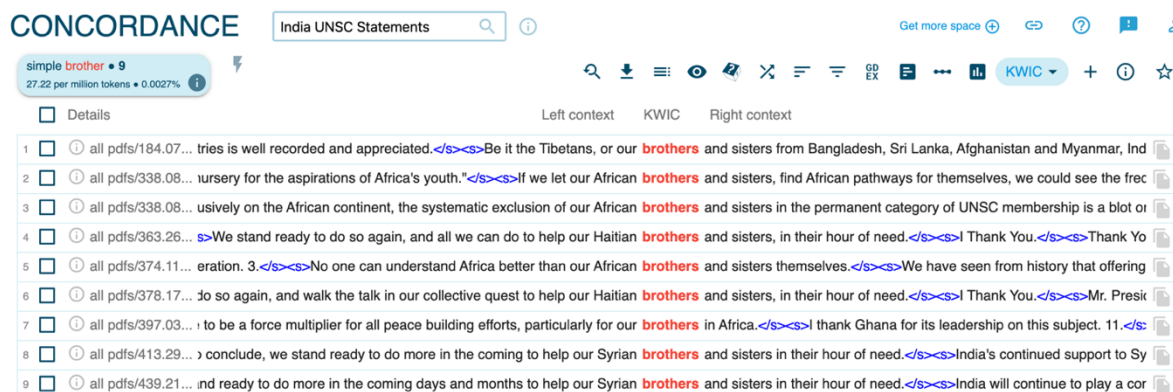


Image 5.4: Usage of the word ‘brothers’

It can be seen that ‘brothers and sisters’ as a phrase has been used eight out of nine times. Only in Statement 397 (2022, 3) quoted above, it uses brothers by itself in the context of sustainable peace in Africa. The non-usage of sisters in this statement I believe has no particular contextual reasoning, since most of the other statements also focus on sustainable peacebuilding in developing countries. Thus, I would consider this usage of brothers by itself and without sisters an aberration, rather than an indication of a gendered approach to peacebuilding. However, what is relevant to this finding theme, as can be seen in the image, is that India uses ‘brothers’ and ‘brothers and sisters’ all in the context of countries of the

Global South. 4 of the 9 statements use it in the context of Africa. It can be inferred therefore, that India is furthering a sort of ‘brotherhood’ or ‘sisterhood’ with developing countries, thereby projecting a form of South-South togetherness.

This South-South cooperation discussion often focusses more on India’s developmental assistance to the Global South, rather than a cooperative two-way approach. This assistance usually takes the form of substantial grants, soft loans, infrastructure, housing, education, health, connectivity, improving livelihoods and scholarships for higher education and capacity building, including in large numbers to women (Statement 335 2022, 2).

Other instances of India’s leadership of the Global South are seen through its assistance to Palestine. India says that it has always focussed on the importance of improving the overall quality of life in Palestine through development assistance projects and capacity building programs for Palestinian youth (Statement 57 2021, 2). In most of these statements, the word ‘always’ is notably repetitive, showing that India positions this assistance as being a central tenet of its foreign policy approach for a long time. It goes on to highlight that even during the pandemic, India’s developmental projects in Palestine, like the India-Palestine Technopark, the Women Empowerment Centre and construction of schools continued to progress (Statement 178 2021, 2)

In the case of Central Africa, India highlights that it has cordial, friendly and bilateral relations with the countries, has extended development cooperation assistance and will continue to engage closely and be steadfast in its support to Central African peace and prosperity (Statement 300 2022, 3).

I argue that India draws the justification of its leadership of the Global South from its colonial experience. This is seen evidently in Statement (65 2021, 3):

“India stood at the forefront during the UN's tumultuous years of struggle against colonialism and apartheid. During our eight terms as a member of the Security Council, we have always endeavoured to be a voice of reason and understanding, a voice of the underrepresented developing world, a bridge-builder for narrowing divides and fostering consensus. We have been the leading advocate of the concerns and aspirations of developing countries and the creation of a more equitable international economic and political order” (Statement 65 2021, 3).

In a similar vein, the delegation often openly critiques the procedures, resolutions and debates of the UN for not being considerate to the Global South. It shows its critique by abstaining from the vote for certain resolutions, thereby acting on its critical view and making a point to the UNSC. In a statement that explains India's abstention on a vote about an adopted South Sudan resolution, the delegation says that the country needs engagement and encouragement, rather than the sanctions measures that don't give due credit to positive strides made by South Sudan. In view of this, India abstained from the resolution (Statement 290 2022, 2).

In a debate on strengthening accountability for international law violations, India speaks of cases being referred to the International Criminal Court (ICC) for political reasons, and highlights those countries in Asia and Africa, including India itself, that are not part of the Rome Statute³⁶ (Statement 296 2022, 2). Which is why, India argues, referring cases to the ICC would violate principles of the Security Council like independence of a judicial body and not being subordinate to political organs.

Coming back to the issue of vaccines, India's primary leadership role was seen in its statements on vaccine inequity during the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, India consistently highlighted the "glaring disparity" in vaccine accessibility globally because inequitable vaccine distribution has hit the conflict-affected and poorer countries the hardest (Statement 21 2021, 1, 2). In another statement (261 2022, 1) India speaks about how while one part of the world has even moved on to the booster dosage rounds of the vaccine, much of the developing world is yet to be vaccinated. India calls out the "irony" of the progress in newer vaccine development despite the problems in availability, especially in conflict and post-conflict situations (Statement 2022 261, 1).

At the same time, I also noticed a defensive form of appreciation towards home-grown vaccines. In noting how much the world order has changed, the External Affairs Minister made the statement that the pandemic saw many vulnerable nations get their vaccine from

³⁶ The Rome Statute is the treaty that established the International Criminal Court (ICC) (International Criminal Court 2021).

beyond their traditional sources, which indicated a diversification of global production and signified how much the world order has changed (Statement 429 2022, 2).

Similar to vaccine inequity, India also draws parallels to food security:

"We have been consistently drawing attention to the twin burden of rising prices and falling supplies of petroleum and food grains on developing countries. We can ill afford to again disregard principles of equity, affordability, and accessibility of essential commodities for the needy, as we had erred in the case of Covid-19 vaccines" (Statement 310 2022, 2).

The attention to food security and India's leadership role is especially seen in statements about the Ukraine war. The delegation spotlights the impact of the crisis in the form of increasing food and energy costs especially for developing countries (Statement 257 2022, 2), disruption of supply chains (Statement 254 2022, 2), rising oil prices that have impacted free movement of goods to vulnerable regions (Statement 300 2022, 2) and shortages of fertilisers (Statement 420 2022, 2).

India positions itself as a leader that's combating several of these impacts. For instance, it speaks of how it's increasing the production of fertilisers to combat the shortage (Statement 336 2022, 2). It also highlights how it has committed to mitigate food insecurity, by providing financial assistance and supplying food grains to countries in need, like Afghanistan, Myanmar, Sudan and Yemen and Sri Lanka (*ibid.*).

Such work on food security is not restricted to the Ukraine war. Almost a year before the war in March 2021, India reiterated the importance of reshaping food systems to be more inclusive for poor and marginalised populations especially during conflict-induced food insecurity (Statement 35 2021, 2). In some cases, India also highlighted that the focus on Ukraine must not take away from other conflicts — "While the international community's focus is on the humanitarian situation arising out of Ukraine, we must not lose sight of the sufferings of the Syrian people" (Statement 283 2022, 1).

India focuses a lot on highlighting the disproportionate impact of conflict on the Global South. In a statement on North Korea, India writes, "The Global South has already been disproportionately affected by the prevailing geopolitical situation and related challenges.

It is therefore important, to continue to make all efforts to maintain peace and stability” (Statement 372 2022, 2). The delegation often talks of adverse and multidimensional impact of the Ukraine conflict (Statement 282 2022, 1, 2), not just limited to Europe (Statement 418 2022, 2), having a destabilising effect with broader regional and global implications (Statement 274 2022, 2) adding that “the global south, in particular, is feeling the pain acutely” (Statement 421 2022, 2).

I also found that India has often positioned itself as the leading role in UN peacekeeping. This is reflected in its policy priorities, and some of the statements, and especially when they speak of women in peacekeeping (discussed in detail in chapter 6). For instance, “India’s peacekeeping credentials need no elaboration. Suffice to say that we have proudly contributed to UN Peacekeeping...” (Statement 352 2022, 1). Even within the peacekeeping theme, India discusses the anomalies between Global North and South. For instance, Statement 352 (2022, 2) criticises peacekeeping missions for not being given clear mandates because troop and police contributing countries do not have a role in the decision-making process.

It critiques the UNSC for not addressing the peacekeeping problems adequately. “Peacekeeping missions cannot be a long-term response to what are fundamentally political problems. It is for the Council to address these issues rather than burden the peacekeeping missions beyond their mandate” (Statement 76 2022, 2). Regarding the implementation of the Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System (CPAS)³⁷, India said that there should not be a selective approach that only holds the troop contributing countries accountable for the effective performance of the mission (Statement 102 2021, 2). The North-South divide in UN Peacekeeping is a well-researched phenomena [see for instance (Abiola et al. 2017)]. By highlighting this issue in its speeches, India is referring to the fact that expansive mandates and protracted and larger peacekeeping operations have “forced” the UN to depend only on the Global South for peacekeeping troops (Joshi 2020, 795). This is compounded by the fact that troop contribution from high-capacity states has declined over time. Thereby, by referring to the selectivity of the UNSC in dealing with troop

³⁷ The CPAS is a tool to enhance evidence-based UN Peacekeeping mandate implementation that is rooted in a detailed assessment of the context (United Nations Peacekeeping 2020).

contributing countries, India is essentially highlighting the divide between the Global North and South.

The following pages outline some more broad trends seen in these statements. Within critical discourse analysis, analysis of ‘concordance’ is the analysis of the context of the word in its own textual environment, which may help uncover and interpret possibilities of words that may not have otherwise been realised (Cheng 2013, 1, 2). Using Sketch Engine to conduct concordance analysis on the phrase “Global South,” I found that it has been mentioned 38 times across the corpus. The following are images from the analysis, highlighting in which sentences of which documents the phrase was found:

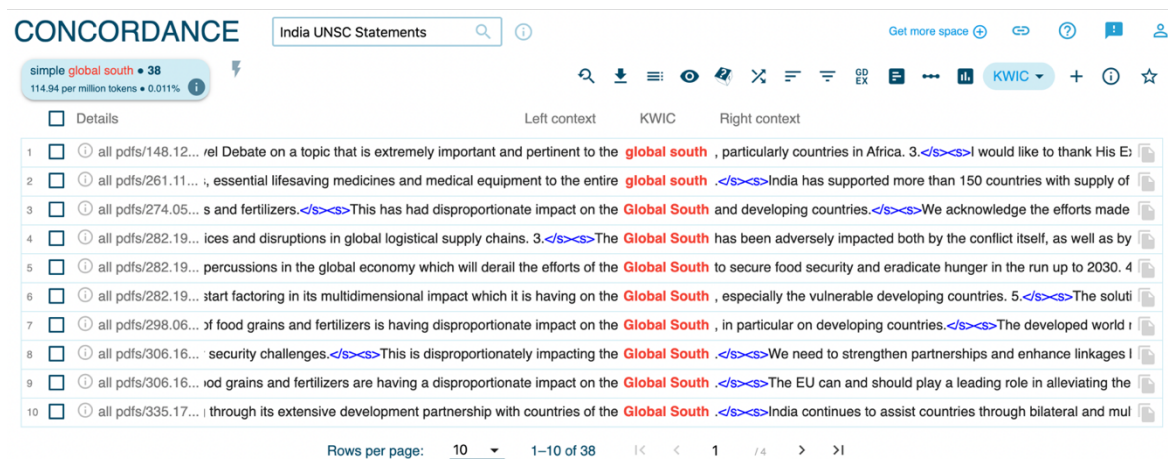


Image 5.5: Global South mentions Page 1 of 4

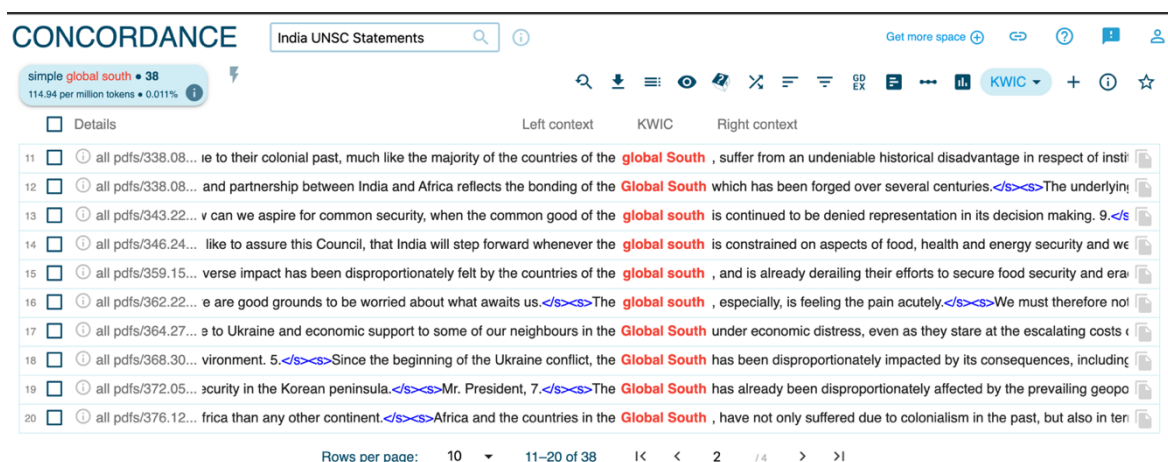


Image 5.6: Global South mentions Page 2 of 4

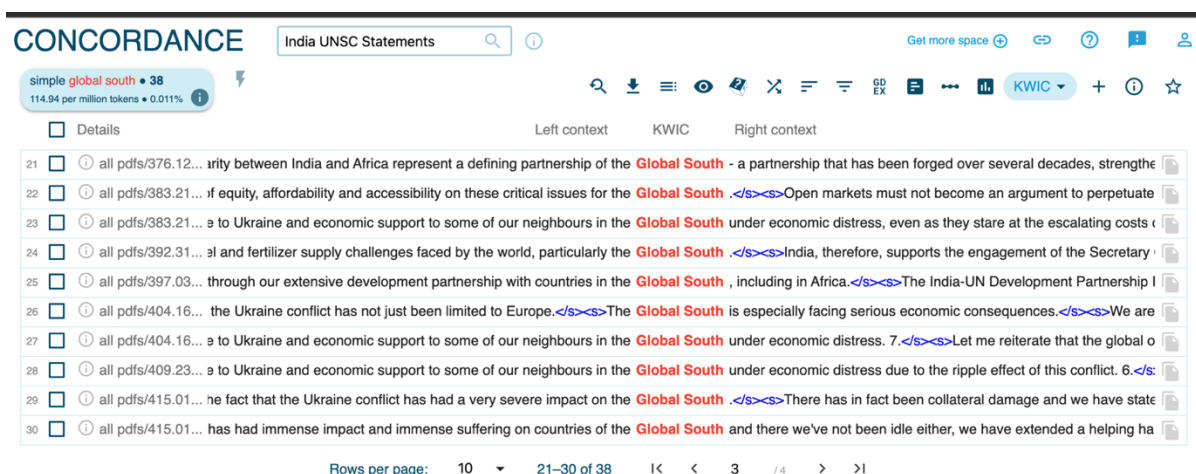


Image 5.7: Global South mentions Page 3 of 4

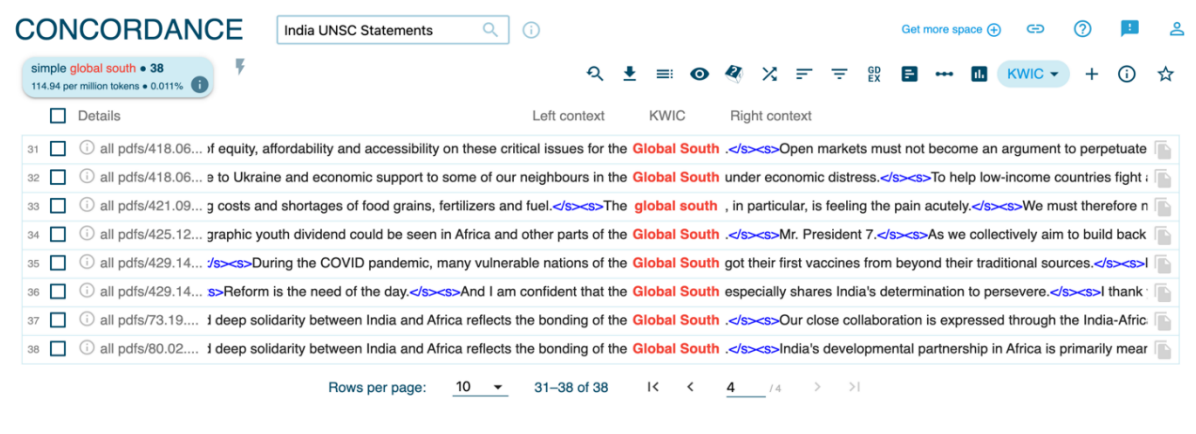


Image 5.8: Global South mentions Page 4 of 4

Some trends that stand out in this data is the usage of “Global South” and “colonial” in the same document, which happens twice; or the usage of “Global South” and “Africa” in the same document, which is seen in 11 documents. These phrases occurring concurrently in the same document indicate that they are attributive words, in the sense that India speaks of Africa often when it speaks of the Global South. One can also make the inference, based on these word findings and the analysis above, that India also forms links between colonialism and the Global South (although this is done in several more statements using words other than ‘Global South,’ which is why the concordance analysis here shows only two statements).

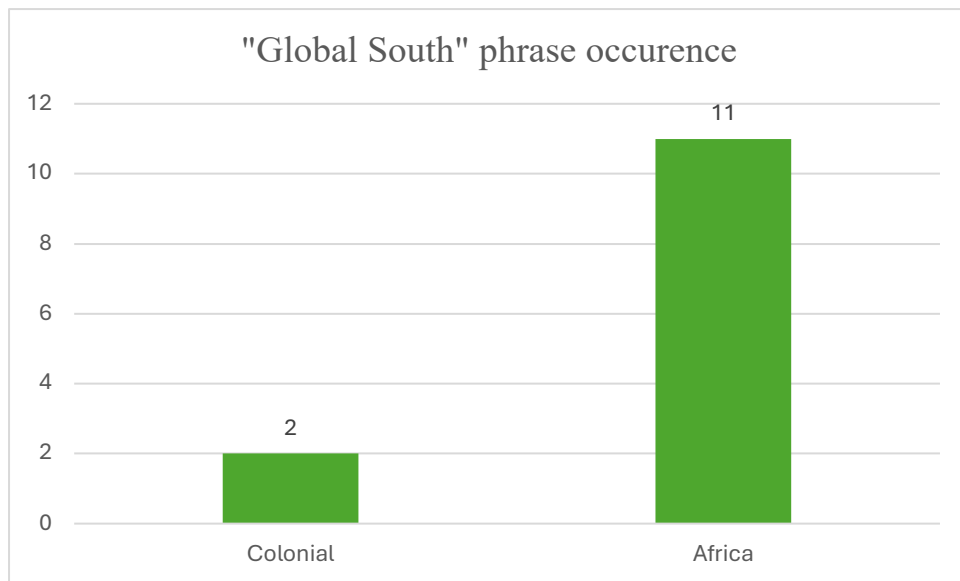


Chart 5.5: “Global South” phrase occurring in the same document with “colonial” and “Africa”

Another interesting finding looking at image 5.5, document 9, is that Global South is used in the same sentence as the European Union (EU). This is a unique statement because it evidences that India isn’t only striving for leadership or advocacy but also attributing accountability to the West regarding Global South deprivation. This in is statement 306 (2022, 2), when India says that the EU can and should play a role in alleviating the impact of the crisis on vulnerable countries, and as the chair of the counter-terror committee, India would like the EU to “step up its support” to make it a collective fight against terrorism with “no double speak” (*ibid.*, 3). What stands out in this statement is that India is critiquing a regional organisation in this statement and not the UNSC or the permanent members of the UN. Thus, it seeks to not only hold the UN accountable, but also Western governments in their different capacities and forms. This is consistent with the other findings of this research on India’s anti-colonial foreign policy, discussed in detail in section 5.2.3 of this chapter.

Perhaps the starkest statement that summarises India’s advocacy and leadership of the Global South is statement 346 (2022, 2)—

“We have delivered for the world in terms of vaccines. We did it earlier for medicines. So, I would like to assure this Council, that India will step

forward whenever the global south is constrained on aspects of food, health and energy security and we will do this in a manner that is helpful to the global economy and does not take undue advantage of countries in distress.”

This section discussed the first of four themes that make up the finding that India constructs its identity as postcolonial at the UNSC. The next theme relates to an emphasis in the statements on regional solutions rather than those imposed by geo-political powers.

5.2.2 Calling for Region-specific and Local-led Solutions

This section deals with the theme that India calls for region-specific and local-led solutions to conflicts. This builds on India’s positioning of itself as an advocate of the Global South, because in the discussion of various conflicts, India prioritises bottom-up over top-down approaches.

India is against externally imposed solutions to conflicts. It believes that the purpose of international involvement should be to help countries in the peaceful resolution of issues and that peace itself must comprise “an intra-country-led process and not externally imposed solutions” (Statement 8 2021, 2).

For instance, in the case of Syria, India writes, “We would like to underline again that there cannot be externally imposed solutions to the conflict” (Statement 60 2021, 2). In the Syrian context again, India says that the major impeding factor that is hampering the progress on the political track is external influence and so “we call on all external actors to desist from adversely influencing the parties concerned” (Statement 139 2021, 2).

Not only does India argue that external involvement obstructs peacebuilding and political progress, but also adversely affects the “sovereignty and territorial integrity” of countries (Statement 192 2021, 1). It reiterates the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of conflict-affected states like Libya for instance, and how this needs to be safeguarded with no imposition of external interference (Statement 331 2022, 2).

This external influence is seen through the presence of foreign troops within conflict-affected states, that India does not approve of. Not only does the delegation argue against

the presence of these troops within countries, but also actively pushes for their exit. For instance, it calls for the “full and complete withdrawal of foreign forces and mercenaries” from Libya (Statement 204 2022, 2).

India’s argument is that the continued presence of foreign forces and mercenaries is detrimental to the peace and stability of the country and the region (Statement 331 2022, 2). The delegation also makes the point that the withdrawal of foreign forces and mercenaries continues to be violated by other nations and asks for a “serious discussion” on measures to ensure that the withdrawal of foreign forces is implemented, so that sustainable peace and stability prevails (Statement 107 2021, 1). India also believes that this withdrawal is essential toward realising the objective of a ceasefire (Statement 358 2022, 2). In the case of Libya, not doing so poses a serious threat not only to Libya “but also to its neighbours and the region as a whole” (Statement 75 2021, 2).

India’s reasoning for being against external interference and the removal of foreign forces from conflict-affected states stems from its advocacy of region-specific solutions. In many statements it reiterates its consistent stand that imposing external solutions will not help in resolving the Syrian conflict, “It is for the Syrians to determine and decide what is best for Syria and for their own future” (Statement 227 2022, 1; Statement 250 2022, 1). In the same context, it reiterates that political processes should remain “Syrian led and Syrian driven,” only to be facilitated by the UN and “in this regard, we continue to call on all external actors to desist from adversely influencing the parties concerned” (Statement 157 2021, 2).

In several statements, I found an emphasis given to people-led peace processes. The delegation highlights that the approach to dealing with conflicts must be “inclusive, driven by the aspirations of the people” (Statement 8 2021, 2). It says the same in different contexts. For instance: it argues for a Mali-owned and Mali-led process which is inclusive and representative (Statement 301 2022, 2), an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned and Afghan-controlled peace process (Statement 91 2021, 2), a comprehensive and peaceful resolution of the Syrian conflict through a Syrian-led dialogue, taking into account the legitimate aspirations of the people of Syria (Statement 63 2021, 2), and a Yemeni-led and Yemeni-owned political process (Statement 7 2021, 3). With regards to Haiti, India commends the strength and resilience of the Haitian people to overcome their current challenges

(Statement 89 2021, 2). It also articulates its continued support to the Somalian people in their collective desire for a stable, secure, and peaceful future (Statement 216 2022, 2), and its steadfast commitment to continue supporting the people of the Democratic Republic of Congo (Statement 255 2022, 3). India also reiterates that a “Sudanese-led and Sudanese-owned, inclusive, and credible political dialogue” remains critical in the efforts to find peaceful solutions to the conflict (Statement 419 2022, 2).

This people-led approach to conflict resolution and peacebuilding stems from India’s argument that no one can understand the region better than the people who live there, and consulting with them, learning from their expertise is the only way to move forward. It is critical of the lack of consultations historically and contends that this has not helped the people. “We have seen from history that offering “external” solutions to African problems without African involvement has not served the interests of the African people” (Statement 374 2022, 1, 2).

In discussing MINUSMA in Mali, India writes that when it comes to counterterrorism operations, the former must not be burdened. This is because these operations must be undertaken by the national security forces, which command a better understanding of terrain and local dynamics (Statement 301 2022, 2). Through this statement, India is highlighting again that regional approaches to peace issues take precedence over the international, since they are more in command of local conditions.

In this vein, India recommends that the UNSC coordinate with regional and sub-regional organisations in its peace operations. It argues that that not only would this approach strengthen partnerships between the UN and regional organizations in line with the UN Charter (Statement 306 2022, 2), it has also shown positive results before (Statement 300 2022, 1). The delegation also argues that regional organisations have a strong role in settling disputes in conflict situations:

“Regional and sub-regional organizations, have time and again shown how important their role is in the maintenance of international peace and security. They have an important role in settlement of disputes, especially in conflict situations. Because of their deep knowledge of local factors and complexities, regional and sub-regional organizations are uniquely placed to provide better solutions to conflicts in their regions” (Statement 218 2022, 2; Statement 241 2022, 1).

India also argues that regional organisations play a critical role dissuading external influence through negotiated agreements (Statement 214 2022, 1). It also speaks of the role of not just the conflict-affected country alone, but of its neighbourhood as a whole, in bringing peace to the region, as one of the justifications of giving importance to regional approaches to conflict resolution (Statement 227 2022, 1).

I also observed that India gives importance to the agency of national governments in their “ownership” and “primacy” in driving sustainable peace (Statement 3 2021, 2). It also argues in several places that the Security Council must remain respectful to this regional approach by the countries (*ibid.*). Especially in the case of issuing sanctions, I noticed that India is critical of the UNSC for not addressing challenges with regional organisations first before issuing sanctions, which is detrimental to the country and the region around it, especially the civilians (Statement 211 2022, 2). It therefore calls for increased cooperation with regional organizations like the African Union (AU) (Statement 374 2022, 1, 2).

What is also of interest in the statements is that India is especially critical of the European Union (EU), singling out the organisation for not fully pursuing regional approaches. India advocates that the EU, itself a regional organization, needs to pursue greater international cooperation and solidarity by promoting dialogue among various parties (Statement 306 2022, 2). “The EU-AU Partnership should focus on finding African solutions to African problems” (*ibid.*; Statement 85 2021, 2).

India foregrounds how these regional problems require a multi-country approach, on top of the consultations with regional organisations. It gives the example of the drying up of Lake Chad, which adjoins four different countries (Chad, Niger, Nigeria and Cameroon), causing grave socio-economic problems and spurring radicalization and terrorism, stating that this issue requires a regional multi-country integrated approach (Statement 4 2021, 3). Even within the domain of its listed policy priority ‘maritime security,’ the country highlights strengthening maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea, in consultation with the countries of the region (Statement 408 2022, 2). It praises the UK for considering views of ASEAN³⁸

³⁸ The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), is a political and economic union of 10 countries in Southeast Asia (Association of Southeast Asian Nations 2024).

in a consultative manner (Statement 437 2022, 1) and underscores the emerging trend of regional and sub-regional organizations increasing capacities to deal with conflict (Statement 164 2021, 2).

Other than regional organisations, India gives importance to grass-root level development projects that strengthen the capacities of local communities (Statement 42 2021, 1). It praises the community peace process in Abyei (Statement 58 2021, 1) and the capacity building of the Haitian local police (Statement 220 2022, 2). In the case of the Sahel region's peace process, it speaks of "Africa's home-grown solutions," that require financial assistance from the international community. (Statement 258 2022, 2). It is again critical of the SC on this front: "Indecisiveness of the Council unfortunately has allowed the terrorist groups to expand their area of influence" (Statement 167 2021, 2).

This section discussed the second of four themes that make up the finding that India constructs its identity as postcolonial at the UNSC. The next is that India frequently references the impacts of colonialism in its UN discourses.

5.2.3 Anti-colonial foreign policy — India Challenges the Developed World

As is evident from the previous findings, India positions itself as a Global South leader and argues for pursuing local-led solutions to conflicts. In both these themes, India has articulated historical reasons for Global South deprivation, shared South-South colonial history and has been critical of the UN system for being exclusionary. This section focusses on fleshing out some of these trends in the statements that are overtly anti-colonial in nature, seen also through a challenge that Indian foreign policy offers to Western nations.

The following are the mentions of the terms 'colonial' and 'colonialism' in the statements:

The screenshot shows a web-based concordance tool. At the top, the search term is 'colonial' with 5 results. Below, a table lists five occurrences of the word in various UN Security Council statements. Each entry includes a checkbox, a document identifier, a snippet of text with 'colonial' highlighted in red, and a document icon.

Checkbox	Document	Snippet	Icon
☐	all pdfs/159.28...	... of its own experience that the root cause for conflicts in Africa lie in its colonial history.	
☐	all pdfs/255.29...	... back to 1960, when our peacekeepers helped in orderly withdrawal of colonial forces and establishment of a national government.	
☐	all pdfs/3.06.0...	... ngstanding trade and diaspora links across the Indian Ocean, a shared colonial past and our common developmental challenges have shaped India-Afr	
☐	all pdfs/338.08...	... cannot be overemphasized. The countries in Africa, due to their colonial past, much like the majority of the countries of the global South, suffer fi	
☐	all pdfs/340.11...	... r consideration: • Penholdership cannot be based on archaic factors or colonial past. The contemporary global reality should guide decisions on	

Image 5.9: 'Colonial' mentions

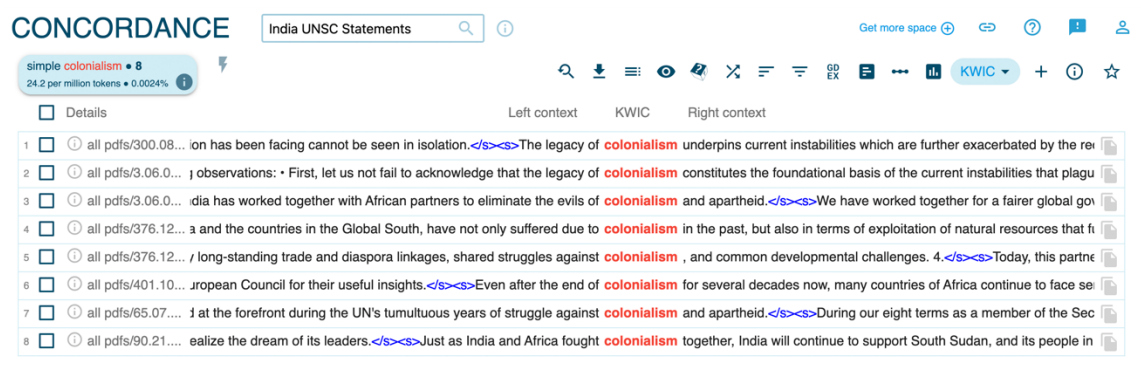


Image 5.10: 'Colonialism' mentions

Looking at image 5.9 and 5.10, it can be seen that 7 out of 10 statements have mentioned colonial and/or colonialism in the context of Africa. It can also be seen that some statements like 3 (2021) and 376 (2022) have multiple mentions of the words. While the former statement deals with the challenges of maintaining peace and security in fragile contexts, the latter deals with climate and security in Africa. These exemplify that when it comes to themes of conflict-affected contexts or the impact of climate change in conflict situations, India highlights the historical role of colonialism.

The themes emerging from the statements using these words particularly are that the legacy of colonialism is the basis of the African continent's political fragilities in terms of conflict; that this is a shared struggle between Africa and other Global South countries; and this also leads to common challenges among the developing world (Statement 376 2022, 2). Thus, it can be argued that Indian discussions on colonialism not only forward their articulations for South-South cooperation (through highlighting similar pasts and shared challenges), but also seek to highlight colonialism as the reason for countries being in conflict. This is illustrated in the chart below:

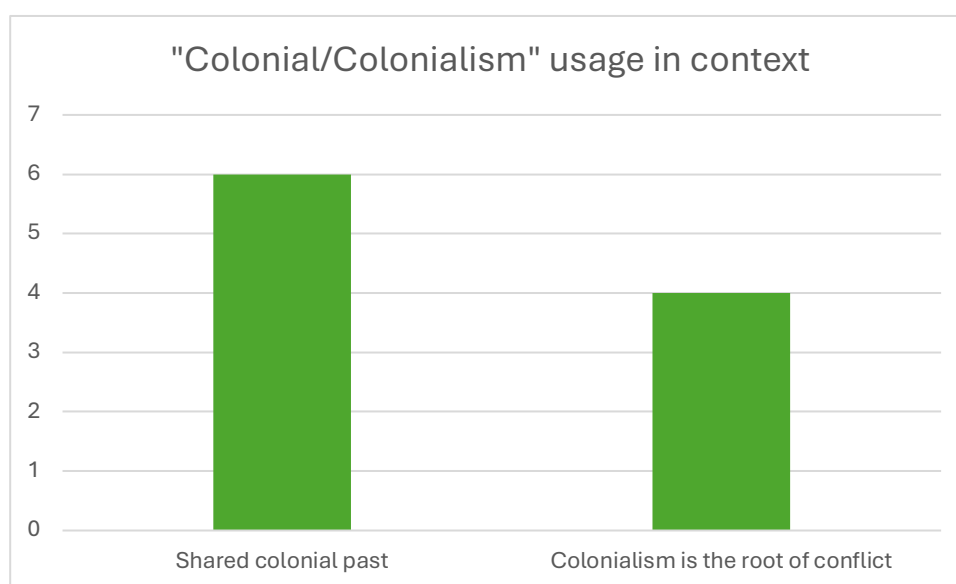


Chart 5.6: “Colonial/Colonialism” usage

Although mentions of these words are few — a total of 13 times — the manual scoping revealed themes of anti-colonialism throughout India’s tenure at the UNSC. This is discussed below.

Perhaps the most critical statement in this theme is Statement 3 (2021, 2): “First, let us not fail to acknowledge that the legacy of colonialism constitutes the foundational basis of the current instabilities that plague the African continent.” This recognition of the ‘legacy’ of colonialism informing and shaping the contexts of the world is a common thread through the corpus. Some more evidence of this is seen in Statement 159 (2021, 2): “India appreciates because of its own experience that the root cause for conflicts in Africa lie in its colonial history.” An interesting observation I made in this statement is that India highlights its own experience in this regard, as opposed to a ‘shared’ or a ‘common’ experience.

In the context of Central Africa, it discusses the multidimensional nature of challenges faced and says that they cannot be seen in isolation. It says that, while it blames the legacy of colonialism as underpinning the current instabilities, it also says that recent global developments have exacerbated the latter (Statement 300 2022, 2). However, it doesn’t discuss what these recent developments are (analysing the context of the statements, it is probable that since this statement was made in June 2022, the developments India is

referring to here are the COVID-19 pandemic and the Ukraine war, both causing a disproportionate impact on the developing world). Another statement that links colonialism to current developments is Statement 401 (2022, 1) which writes that countries in Africa continue to face serious security threats from terrorism, armed groups, transnational organized crime, and drugs and arms trafficking, “even after the end of colonialism.”

As mentioned before, India also speaks of the shared history of colonialism and builds on that to advocate for South-South solidarity. For example, “just as India and Africa fought colonialism together, India will continue to support South Sudan, and its people in this journey towards sustainable peace and a prosperous future” (Statement 90 2021, 2). Other effects of colonialism India highlights are that it gives an “undeniable historical disadvantage in respect of institutional capacity,” and needs human resource development, capacity expansion and collective cooperation to combat the difficulties of a less developed institutional capacity (Statement 338 2022, 2). All these instances together show that India’s foreign policy at the UNSC is openly anti-colonial.

Another reason why I term aspects of India’s foreign policy ‘anti-colonial’ in this finding is that it openly challenges the West, especially in instances of historical injustices. For instance, in statement 374 (2022 2, 3), in the context of denial of representation, India says that “this Council needs to move way beyond than mere lip service to Africa’s concerns.” The delegation also points out the irony of the lack of representation even though “...more than half of the Security Council’s work is focused on Africa” (Statement 373 2022, 2).

India is also critical of the usage of veto by the permanent members of the UNSC. In an instance of a non-adoption of three resolutions due to vetoes, India says that “the use, or threat of use of the veto, may prevent the Council from acting on vital topics...calls for restraint on the use of the veto, especially on actions aimed to prevent the most serious crimes of international concern - the very heart of this Council’s mandate” (Statement 314 2022, 4). By passing this statement, India makes its stance clear on the veto system in UN. It must be noted that the reasoning India gives in this case is not about the exclusionary nature of the UN or the demand for a reformed multilateralism, but that concentration of power through vetoes prevents the UNSC from working on concerning issues — thereby, it makes this critique on humanitarian grounds.

In another rare statement (rare since this occurred only once in 440 statements), India indirectly critiques the USA's actions in Afghanistan, saying that "the days when Afghanistan was used by others as so-called "strategic depth" are over. Such skewed approaches have only brought misery to the people of Afghanistan and mayhem in the region" (Statement 435 2022, 2).

An area where I could see the strongest critique aimed at the developed world is in discussions on security and climate change. India is against discussing climate change at the UNSC. It argues that the mandate of the UNSC is peace and security issues, while climate change is the mandate of the UNFCCC³⁹. So, it argues that attempts to link climate with security obfuscate the lack of progress on critical issues under the UNSC —

"The reality is that the developed countries have fallen short of their promises not just on mitigation but also on providing access to climate finance and technologies... Consequently, we will resist any attempt to take climate change out of UNFCCC and discuss it separately without these principles and provisions. And that is precisely why we do not subscribe to the UN Security Council as a place to discuss this issue. In fact, we view this as an attempt by developed countries to evade responsibility under UNFCCC and divert the world's attention from an unwillingness to deliver where it counts" (Statement 238 2022, 2).

In a similar statement, India says:

"To conclude, India will always support real climate action and serious climate justice. We will always speak up for the interests of the developing world, including Africa, the Sahel region and Small Island Developing States, and for our friends and partners like South Sudan. But we will do so at the place it deserves – the UNFCCC" (Statement 242 2022, 2).

It also calls out the developed countries for failing to deliver on climate financing (Statement 188 2021, 2) and for historically exploiting the natural resources of Africa for fueling their economic progress, industrial revolution and scientific advancement (Statement 376 2022, 1).

³⁹ The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is an international treaty among UN member states that seeks to negotiate an agreement to limit the impact of climate change (United Nations Climate Change 2024).

This section discussed the third of four themes that make up the finding that India constructs its identity as postcolonial at the UNSC. The last relates to India's referral back to the non-aligned principles associated with its initial foreign policies after independence.

5.2.4 Foreign Policy Continuities — NAM Principles and Traditional Values

This section shows some continuities in India's foreign policy at the UNSC with its foreign policy over the years since independence. These continuities take the form of positioning itself as a state focused on the morality of humanitarianism and prioritizing people's aspirations (as opposed to governments' policies). This positioning is based on India's view of its values as deriving from its postcolonial experience. This will be discussed more in detail in section 5.3 at the end of the chapter where India's identity construction will be approached critically. These values align with the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) seen during the Nehruvian foreign policy era, thereby making me label this theme as a foreign policy 'continuity.'

A trend I see is that India often speaks of depoliticising humanitarian situations. This is in the context of developmental and financial assistance, and how they must not be linked to political progress (Statement 35 2021, 2). By this India means that assistance must continue, no matter the political situation in the country. I noticed that this stance is consistent throughout the years on humanitarian assistance. For instance, in the case of Ethiopia, India says:

“It is concerning to note that the humanitarian efforts led by the UN has been stalled in the recent weeks. It is important that humanitarian assistance is resumed at the earliest available opportunity. We also reiterate the importance of founding principles of humanitarian assistance, i.e., humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence” (Statement 163 2021, 1).

By reiterating these foundational principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence, India is wanting to clarify that assistance, and donations must be separated from politics, and must go on, irrespective of the political situation, since the most adversely affected would be the people.

It reiterates these principles multiple times, in the case of food insecurity in fragile states (Statement 268 2022, 2), Ukraine (Statement 236 2022, 2; Statement 245 2022, 2; Statement 257 2022, 2), protection of civilians in conflict (Statement 108 2021, 2), Ethiopia (Statement 145 2021, 2) and Afghanistan (Statement 172 2021, 2). In the case of the latter, India called for the disbursement of aid to be non-discriminatory and accessible to all, irrespective of ethnicity, religion or political belief (*ibid.*).

India argues that if the donor community takes the position of politicising humanitarian situations, this will only lead to food insecurity in the conflict-affected countries (Statement 35 2021, 2), and a continuation of the suffering of people (Statement 49 2021, 2). Not only this, but delinking humanitarian and developmental work with political progress will help create a conducive environment of trust and confidence (Statement 36 2021, 2).

Throughout the statements India positions itself as a vocal champion of humanitarian issues. It calls out the Council in this regard, saying that the humanitarian carve-outs provided for in Council Resolutions should not be misused to issue sanctions, since the latter can further deteriorate humanitarian crises (Statement 116 2021, 2). Therefore, India implies that it is against the issuing of sanctions.

India's stand on humanitarian relief is that the primary responsibility for providing protection and assistance in armed conflict lies with the concerned national government; but when international assistance is provided, it must be given impartially "in accordance with the guiding principles outlined in General Assembly resolution 46/182 and other relevant resolutions" (Statement 108 2021, 1). In the same statement on protection of civilians and preserving humanitarian space, India says:

"We also believe that respect for the principles of the UN Charter, including sovereignty, political independence and the territorial integrity of Member States, should remain the basis for all humanitarian actions taken by the Council...Humanitarian action should not be used as a ploy to undermine the territorial integrity of States. Too often we have seen humanitarian assistance being linked to coercive measures by external players in order to force outcomes desired by them. Such actions run the risk of being counter-productive to achieving a resolution of the conflict itself and could further shrink the necessary space for much needed humanitarian action or assistance" (*ibid.*).

India also raises concerns on the reduction of humanitarian assistance to Syria from 2021 to 2022 (Statement 307 2022, 2) and simultaneously praises initiatives of regional countries in positively contributing to address the humanitarian situation, thereby consistent with its stand of giving importance to regional as opposed to broad international approaches to conflict (Statement 307 2022, 1).

Overall, India doesn't look at humanitarian assistance in a silo, but rather understands it holistically. In this sense, it looks at assistance as a broad sustainable long-term enterprise, through for instance starting projects that can help conflict-affected people with job opportunities (Statement 325 2022, 2). In terms of immediate humanitarian assistance, India calls for guarantees of safe passage to deliver supplies and gives evidence of how it sent "humanitarian supplies" like medicines and relief material to Ukraine (Statement 257 2022, 1). India also addresses humanitarian workers through its statements, when it asks them to be "sensitive to the situation on the ground and adhere to these principles especially when the host state (Ethiopia) is facing a complex politico-military situation internally" (Statement 145 2021, 2).

In statements on the war in Ukraine, India repeatedly highlights its "human-centric" or "people-centric" approach (Statement 364 2022, 1; Statement 383 2022, 2; Statement 409 2022, 2). By this it means it provides humanitarian assistance to the country. However, it doesn't elaborate more, and in each of the statements immediately speaks of the "ripple effect" of the conflict in the Global South, and how India is providing economic support to the Global South (Statement 409 2022, 2). In a rare statement on the Yemen war, India asks the warring parties to take a human-centric approach and not merely view the war as a military or political game (Statement 377 2022, 1). I call this a rare statement because I spotted India calling for the warring parties to consider humanitarian approaches for the first and only time in 440 statements. This indicates that India isn't only speaking to the donors or the UN humanitarian agencies but is also advocating that different sides of the war should consider the effects on humanity.

Another interesting observation made here is that India views 'people' as separate from the 'state' or the 'government.' In a statement on the new Iraqi government, India says:

“A transparent, free, fair and inclusive election, conducted in a violence-free environment, with high voter turnout will empower the new Government to implement reforms, improve accountability, meet the genuine aspirations of Iraqi people, especially the women and youth, and promote inclusiveness and reconciliation” (Statement 20 2021, 2).

This statement is interesting because of the distinction drawn between the Iraqi people’s “genuine” aspirations and the government. It speaks of legitimate aspirations in other contexts as well, like Syria (Statement 47 2021, 2) and commends the fact that the people of Darfur are cooperating in the peace efforts (Statement 111 2021, 2).

While these statements are less in number, they are significant since they signal India’s views on the importance of the voice of the people, as opposed to an institutional approach of highlighting governmental peace efforts only. Viewing the people’s aspirations as separate from the government, is indicative of attention being accorded to bottom-up approaches to peace.

Another consistent theme that has always been integral to India’s foreign policy approach is viewing the world as one family (Statement 346 2022, 1; Statement 395 2022, 1; Statement 415 2022, 3). This age-old ethos of “*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*” is defined as the spirit of tolerance and understanding, that is relevant to post-conflict societies and helps humanity reach its fullest potential (Statement 148 2021, 2). The following are some of the times this phrase has been used in different contexts:

CONCORDANCE India UNSC Statements

simple one family • 13
39.32 per million tokens • 0.0039%

Left context KWIC Right context

1	all pdfs/1.04.0... a look forward to our collective pursuit for an ideal where the World is One Family "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam".	Even as the world comes togethe
2	all pdfs/148.12... the age-old ethos of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam – The Whole World is One Family .	This is relevant everywhere, including to post conflict societi
3	all pdfs/182.06... ur traditional wisdom of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, the Whole World is One Family .	Children's access to education is fundamental to building a p
4	all pdfs/282.19... n belief in the abiding ethos of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, the world is one family .	16. In conclusion, Mr. President, I would like to underscore Ir
5	all pdfs/343.22... rtner for all, based off our ancient Indian ethos that sees the world as one family .	However, the question remains. Are multilateral orgai
6	all pdfs/346.24... if our national beliefs and values, which perceives the whole world as one family .	4. India remains deeply concerned over the situation in Ukrai
7	all pdfs/354.07... of our national beliefs and values, which perceive the whole world as one family .	7. Let me assure the Council that India will continue to work
8	all pdfs/356.08... if our national beliefs and values, which perceives the whole world as one family .	5. India's approach will be to promote dialogue and diplomac
9	all pdfs/382.20... women. 11. In keeping with the Indian ethos of 'The World as One Family ' and of Gandhian values of 'service to humanity', India has been shar	
10	all pdfs/395.02... ideals are part of cultural ethos and our belief in the spirit of "World is One Family ".	India has always welcomed communities facing persecution
11	all pdfs/415.01... us, decisive and all inclusive, underpinned by the thinking: one Earth, one family , one future.	We see both these Presidencies, that of the Sec
12	all pdfs/415.01... are our experiences, underpinned by the philosophy that the world is one family and what the Prime Minister has said: one earth, one family, one futur	
13	all pdfs/415.01... world is one family and what the Prime Minister has said: one earth, one family , one future.	Pamela Falk (CBS News): Thank you very much.

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Image 5.11: ‘One family’ mentions

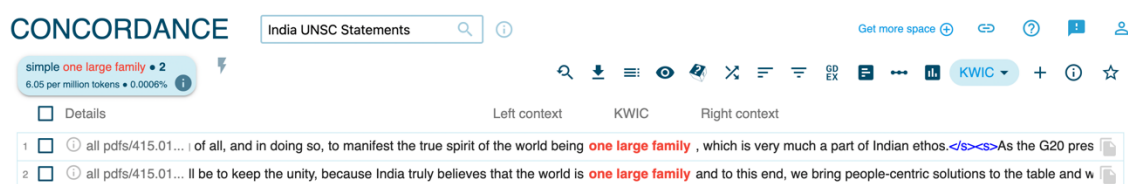


Image 5.12: ‘One large family’ mentions

With a total mention of 15 times for both ‘one family’ and ‘one large family,’ this idea signals an important philosophical stance by India. As can be seen, India has articulated this philosophy in different contexts to justify a humanitarian approach to peace, that prioritises assistance through food, jobs and medical supplies, irrespective of the political situation. India links its stance on humanitarianism to this value: “This humanitarian aid and assistance symbolizes the human centric development approach of the Government of India, a central tenet of our national beliefs and values, which perceives the whole world as one family” (Statement 346 2022, 1).

India’s value-based approach to humanitarianism is, I argue, a continuance of its traditional foreign policy ethos that although most overt in the NAM era, continued in different ways throughout the history of its foreign policy. This is discussed in more detail in the section at the end of the chapter.

However, I observe that India’s stance on humanitarian and people-centric approaches to war is slightly altered when it comes to refugees and displaced persons. For instance, in the case of Myanmar in statement (50 2021, 2), India speaks about the issue of displaced persons from the Rakhine state of Myanmar, who are the Rohingya Muslims⁴⁰: In the first instance,

“We commend Bangladesh for hosting a million displaced persons in its territory. It is important for the international community to recognize and understand the humanitarian burden that Bangladesh continues to face and the efforts it has undertaken to ensure the well-being of the displaced persons” (Statement 50 2021, 2).

⁴⁰ The Rohingya Muslims have been fleeing to various countries to seek refuge to escape ethnic discrimination, military impetuosity, persecution, and human rights violations in Myanmar (Verma 2022, 481).

However, while it speaks of the hopes and aspirations of the people of Myanmar, the approach taken in this statement is very different than the value-based approach taken in statements discussed throughout this section. In this statement, India focusses more on the support required for the repatriation of the displaced persons back to Rakhine state and the help that Bangladesh would require. It is therefore evident that the human-centric and people-focused approach is found wanting.

It is to be noted that India doesn't use the words 'Rohingyas' when it speaks of the displaced people. Myanmar shares a border with India and immigration of Rohingyas into the country is not a new phenomenon. However, recently the current government's resistance to accepting the Rohingyas as refugees from Myanmar reflects in both public discourse and in policy, for instance, in the exclusion of Rohingyas from the citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 (Verma 2022, 479). In statement 110 (2021, 10), India faced a question by the press on its stance on refugees from Myanmar and said that it was incorrect to say that India rejects the refugees coming into the country. Similarly in statement 184 (2021, 1, 2) India stresses its role historically in accepting and assisting refugees, including those from Myanmar. It says that this humanitarian response is driven by the ideals of compassion and empathy. When speaking of Ukraine's neighbours who welcomed refugees from the former, India calls itself a country that has welcomed refugees over centuries; "India knows the importance and value of treating them equally and with dignity and catering to their needs and requirements" (Statement 277 2022, 2). Yet, while these articulated ideals seemingly align with the larger foreign policy continuities of a values and morality-based approach, it is noteworthy that it doesn't correspond to India's approach to the Rohingya refugees as seen on ground, as noted above.

Another complex stance that is not fully discontinuous from previous stances, is that with respect to the Ukraine war, India has not overtly critiqued Russia throughout its statements. In most of its Ukraine statements as discussed above, it stresses a humanitarian approach and aid delivery, the disproportionate impact the war has had on the Global South and a call for the "immediate cessation of hostilities" (Statement 254 2022, 2). It also ends its Ukraine statements with: "We continue to emphasize to all member states of the UN that the global order is anchored on international law, UN Charter and respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty of states" (Statement 257 2022, 2). I argue in the next section that

by not overtly critiquing Russia, India's foreign policy is being more pragmatic and less ideal. As such, this stance is similar to Indira Gandhi's era (when India openly sided with the USSR as opposed to the USA) as examined in chapter 4. This suggests that India's construction of itself as a postcolonial champion and leader with ideals still grounded in the early years of independence are not the whole story of India's foreign policies.

This chapter has so far discussed four themes that make up the finding that India constructs its identity as postcolonial at the UNSC, the final section below looks at these themes with a critical lens, arguing how they are uniquely mobilized by India for the promotion of national self-interest.

5.3 Contradictions within India's Construction of itself as a Postcolonial State

As evidenced throughout the chapter, four themes are visible in India's statements that make up the first major finding of the thesis that India constructs its identity as postcolonial in its UNSC statements. However, in this section, I would like to problematise this further by questioning why such articulations exist, and how they not only derive from India's colonial experience but are also a pragmatic decision to solidify and justify its international positioning, thus opening its construction of itself as a progressive postcolonial actor up for scrutiny. Thus, there is a unique brand of postcolonialism that India espouses and instrumentalises, which comprises many (sometimes contradictory) trends from its historical foreign policy that work simultaneously. To make these arguments, I first link the findings with the theoretical contributions of postcolonialism, some of which were discussed in the theory chapter 1. I then outline some contradictions to problematise India's postcolonial identity.

As outlined in chapter 1, postcolonialism concerns itself with the history and legacy of colonialism, and the need to critically analyse the experiences of colonialism and their current manifestations (Young 2016; Browne, Smye, and Varcoe 2005). Within the context of IR, postcolonialism critiques mainstream IR for its claims to the universal and for marginalising non-Western thought, thereby reproducing a hierarchical IR centred on a concentration of power (S. Nair 2022). This Eurocentrism of IR is challenged with postcolonialism's attention to "difference," leading to a shift of IR's ontological focus to issues of race (Fitzgerald 2019). By positioning itself as a country that not only experienced

colonialism, but understands its manifestations in terms of historical deprivations, I argue that India sees its identity as postcolonial.

Among the themes discussed in the chapter are that India constructs itself as an advocate for and leader of the Global South, that it calls for region-specific and local-led solutions and that it has an anti-colonial foreign policy that challenges the developed world. India's recognition of coloniality and race as structuring IR and foreign policy is evident in mentions of the effects of colonialism on the Global South, or the disproportionate impact of war on the developing world, which can be seen as a progressive form of foreign policy. Its advocacy of the reform of the UN is also rooted in problematising the current world order. I would argue here that India not only problematises liberal IR but also offers an alternative approach to reformed multilateralism. This is especially seen in the G4 statement with clear directives to the UN on who should be given UNSC permanent seats.

By doing so, I argue that India is offering an alternative to current liberal world order. In trying to shift the geographies of the UN system, India is aligning itself with the larger decolonial subversion of Western thought — a movement within which the Global South is being recognized as the epistemic site from which privileged insight into the workings of the world at large can be better understood (Comaroff and Comaroff 2015 1, 2 in Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015, 39).

In challenging the developed world, India is furthering a “discourse of oppositionality,” that is brought into being first from the very point of colonial contact Menon (2004, 1815; 2005, 207). Thus, in some of these articulations of Indian foreign policy a certain form of resistance can also be observed. For example, in many cases India resists the imposition of the Western veto (ideologically, even though it cannot practically), and asserts itself through its statements. Theoretically, India's resistance to arguments of the developed world can be seen through the lens of the “resistance as opposition” model of postcolonial discourse, which argues that liberation lies in the collective opposition to and dismantling of the material structures of colonial authority (Bhandari 2022, 95). In this case, India doesn't seek to dismantle the UN system, but to reconstruct the UNSC. It has articulated several times that the UNSC as it stands today is inadequate and doesn't reflect current geopolitical realities, which forms its resistance to the material structures of the UN. India's politics of resistance can also be read through Jefferess' (2008) work on resistance as

transformation. He argues that resistance seeks to transform the condition of the colonized through for instance, transformation of the discourse which involves acknowledging the past and fostering a new discourse (Bhandari 2022, 5, 6). By privileging issues of a reformed multilateralism and an African-led approach to sustainable peace, among others, India is prioritizing the marginalized and attempts to give agency to the underrepresented at the UNSC through its discourse.

However, what is complex here is that although it is arguing for the UN to recognise changing geopolitics and give a voice to the Global South, it is at the same time seeking to be a geopolitical ‘power.’ This is seen in its partnership with the G4 for permanent membership of the UNSC (discussed in section 5.2.1): this is contrary to India’s reflected priorities for being the voice of the Global South since the G4 are advocating for permanent seats for themselves as opposed to expanding their grouping to include African nations. This aligns with my argument here that India is instrumentalising postcolonialism for its national interests, as seen in its bid for a permanent seat.

Another finding within the statements is that India has an awareness of the multidimensional complexities of identities especially in post-conflict situations. In several statements it calls for local complexities that require regional solutions. This awareness I argue is indicative of a postcolonial approach of understanding multiple and distinct forms of crosscutting oppressions, that require intersectional understandings (Parashar 2016, 371; Khan et al. 2007, 231). Therefore, it doesn’t advocate for a universalist, ‘one size fits all’ approach.

There were major international events that characterized each of the years in question in this research. One being the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021, and the other being the Ukraine war in 2022. In statements on both these issues, India has consistently expressed the disproportionate impact on the Global South through vaccine inequity and rising cost of fuels, to name a few. This active prioritisation of the issues of the Global South, I argue, is an expression of postcolonialism. This is because postcolonialism shifted the traditional liberal understandings of global justice to ambitious postcolonial agendas (Zondi 2017; Jabri and Richmond 2021, 101). Postcolonial scholars also highlight the how postcolonial subjects negotiate the marginal, subaltern and minority subjectivities (Behera 2007, 355). While I found that India’s foreign policy doesn’t engage with indigenous voices

in terms of grassroots movements within India or feminist thought and genealogies (to be further discussed in the next chapter), within the system of the UN, India does position itself as a nation that advocates for the marginalized and historically deprived nations.

This also reflects in its calling for region-specific and local-led approaches, where India advocates for vulnerable populations even within the conflict-affected countries (as opposed to advocating for the country as a whole). It also in many cases views the people of the country as separate from the state or government. This bottom-up thinking theoretically aligns with work done by the South Asian Subaltern Studies Group, which understands history and society from the most disadvantaged position (Mendoza 2016, 101). With a focus on the most marginalized countries and populations within them, India is attempting to shift the focus to local groups and give the agency to deprived people.

India has been very vocal for the people of nations in conflict to lead their own nation to a stronger peace process. I argue that this can also be considered a postcolonial feature of its foreign policy, since India draws its support for self-determination from its own experience of national liberation from the colonizer. Several movements through India's struggle against colonialism like the Swadeshi movement and the Civil Disobedience movement had self-determination as the goal (discussed in chapter 4). India's experience with advocating for and subsequent independence, I argue, inform its traditional foreign policy priority of supporting the people. India's advocacy of the agency of the people in determining the future of their countries therefore derives from a "postcolonial rationality" that gives primacy to the politics of self-determination (Jabri 2013, 3).

This is evident in its traditional Nehruvian NAM policy. The fourth theme of this chapter found the NAM's presence as continuing in India's foreign policy. Although successive governments dealt with the NAM policy differently, I found that a lot of statements in this case derive their philosophy from their traditional support of decolonisation (discussed in chapter 4). In that way, I observed some continuities in the foreign policy as seen in its espousing humanitarian values and viewing the world as one family.

However, despite these trends that are in alignment with the theoretical focus of postcolonialism, there are contradictions. These contradictions take the form of an increasingly assertive identity that India is expressing at the UNSC. This could be attributed

to the discussion in chapter 4 on how although Modi is building on work done by other prime ministers before him, his strategy builds more energetically and with a more ambitious normative agenda Hall (2016). While the previous few paragraphs pointed out how the discourses of resistance, oppositionality and anticolonialism are in alignment with postcolonial theory, the next few paragraphs I will demonstrate some features of the UNSC statements that complicates India's branding of itself as postcolonial.

This is seen starkly in India's mobilization of the topic of counterterrorism for a self-interested, and more realist (in IR terms) concerns of its territory. Counterterrorism, which forms one of India's policy priorities, forms a major part of India's UNSC discourses. It features as an important priority because most of India's counterterrorism advocacy comes from security threats from Pakistan. Historically, the partition of India and Pakistan is itself a direct effect of colonialism in the subcontinent (discussed in chapter 4), after which there have been continuous skirmishes and conflicts at the border. During Modi's term, the deadlock between the two countries worsened, with India tightening its approach towards Pakistan. The Modi government balances between exploring reconciliation measures, while simultaneously convincing the Indian public that Pakistan must be "taught a lesson" through military strikes (Kaura 2020, 284). This assertive realism also reflects at the UNSC through counterterror discourses. The post 9/11 counterterrorism discourse is increasingly being interpreted by scholars as being another chapter in the long story of colonialism in how it suspends the rule of law, ordinary civil liberties and allows for state violence in the West (Finden and Dutta 2024). In the case of India, I argue that it has co-opted Western hegemonic counterterrorism discourses to its case. It readapts these colonial logics to the Indian case, which, when intersecting with postcolonial anxieties and nationalist ideologies, creates a postcolonial rationality to *justify* counterterror discourses. Scholars have also shown how India is in this way using counterterrorism as a way to gain international legitimacy (Finden and Dutta 2024). This behaviour can also be seen as a feature of the "postcolonial security state trying to maintain its colonially endowed territory" (Grewal, Kaur, and Sabherwal 2022).

Another instance of India mobilizing postcolonial thinking to further its national interest in a realist IR sense is seen in the victimhood narrative in the statements. Even in the discussion of counterterrorism, India portrays itself as having been the victim of terrorism. And in the discussions of anticolonial foreign policy, India sees itself as having been a

victim of colonialism, with the impact lasting till today. This aligns with Miller's (2019) work. She argues that there's a sense of victimhood in India's foreign policy conduct because it has been traumatised from the imperial agendas in the past. She shows that there is an institutionalisation of the historical memory of colonialism in Indian foreign policy structures. This historical memory comes up several times in its statements as India shows itself to carry the Global South forward, because it has been the victim of imperial agendas before. In this way, the country is also carving a space for itself at the UNSC, thus solidifying its postcolonial identity.

In a further critical turn, I found that India shows national assertiveness that is sometimes at odds with its postcolonial ideals. Two instances of this are its advocacy for state authority and its lack of criticism of Russia. In chapter 4 I discussed concepts like postcolonial anxieties and ontological insecurities that characterize postcoloniality. I argue here that India's foreign policy as observed in the UNSC statements is underlined with narratives of nationalism that seek to provide ontological security back home (Kinnvall 2019, 283). This is especially seen in the case of India's strong stance on refugees. For a country that has always traditionally advocates for the rights of the marginalized, being ambivalent (sometimes against) accepting refugees stands out as a discontinuity rooted in a new national assertiveness. I argue here that this stance is in alignment with recent instances of narrative development in Indian foreign policy that privileges populist narratives of nationalism (Kinnvall 2019, 284). In seeking to show the difficulties in giving asylum and in discussions of repatriation of refugees, India's traditional stance on accepting and being a safe haven for refugees (S. I. Rajan 2022) has taken a turn.

This is especially discernible in the current government's stance on the Rohingya refugees from Myanmar as "illegal" and a "threat to national security" (Verma 2022, 479). I argue that India is reframing nationhood to national security, which reflects an insecurity of its nationhood, and perceives refugees to be a threat to it. This is especially complicated because the Rohingyas are Muslim and as was highlighted in the previous chapter, India's current government stands for values that are rooted in Hindu nationalism, leading to an othering in the right-wing imagination of the country, with violence seen across the nation against Muslims (N. Kaul 2017). Thus, the approach to the Rohingya issue can be read not only through the lens of national security, but also as security against the 'other' (Muslims). Research on ontological security highlights how collectives seek to look for security

through constructing homogenous identities in response to uncertainties, which is especially seen in postcolonial settings (Cash and Kinnvall 2017, 268, 269). Therefore India's shifted stance on refugees reflects its preoccupation with national space and a pure unambiguous community called the homeland, which Krishna (1994, 517) terms the cartographic anxiety that informs the postcolonial condition.

Another observable contradiction is India not being critical of Russia in the context of the Ukraine war. I argue that this approach is only partially contradictory from previous foreign policy stances. It is true that historically even in the times of Indira Gandhi, India had taken the side of the USSR (detailed in chapter 4) — it should then not be surprising that India wouldn't critique Russia. However, I would argue that this stand is partly different from India's historical policy evolution because of India's traditional focus of not supporting invasions and advocating for decolonisation. Not only does the Ukraine war mark an obvious silence from India's end but also reflects a sense of pragmatism in its foreign policy. As discussed in the evolution of the 'Modi Doctrine' in chapter 4, some scholars show that India is becoming increasingly practical and privileging its national interests. Thus the Modi government's reluctance to condemn Russia is informed by India's dependency on Russian military equipment, and interest to strengthen its bilateral relationship to strategically counter the Russia-China relationship (Verma 2023, 14). This not only reflects India's privileging of its nationhood and national interest as a symptom of the postcolonial anxious condition but also reflects a practicality that is characteristic of reclaiming its agency at the UNSC. In terms of not taking a stand for Ukraine, I also argue here that India is compensating for this by focusing a lot on the humanitarian aspect of the conflict in Ukraine, and highlighting how much food and aid it has delivered, thereby diverting attention away from being critical of Russia.

One of the primary reasons that it can be argued that India is instrumentalising postcolonialism to its national interest is the complete lack of recognition of the Indian government's violence. The Indian government's role in the state sanctioned violence in the state of Kashmir and in the North East of India, which scholars have also termed a form of colonialism, cannot be ignored (Saikia 2014; S. Kaul 2011; Osuri 2017). So, while India is attempting to solidify its international positioning at the UNSC through calling itself postcolonial, this does raise questions of the Indian state's role in violence in Kashmir and the Northeast of India.

Scholars have long shown that India's foreign policy is linked to a progressive politics of postcolonialism. For instance, Chacko (2013) argues that India's foreign policy behaviour is based on its postcolonial identity. The findings of this chapter suggest that although India's constructions of its postcolonial identity have some progressive elements such as a politics of resistance, Global South advocacy and calling for decolonisation, there are also limits of this construction. These limits take the form of an assertive realism with respect to its territory, a nationalism that is rooted in victimhood discourses, and a lack of recognition of its own coloniality. Combined together, both India's Global South leadership and assertive national interest, *work simultaneously* to construct a certain brand of postcolonialism that is accommodative of both these trends. This brand of postcolonialism is instrumentalised by the country to carve out an international positioning. This is one of the main conclusions of this chapter, that India's own brand of postcolonialism not only allows for but accommodates its national interest assertiveness (sometimes at the expense of the marginalised in its own country), since it believes that this assertiveness is justified, for having experienced colonialism. The analysis of the UNSC statements in this chapter is evidence of the operation of this instrumentalisation.

Conclusion

This chapter began with an introduction to the UNSC statements of India in 2021-22. I highlighted the role of the statement-issuing outpost of the Government of India, the Permanent Mission of India to the UN based in New York. I then showed the policy priorities of India — reformed multilateralism, counterterrorism, peacekeeping and maritime security. This section also showed the structure of the statements, with charts of the themes covered by all 440 of them. I also found some recurring keywords, that can be linked to policy priorities, like 'peacekeeping.'

I then began the discussion of the four themes that make up the finding. I found that India does construct its identity as a foreign policy actor through recourse to its postcolonial positioning and references to the NAM traditions in its foreign policy. For example, it prioritises Global South rights in its statements and advocates for reformed multilateralism to accommodate for a new geopolitical reality. It positions itself as a leader of the Global South, and highlights vaccine inequity and the disproportionate impact of various conflicts

(especially Ukraine) on food security, energy and fuel costs. India calls for region-specific and local-led solutions to conflicts. It is against external influence in countries, and argues for an increased cooperation with regional organisations, who have a better understanding of local dynamics. India highlights colonialism as a shared historical experience to promote solidarity with the Global South, and links colonialism to the roots of conflicts, especially in Africa. I also observed a challenge to the developed countries when India's calls them out for paying lip-service to Africa and attempting to securitise climate change, among others. As the fourth theme explains all these elements are tantamount to a continuity in foreign policy over time, with themes of humanitarianism and a values-based approach, continuing from its longstanding humanitarian policies of the non-aligned movement. However, there are also other complex aspects to India's construction of itself as postcolonial, like its ambivalent stance on refugees and its lack of support of Ukraine.

In the last section, I demonstrated how this progressive representation of foreign policy construction comes with contradictions. On the one hand there are alignments with postcolonial values as seen in the support of the Global South, calls for decolonisation, etc. On the other hand, are exclusionary politics with respect to the Rohingyas, an assertive nationalism seen in being protective about its territory through counterterrorism and not being cognisant of its own coloniality in Kashmir and the northeast. Combined, both India's Global South leadership and assertive national interest, *work simultaneously* to construct a certain brand of postcolonialism that is accommodative of both these trends. This brand of postcolonialism is instrumentalised by the country to carve out an international positioning at the UNSC. A furtherance of this critical account of Indian foreign policy is continued in the next chapter, in which I explore explicitly what postcolonial feminism has to offer in this regard.

Chapter 6: Research Axis 2 Part #2: India's Approach to Gender at the UNSC — Limits and Vulnerabilities

Introduction

As explained at the outset of this thesis, Feminist Foreign Policy is a means of critical engagement with existing foreign policies, as well as a means of institutionalising feminist policy instruments. India currently doesn't currently espouse a Feminist Foreign Policy. However despite not claiming a formal FFP, there is evidence to show that India is not silent on gender equality, and has shown significant efforts in gender mainstreaming in multilateral avenues (Vishwanath and Mukund 2022, 147). This was seen for instance in India's G20 Leadership, wherein it had a focus on women-led development and incorporated various engagement groups into the debate that highlighted the importance of gender mainstreaming (Kubernein Initiative 2022, 3).

Simultaneously, in the context of the UN as revealed by the FCDA in the previous chapter, India is very vocal about perspectives from the Global South and furthers developing countries' ideals — which can be categorised as a progressive representation of foreign policy. This progressive representation is problematised by postcolonial feminist theory. I make the argument in chapter 5 that India constructs its identity as a *postcolonial* nation at the UNSC, but it is complicated by other complex contradictions like a realist self-interested foreign policy approach coupled with nationalist identity building.

In this context of these — that India is not silent on gender equality and that it constructs its identity as postcolonial — this chapter seeks to analyse India's inclinations towards FFP (despite no label) as expressed in its UNSC statements, using the lens of postcolonial feminist theory. Thus, this chapter builds on the previous one to provide an explicitly postcolonial feminist critical engagement with India's Foreign Policy (FP) as expressed through its statements to the UNSC. Analysing the UNSC statements through the five postulates of postcolonial feminism reveals key findings of this research, thereby answering the research question: How do progressive representations of foreign policy do under the scrutiny of postcolonial feminism?

As discussed in chapter 1, postcolonial feminist theory challenges the presumptions of Western, European feminisms that rejected or colonised indigenous forms of feminism and ignored the legacies of imperialism and exploitation (Kinsella 2020, 147). Postcolonial feminists recognise that the feminism of the Global North is rooted in and dependent on discourses of rights and equality that are of concern to Western Europe. Therefore, as emerged from the first half of the thesis, the tokenistic ‘add women and stir’ approach that has characterised liberal feminism (even as seen in Global North FFPs) has resulted in the instrumentalising of women’s rights, thereby disarming the transformative potential of larger feminist agendas (Brown 2021, 142). Postcolonial feminism stands in contrast to this, arguing for situated lived experience as a category for analysis, and goes beyond liberal understandings of increasing women’s representation through numbers to including and giving space to marginalised voices.

Of its many theoretical contributions, I focus here on five postulates or tenets of postcolonial feminism, that emerged from the discussion in chapter 1. The FCDA conducted in this research analysed the 440 UNSC statements with these postulates of postcolonial feminism in mind, which led to the findings of this chapter.

Analysing the statements through the first postulate reveals that India doesn’t position itself as a feminist state (as opposed to a postcolonial state). Thus, it doesn’t see gender as being integral to the structure of IR and foreign policy in the way that it sees colonialism. The second postulate shows that there is a focus on liberal emancipatory measures for women such as discourses on inclusion in institutional processes, market-based emancipatory measures for women and equating women’s rights to human rights. The third postulate explores India’s representation of women, and the characterisations which emerge include portrayals of women as innocent, vulnerable, victims of conflict, their infantilisation and singling-out, along with essentialist ideas of women’s inclusion as a panacea for conflict because of their divinity and closeness to nature. Such portrayals reveal the presence of double-binaries (Male-Female, within Females) in the statements, viewing women as those who need to be protected and men as the perpetrators of violence. I argue that these portrayals constitute epistemic violence. The fourth postulate leads to the finding that India projects its achievements outwards (e.g. through women-only peacekeeping forces), and how this is lacking in a recognition of domestic failings like not having a National Action Plan, conflicts within its borders and sexual violence against women. The fifth postulate

brings to light the exclusion of bottom-up voices in the statements, which leads to the finding that India does not fundamentally challenge patriarchy.

In presenting evidence for these findings, I argue that India's UNSC policy, while vocally postcolonial, is vulnerable to the critique offered by postcolonial feminism. Thus, at the UNSC, India's advocacy for women's rights is similar to the patterns of the Global North countries' FFPs: there is a focus on liberal emancipatory measures, gender mainstreaming through numbers, underpinned by binarised and essentialist notions of men and women. The goal of this chapter is to provide evidence from the FCDA to show that despite its claimed postcolonial credentials, postcolonial feminism reveals the limits of the way India constructs gender equality and women-led peacebuilding and development in its UNSC policy.

As with the previous chapter, the findings here are primarily from the manual scoping of the corpus, and Sketch Engine is used to show some word patterns which corroborate this manual scoping. Throughout the chapter, references will be made to the concepts discussed in the previous chapters on postcolonial feminist theory (Chapter 1). I will refer to India's foreign policy evolution to flesh out continuities and draw parallels with domestic feminist policies and debates (Chapter 4). The goal of the chapter is not only to present evidence of the findings, but to also evaluate them critically from a postcolonial feminist perspective.

6.1 Through the lens of Postulate 1:

Gender, Coloniality and Race structure IR and Foreign Policy

Findings:

P1.1 India does not position itself as a feminist state (as opposed to a postcolonial state)

P1.2 India does not see gender as being integral to the structure of IR and foreign policy in the way that it sees colonialism

The previous chapter evidenced India articulating how colonialism not only shaped the world as it stands today but is also often naming it as the root cause of conflicts around the globe. Based on this, I argued that India constructs itself as a postcolonial state and views coloniality and race as structuring IR today. However, I found that when it comes to gender,

India doesn't consider it to be foundationally structuring foreign policy, in the way that postcolonial feminists suggest. I have evidenced the same in this section.

At a very basic level, I observe that India does not position itself as a feminist state. This finding must be read in conjunction with the previous chapter that articulates that India positions itself as a postcolonial state. By 'feminist state,' I mean using feminism and gender as an important component of nation-branding, as seen (discursively at least) in cases like Sweden and Canada, with both officially adopting (and later dismissing in the case of Sweden) a Feminist Foreign Policy based on national feminist progressive values (Jezierska and Towns 2018). This concept was discussed in chapter 2. In this findings section, I want to demonstrate that India does not position itself as a feminist state in the way that Sweden and Canada do, or the way that it does in terms of postcolonialism.

Most bluntly, the words 'feminist' or 'feminism' do not find a single mention in the 440 documents. However, in the policy priorities list in the first statement at the beginning of its tenure, India declares: "Peace-keeping, peace-building, maritime security, women and youth, especially in conflict situations, and technology with a human face, will receive our attention while on the Council" (Statement 1 2021, 2). This is the first and last time that India mentions women as being a part of its policy priorities. In both the introductory statements to its UNSC Presidency of August 2021 and December 2022, and in its NORMS policy priorities document, there is no mention of women as a policy priority.

In some cases, I observe statements where there is a silence in terms of recognising gendered issues, but not of postcolonial issues. For instance, in Statement 241 (2022, 2), India discusses the mandate of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and speaks of the transnational threats it is handling: there is an absence of anything regarding gender. But the same statement has postcolonial advocacy, with India calling for regional organisations to be consulted more, and humanitarian responses to further aid efforts, etc (*ibid.*).

Despite the lack of a vocal feminist positioning however, I found that there were many mentions of 'gender' in the context of various agenda items at the UNSC. 'Gender' is mentioned 56 times and 'women' mentioned 481 times. I will discuss the mentions of 'women' in the findings section P3.1 and P3.2 where I provide evidence for certain

portrayals of women and argue that they can constitute epistemic violence. Here, I want to highlight the different ways *gender* is portrayed. Gender mentions span six pages in the software, of which I have pasted images here of the first two:

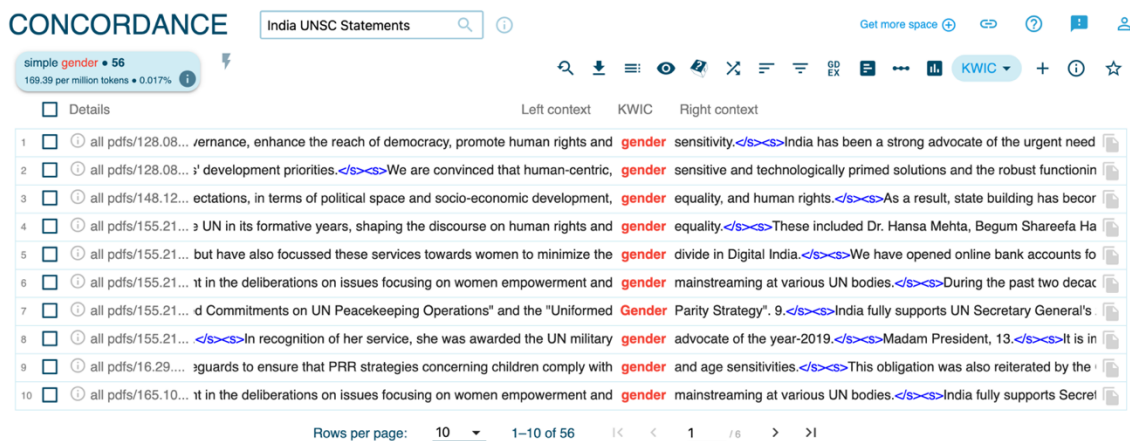


Image 6.1: 'Gender' mentions, page 1

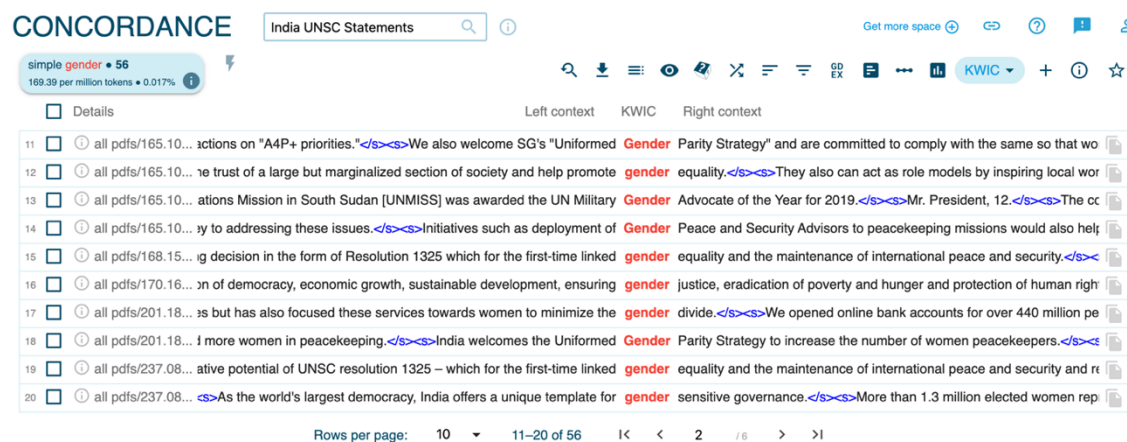


Image 6.2: 'Gender' mentions, page 2

It can be seen in these and the other pages, that gender is mentioned alongside some keywords, like 'mainstreaming' or 'parity' or 'equality.' These attributive words are indicative of why India is speaking about gender and what exactly it wants to convey. The following chart summarises the various mentions of gender along with the attributive words found around it:

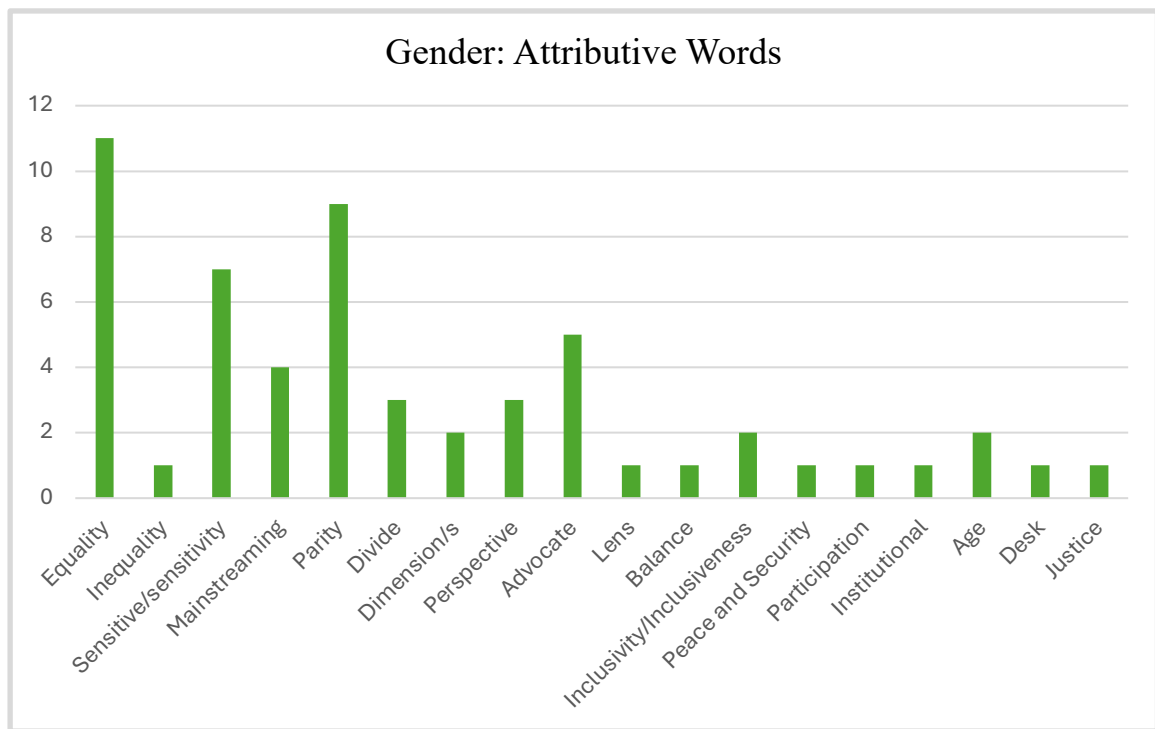


Chart 6.1: Attributive words of 'Gender'

'Gender equality' has the maximum mention across all documents, while 'Gender inequality,' 'lens,' 'balance,' 'peace and security,' 'participation,' 'institutional,' 'desk' and 'justice' have only one mention each. As will be argued later in the chapter, this observation also aligns with finding P5.1 that although India is not silent on gender inequality, it doesn't fundamentally challenge patriarchy.

In several statements, India calls for a gender perspective or a gender sensitive approach to conflicts. For instance, in the context of sexual violence in conflict, India argues that the "mainstreaming of gender perspective in peace operations and increasing women's representation in peacekeeping are prerequisites for prevention and response" (Statement 53 2021, 2). A similar statement is made in the context of Ukraine as well: "...we need to keep the gender perspective in mind and act with sensitivity" (Statement 262 2022, 1).

Not only does India stress including the gender perspective, but also speaks of its value, specifically in regionally specific strategies for developing countries. In the context of the Sahel, for example, India praises the launch of the Group of Friends of Women of the Sahel:

“We hope that this initiative will provide the much-needed impetus in developing strategies pertinent to the region by bringing in the valuable perspective of women of the Sahel” (Statement 80 2021, 1).

With respect to gender sensitivity, India speaks of itself being a model for gender-sensitive governance (Statement 237 2022, 2) or how technology can promote gender sensitivity (Statement 128 2021). However, I contend that most of these comments on gender sensitivity occur as an afterthought, rather than as a central point of advocacy. For instance, I found that other than highlighting the importance of this perspective, India doesn’t elaborate on what a gender perspective or gender sensitivity could mean. It comes close to describing what a gender perspective would entail in a statement on the impact of women peacekeepers: India says that women peacekeepers have been integrating a gender perspective into peacekeeping activities by “awareness campaigns and livelihood training” (Statement 308 2022, 2). But other than this statement, there is no discussion on what gender sensitivity could contribute, and its mentions come across as lip service rather than advocacy.

Read in comparison with India’s mentions of colonialism and how it positions itself as the voice of the developing world, India’s articulations of women’s issues or gender perspectives, I argue, are tokenistic at best. Thus, while India’s UNSC statements often draw attention to how coloniality shapes IR, there is no equivalent deep discussion of how gender shapes the international. Especially read in conjunction with the previous chapter, it can be argued that India’s positioning with respect to feminism is not vocal, with the country making no pretensions to positioning itself as a feminist state, or even having a Feminist Foreign Policy.

It is interesting to consider why this is so. Perhaps one of the reasons might be that India doesn’t see the need for FFP, in the way that it needs postcolonialism. The Indian state positions itself as a bastion of formal equality and supporter of women-led development. Indian women were granted formal equality in the forms of Articles 14 and 15 of the Constitution that prohibit discrimination and allow for welfare measures to be taken for ‘socially and educationally backward classes’ (Sharma 1998, 2). This granting of political and civil liberties enabled the growth of a “highly articulate, visible and effective” feminist movement (Misra 1997, 26). Thus, Indian women did not have to bear the kind of injustices

that women in the West had to suffer in terms of getting political rights like voting. Chitnis (1988, 9, 11, 17) argues that this is the reason Indian women are not as agitated as their Western counterparts, since equality is already available to them in principle. While I disagree with the idea that Indian women are not agitated⁴¹, I'm furthering Chitnis' (1988) argument in terms of the Indian state: I argue that the Indian state doesn't position itself as a feminist state because it believes it doesn't *need* to, since it has already granted equality in terms of the Constitution. This idea reflects in the UNSC statements, for in multiple places, India uses its own example as having successfully transitioned to a women-led development:

“India's development narrative has witnessed a transformational change: from promoting women's development to entirely women-led development, and from exclusively government-led to multi-stakeholder inclusive governance model.

As the world's largest democracy, India offers a unique template for gender sensitive governance. More than 1.3 million elected women representatives, who constitute nearly 44% of the total elected representatives are leading the political decision-making at the grassroots level. India is one of the few countries to have had a Head of State, Head of Government, Defence Minister, Finance Minister and External Affairs Minister at its helm as women” (Statement 237 2022, 2).

As seen in the statement, India already constructs itself as advancing gender equality. Therefore, there is more benefit in positioning itself as a postcolonial state. Thus, the lack of positioning itself as a 'feminist state.' This is unlike Sweden or Canada, whose positioning also draws from national branding discourses that situate them as espousing feminist progressive values, eventually leading to the adoption of FFP (Jezierska and Towns 2018).

⁴¹ I disagree with Chitnis' (1988) assertion that Indian women are not agitated. While it is true that Indian women have been granted equality in terms of voting rights in the Constitution, gender inequality in India is far from being resolved. In chapter 4 I discussed some of the issues Indian women face, like violence. Especially when it comes to sexual violence, the Indian feminist movement has used anger as a tool and mobilised across the country. This was seen in many instances: the Nirbhaya rape case of 2012 (Bakshi 2017) and most recently the RG Kar Hospital Kolkata rape case of 2024 (Healthworld 2024). Other instances of the agitation of Indian feminists was seen in the case of the citizenship act protests, during which Muslim women emerged at the forefront of the movement, disrupting the mainstream perception of oppressed Muslim women (Kadiwal 2021).

However, as will be shown in the following sections, India's articulations of gender sensitivity are elite-led at best, and act as afterthoughts, not advocacy. For example, India's statements on gender equality focus on women's contributions in institutional settings, which will be discussed in P2.1. The limits of this approach can be understood through the second postulate of postcolonial feminism.

6.2 Through the lens of Postulate 2:

Liberal themes like representation, 'add women and stir,' a market-based economic emancipatory strategy, etc., are not the solution to gender inequality

Findings:

P2.1 India's current approach to foreign policy highlights liberal emancipatory measures for women

The second critical postulate postcolonial feminism makes, is that considerations of gender in foreign policies are inherently based on liberal feminism and often reduced to an 'add women and stir' approach. Liberal feminist approaches were discussed in chapter 1 — they call for formal equality between men and women, defined in terms of their participation in the public arena, economy and politics (Ehlers 2016, 349). Liberal FFPs too focus on official commitments to increasing representation of women in the public arena (chapter 2). Thus, the findings in this postulate discuss three key themes that come forward through India's statements. One, that India focusses on liberal modes of representation. This is reflected in discussions of women's participation primarily in institutional settings (in decision-making structures and as leaders), as opposed to other settings. This demonstrates that India acts as a rhetorical supporter of liberal feminism, thus highlighting India's 'add women and stir' approach. Two, that the country furthers a market-based economic emancipatory model for women. And three, that India equates women's rights to liberal human rights. Each of these themes are problematised by postcolonial feminism.

Beginning with the first theme, India's statements are reflecting an 'add women and stir' approach. The delegation highlights the inclusion of women in decision-making processes as vital to development. By decision-making processes, India means appointments and elections to government positions and institutions of governance:

“One of the most important indicators for strengthening the roots of democracy, pluralism and fundamental rights is the extent to which women are included in the institutions of governance. Greater involvement of women in higher echelons of decision-making considerably strengthens good governance, and more so in post-conflict situations. India has always called for advancing the democratic framework, the rule of law and institution building in post-conflict situations — a sine qua non to advance the WPS agenda” (Statement 382 2022, 2).

It is seen in several statements that India argues for the inclusion and increasing political participation of women, but specifically in institutional settings. By this I mean a focus on governance, as opposed to participation in other arenas like education for instance. For example, it praises countries in West Africa (Statement 4 2021, 2) and the Sahel (Statement 104 2021, 2) for enhancing the participation of women in governance structures. India calls for the strengthening of women’s electoral participation in several contexts, like Haiti (Statement 143 2021, 2), Yemen (Statement 189 2021, 2) and the Great Lakes region (Statement 271 2022, 2). It also speaks frequently of elections in Iraq, and how the increasing number of women candidates participating in the elections must be coupled with credible steps taken by the government to prevent violence against women candidates (Statement 123 2021, 2). However, I noticed that political participation in India’s discourse has primarily to do with participation of women candidates, and less about women voters.

Another observation is that India stresses the idea of quotas for women as a method to increase political participation. This is seen in the case of South Sudan for instance, when India is pleased to note that appointments by the opposition adhered to the 35 percent quota for women (Statement 30 2021, 2). India also praises Iraqi women for their success in winning over 25% of the seats, way above their quota:

“Women candidates running for parliamentary elections have secured 97 seats out of 329, an increase of 14 seats over and above the seats reserved for women. This represents a significant development towards ensuring greater political participation of women in Iraq” (Statement 176 2021, 2; Statement 226 2022, 1).

These statements are evidence of India’s standpoint on quotas for the better participation of the population. It has traditionally been the case that India has used reservations (i.e., quotas) as an affirmative action tool for historically marginalised populations within the

country, and more recently, it also reserved a percentage of seats in the parliament for women (discussed in chapter 4). However, it's noteworthy that these statements were made before the official law that reserved seats for women was passed in 2023.

Some other statements show that India's UNSC statements locate 'decision-making processes' not only in governance structures, but also in official peacebuilding and peace processes. For instance, it calls for the full participation of women in peace negotiations in Yemen (Statement 54 2021, 2) and argues that the peaceful transition process in Mali must be inclusive, particularly with the full participation of women (Statement 48 2021, 2). Even in the case of peacebuilding efforts, I noticed that India sticks to articulating support for *institutional* peace efforts like negotiations or NAPs.

Another recurring institutional contribution the country focusses on are women leaders. India highlights the value that women leaders bring. For instance, in the case of the Central African Republic, India says that active engagement of women leaders has promoted inclusive dialogue (Statement 27 2021, 2). It argues that more participation of women leaders in all processes is critical to peace and reconciliation (Statement 46 2021, 2). In some statements India's spotlighting of women's leadership is seen in some historical examples that it puts forth. In a statement on women in UN-led peace processes, India says:

“During India's struggle for freedom, women were at the forefront in practically every aspect of our effort. In fact, the Indian freedom-fighter Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose raised for the first time an all Women Regiment in the Indian National Army – Rani of Jhansi Regiment, where this Regiment fought on the eastern front of India and created history.

Even in the United Nations, coincidentally, we have just celebrated today the life of Dr. Hansa Mehta through a memorial lecture in her name. She made a historical contribution to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by changing the words “All men are born free and equal” to “All human beings are born free and equal”. She was the only woman member of the committee other than Madam Eleanor Roosevelt. Additionally, India's Mrs. Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit was the first woman President of the United Nations General Assembly” (Statement 32 2021, 1, 2).

In this statement, India is discussing women's leadership in its fight against colonial rule, which also corroborates the findings from the previous chapter, that India's UNSC policy positions itself as postcolonial and derives a big part of its identity from that. In Statement

237 (2022, 2), the delegation cites its experience with respect to women leaders: “India is one of the few countries to have had a Head of State, Head of Government, Defence Minister, Finance Minister and External Affairs Minister at its helm as women.” In section P5.1 of this chapter, I will argue that most of these examples of leaders are of elite India women, who had connections to access these institutions. There is again a privileging of institutional contributions over grassroots leadership.

When it comes to discourses on women’s leadership, one of the main tenets of India’s speeches I found was its emphasis on how it has transformed from “a paradigm of women’s development to women-led development” (Statement 201 2022, 1, 2). This phrasing is specifically observed in 8 statements as follows:

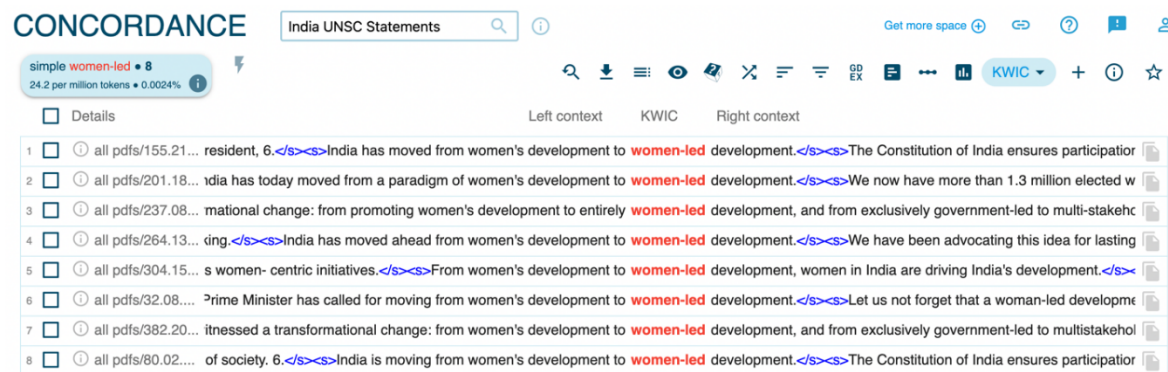


Image 6.3: ‘Women-led development’ mentions

In each of these statements, India speaks of how it has moved into a model of development that is led by women. In Statement 264 (2022, 2), the delegation says after the sentence on women-led development that India has been advocating for lasting peace in its neighbourhood, as in Afghanistan, for example. In Statement 304 (2022, 1) it says that it has moved from a government-led to a multi-stakeholder inclusive governance model, with women driving the nation’s development. Thus, albeit only mentioned 8 times, it seems like India is championing itself as a leader of women’s leadership. This is also seen in Statement 382 (2022, 2): India says that its experiences in women-centric development journeys “may be useful in our shared pursuit of enhancing women’s resilience and leadership” (Statement 382 2022, 2).

Despite the findings of this theme, there are a few exceptions to India’s institutional focus. These are seen in the form of Statement 106 (2021, 2) on Colombia, when India speaks about women leaders as social leaders and human rights defenders, and not in the institutional setting: “More measures should be taken to ensure the security of social leaders and human rights defenders-particularly women leaders, indigenous and Afro-Colombian leaders.” This statement is a first in that it references women leaders who are not necessarily a part of electoral, political or peace institutions.

There are also a few statements that use the word ‘grassroots’ when speaking of women’s leadership. India here is speaking of grassroots governance through all-women Panchayats (local self-government), which although a governmental institution at the local or village level, have been evidenced to help in women’s empowerment (Tiwari 2008).

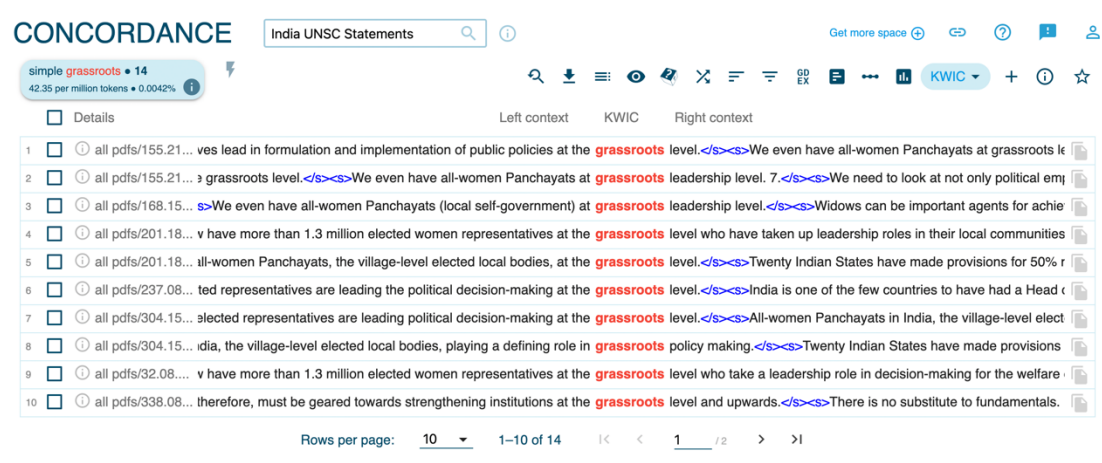


Image 6.4: ‘Grassroots’ mentions, page 1

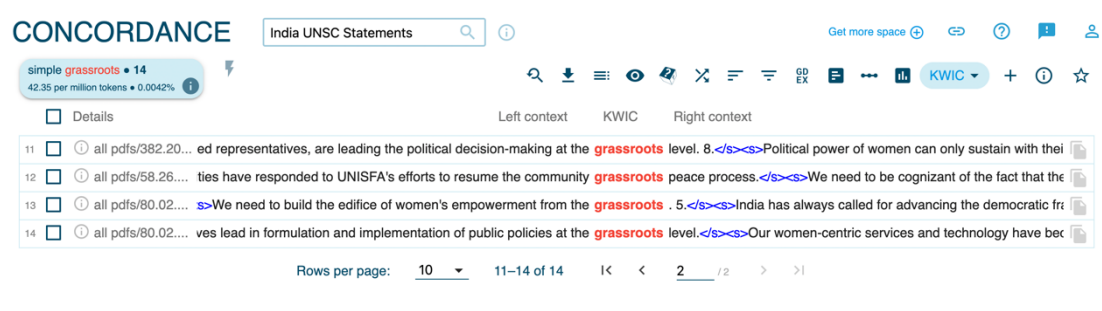


Image 6.5: ‘Grassroots’ mentions, page 2

Amongst these 14 mentions of grassroots throughout the corpus, 12 are about women grassroots representatives of the local government. Thus, although this example suggests a more inclusive discussion about the empowerment of Indian women, it still has an institutional focus since it's still about governance structures. An example that summarises this institutional focus even if about local grassroots leadership would be Statement 201 (2022, 2):

“We now have more than 1.3 million elected women representatives at the grassroots level who have taken up leadership roles in their local communities. We even have all-women Panchayats, the village-level elected local bodies, at the grassroots level. Twenty Indian States have made provisions for 50% reservation of total seats in legislative bodies at the local level for women.”

Thus, as evidenced above, there is a focus on the inclusion and participation of women in institutional structures (decision-making structures, institutional peacebuilding mechanisms, women's leadership, etc.). These are reflective of an 'add women and stir' approach that is rooted in liberal modes of thinking.

The second theme that emerges in this postulate is that the country furthers a market-based economic emancipatory model for women. India argues that “providing economic opportunities, [and] undertaking institution and capacity building” are some ways that UN Member states can address the barriers to women's participation in political and peace processes (Statement 201 2022, 2). It elaborates this further in the same statement: “...in addition to political participation, we must also equally focus in a holistic manner on socio-economic empowerment of women, including their access to credit, finance and technology” (*ibid.*).

India also argues that providing economic opportunities cannot be seen in silo, and must be accompanied by improvement in other socio-economic factors like access to high quality education, and a strong legal institutional framework that gives women opportunities and partnerships (Statement 237 2022, 2).

There's a link I observe here to its postcolonial standing: India speaks of its development partnership with the Global South, which includes grants, soft loans, scholarships and capacity building for women (Statement 335 2022, 2). In this, the country is highlighting

economic empowerment through its assistance to the Global South, as a way for not only empowering women, but also building South-South solidarity (a large part of India's policy at the UNSC, discussed in the previous findings chapter 5). There's also a link to India's foreign policy continuity of the ethos of 'The World as One Family,' which the country also gives as the rationale behind development cooperation that leads to women's economic empowerment:

"In keeping with the Indian ethos of 'The World as One Family' and of Gandhian values of 'service to humanity', India has been sharing its developmental experiences and technical expertise with other countries across the globe...

Through our developmental cooperation, we have assisted partner countries in a range of fields with a direct bearing on women's progress and upliftment. One such encouraging example of powering up women's development and SDG 7 is the 'solar mamas' project. Under this initiative, over 15,000 women, mostly rural with no formal academic training, from 83 countries have received training in solar engineering and related skills in India providing light and power to over 1,200 villages and 5,00,000 people worldwide" (Statement 382 2022, 3).

I notice that these economic arguments are followed up with several successful examples of India's own domestic achievements with respect to women's economic empowerment. This is especially seen in some statements on Women, Peace and Security. In Statement 155 (2021, 2), India argues that its approach to women empowerment is holistic (political and socio-economic) and can be seen in some digital initiatives taken by the country —

"For example, a growing digital divide can potentially alienate women from the mainstream. Keeping this in mind, India has not only undertaken numerous citizen-centric digital initiatives but have also focussed these services towards women to minimize the gender divide in Digital India."

India argues that its leveraging of digital technologies provided women greater access to finance, credit, technology and employment (Statement 237 2022, 2).

In a statement on WPS, India gives its own successful example again in the economic empowerment sphere: "We opened online bank accounts for over 440 million people of which more than 55 percent of account holders are women. During the COVID-19 pandemic, this initiative helped in direct benefit transfer to nearly 200 million women" (Statement 201 2022, 2). It also gives the example of its MUDRA (Micro Units

Development and Refinance Agency) scheme, through which the Indian government provides collateral free loans to encourage entrepreneurship and self-employment: “About 70% of its beneficiaries are women-owned and operated enterprises. Women have become consequently economically empowered and are providing employment to others as well” (Statement 237 2022, 2). Therefore, it can be seen here that especially in statements on the WPS Agenda, India tends to trumpet several successful domestic examples. Arguably however, these are all in line with furthering liberal emancipatory measures through their emphasis on market-based neoliberal economic empowerment.

The third theme that emerges in this postulate that also finds its roots in liberalism is that India equates women’s rights to human rights. India speaks of the importance of upholding human rights, including those of women and girls (Statement 207 2022, 2; Statement 436 2022, 2). The usage of ‘human rights’ with respect to women in this regard stands out, since the concept of human rights is often contested by feminists for privileging liberal conceptions of formal equality in international law (Olowu 2006). Throughout the corpus, India has used ‘human rights’ 66 times in different contexts like humanitarian law and civilian protection (Statement 59 2021), UN bodies like the Human Rights Council (Statement 53 2021) and human rights violations broadly (Statement 101 2021), among others. These contexts are not restricted to gender, but there are a few statements that mention human rights in the context of gender, which are the subject of analysis of this section. I have charted the attributive words of human rights in the context of gender below:

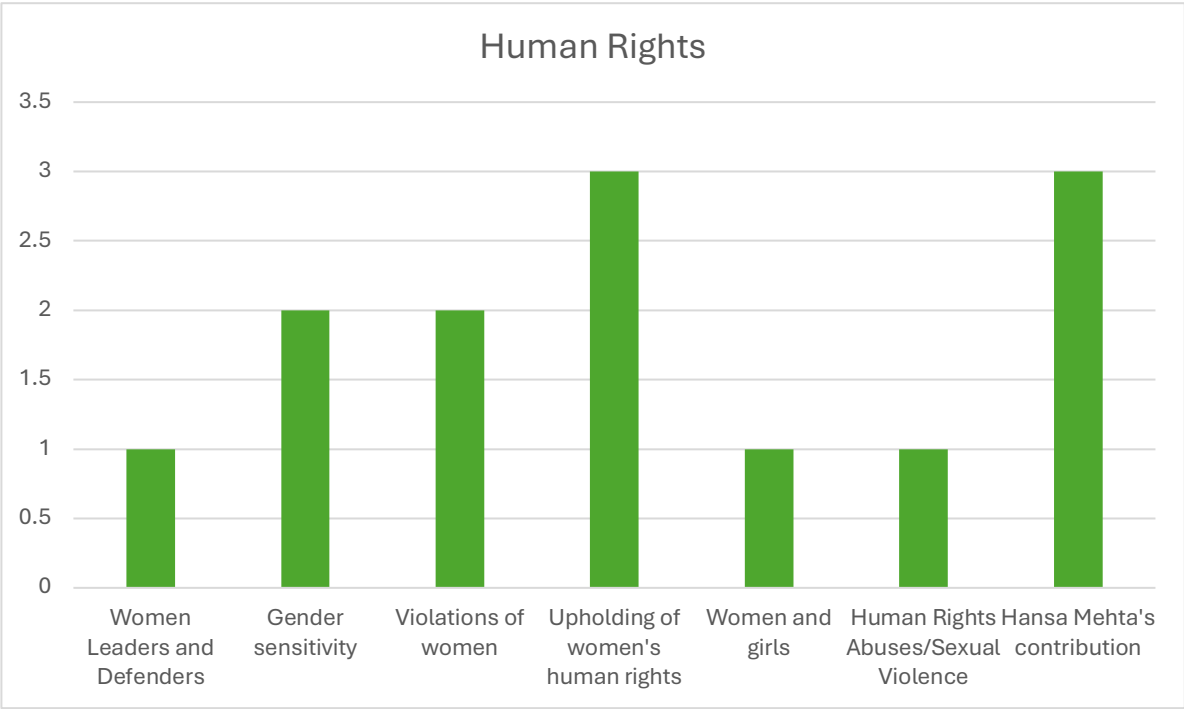


Chart 6.2: Attributive words of 'Human Rights' in contexts about women

From the above chart, it can be inferred that the upholding of women's human rights has been referred to the greatest number of times (3) along with Dr. Hansa Mehta's work (3). The former statements were made in the context of Afghanistan, where India highlighted that one of the expectations from the international community must be to uphold human rights of women, children and minorities, in accordance with Resolution 2593 (Statement 172 2021, 2; Statement 195 2021, 2; Statement 207 2022, 2). Dr. Hansa Mehta's historical contribution to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is mentioned three times in Statement 32 (2021, 2); Statement 237 (2022, 1) and Statement 155 (2021, 1, 2). Dr. Mehta rephrased the line of the Declaration from "All men are born free and equal" to "All human beings are born free and equal" (*ibid.*) Each of these statements on Dr. Mehta's contributions were mentioned in the context of WPS and women's rights and inclusion in peace processes.

Other statements mention women's rights as human rights in the context of gender sensitivity in peacebuilding (Statement 128 2021, 2; Statement 3 2021, 3), women human rights defenders (Statement 106 2021, 2), human rights abuses especially sexual violence in the CAR (Statement 92 2021, 2), concerns on human rights of women and girls in Afghanistan (Statement 436 2022, 2), and in terms of human rights violations in Somalia (Statement 171 2021, 2; Statement 256 2022, 2). Thus, it can be seen through these many examples that India positions women's rights in the human rights context.

In discussing postulate 2, I've demonstrated that India's UNSC discourses rely on liberalism. I term these liberal measures since they draw from the liberal political philosophy of first and second wave feminism discussed in chapter 1. These initial waves focussed on achieving formal equality between men and women, defined in terms of their participation in the public arena, economy and politics (Ehlers 2016, 349). Postcolonial feminists have always been critical of these liberal emancipatory measures for their lack of attention to unequal structures, and a skewed focus on formal equality (Kinsella 2020, 153). They argue that for true emancipation, one must understand how gender and colonialism structure the world. Understanding gender relations then becomes the starting point to examine the reasons for the exclusion of women, implications of their inclusion and the

meaning of prioritising gender issues in policies (Ansorg, Haastrup and Wright 2021). This excessive focus on equality through participatory measures are termed Eurocentric, for ignoring indigenous articulations of peace and empowerment.

This section has shown that while India calls for the inclusion and representation of women, these calls are largely limited to institutional settings, which are inclusion in elections, government cabinets and even peace processes, which are collectively called ‘decision-making structures.’ It is no doubt important to address issues of women’s underrepresentation, and the importance of their leadership. This is because despite the divergences between different branches of the global feminist agenda (for e.g. liberal Western feminism and subaltern postcolonial/decolonial feminism), the lack of women’s political representation and violence against women are shared problems between both the Global North and the Global South: these become shared issues for the global feminist struggle (Ballestrin 2022, 115). Postcolonial feminism, however, helps to push this issue further because it asks: Whose voices remain unheard in postcolonial states? How do we account for gendered differences and universalisms in the violence embedded in postcolonial state structures? (Parashar 2016, 372). Thus, postcolonial feminism is disenchanted and critical about institutions, since in some cases they are implicated in reinforcing these hierarchies. Global South feminists have argued that the failure of the state institutions to bring about justice and equality (despite granting them in the Constitution in India’s case), has deepened identity politics and armed resistance (*ibid.*).

India’s statements, by the very nature of being made in a multilateral institution, by a governmental institution, would obviously be focussed on institutional representation of women. However, postcolonial feminism seeks to interrupt this by asking policymakers to re-think their modes of representations. India’s focus on women candidates with no mention of women voters, for instance, or its stress on institutional leadership over grassroots peace efforts, reinforces a top-down approach to policy. This portrayal of women’s contributions and representations in only top-down institutional settings is similar to Western Feminist Foreign Policies which “simply take elite women as a subject in foreign policy and ‘stir’” (Achilleos-Sarll 2018).

For instance, in some of India’s statements, it highlights the importance of the roles played by Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit and Hansa Mehta in the UN. These women were India’s early

feminists and have made immense contributions to the UN institutions. However, both the women come from the upper echelons of Indian society in terms of class and caste and religion (Jayal 2024; Thapar 1993, 13). The point here is not to dismiss the immense contributions of these feminists, but to highlight that India's statements only discuss contributions of these women leaders who happen to work within institutions and have the class and caste resources to access them. This is indicative of a top-down approach to policymaking that tends to privilege women in institutions and forget women who practice their leadership and activism outside of these institutions, a principle that doesn't align with postcolonial feminism.

In terms of economic empowerment, postcolonial feminism is not against it. Instead, it advocates for a more nuanced understanding of economic empowerment that sees women as agents and not mere recipients of economic benefits. Postcolonial feminism also focusses on collective organising and community-based empowerment. For instance Mohanty (2016) gives an example of this perspective of empowerment through women living in free trade zones in postcolonial countries, who work together and help each other achieve production targets. Sometimes, they lower the production targets to help the women who cannot meet them (*ibid.*). In this way, postcolonial feminism focusses more on the social and cultural aspects of economic empowerment, as opposed to market-based empowerment.

In terms of the third theme that demonstrates how women's rights are equated with human rights, feminist research has shown that human rights discourses in international law are distant from women's lived every day realities (Olowu 2006, 80) and thus raise questions of whether human rights are the best vehicle to achieve the goals of feminism transnationally (McLaren 2017, 83, 84). This is primarily because of the liberal roots of human rights, and their emphasis on legal and political rights over social rights. Postcolonial feminists critique human rights for their claims to universality, especially the assumption that gender equality and individual rights are more important than cultural tradition and religious belief (*ibid.*, 99). Interestingly, some countries like Singapore and Malaysia have claimed that 'Asian values' of collectivism, social duty and economic welfare are inconsistent with Western values of individualism and political rights (McLaren 2017, 100).

The Indian state's practice of legal pluralism, which recognises religious freedoms (Article 25, Constitution of India), and its commitment to individual rights to equality (Article 14, Constitution of India), represents precisely this tension. By articulating for women's rights as human rights, India isn't compromising on its granting of collective rights but seems to view women's rights from the Constitutional conceptions of equality. Equality in India was a long-fought for right. As discussed in chapter 4, this right emerged from balancing between the Ambedkarite arguments of individualism as the unit of citizenship and Gandhian ideals of the village as the unit of the country. Therefore, it could be the case that the Indian delegation is drawing on the fundamental right to equality granted in the country and positions women's rights within the human rights discourse.

However, it is noteworthy that despite this discourse, India refers to crosscutting oppressions and diversity in the context of gender equality in some statements (Statement 264 2022, 2; Statement 148 2021, 2). This was discussed in chapter 5, finding section 5.2.2. This highlights that India doesn't view women's identities in silo like the Western discourses of human rights and recognises regional diversity even in context of gender equality. I theorise that this is because India does not want to dissociate itself from being the voice of the developing nations and the leader of the Global South. Therefore, by speaking of both women's rights in the context of human rights, and at the same time complicating this picture by connecting women's rights to other community rights and post-conflict complexities, India is not only balancing this very tension, but also speaking from its own experience — since this balance is seen in the Indian Constitution as well.

This theme discussed the findings that emerged from the second postulate on the liberal emancipatory measures seen in India's foreign policy. The next theme flows from the third postulate on how the Global South woman is represented in India's foreign policy.

6.3 Through the lens of Postulate 3:

Representation of the Global South woman in foreign policy tends towards the construction of narratives of victimhood and homogenisation which are reductive and deny women's agency

Findings:

P3.1 India's current foreign policy reinforces double binaries (Male-Female, within Females)

P3.2 Essentialist portrayals of women in Indian foreign policy can constitute Epistemic Violence

In this section, I examine how 'the Global South woman' is represented in India's UNSC statements.

In discussing these portrayals, I begin with demonstrating how women are shown as innocent, vulnerable victims in conflict. I also highlight discourses of infantilisation (women and children seen together) and singling-out women's issues (women seen as separate through words like 'especially' and 'particularly') and essentialism (women's inclusion as a panacea due to their divine nature). Thus, I argue that these portrayals stand in binary with men, where women are cast as those in need of protection and men are shown to be perpetrators of violence. I then argue through a postcolonial feminist lens that these portrayals can constitute epistemic violence.

Overall, 'women' are mentioned a total of 481 times in the corpus in different contexts. I have charted the same below:

PORTRAYALS OF 'WOMEN'

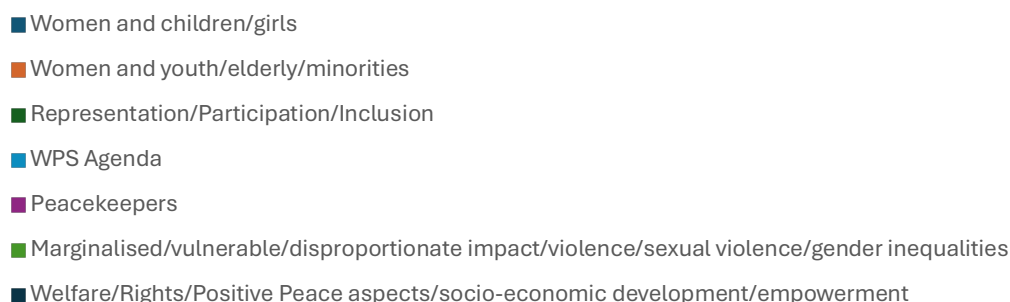


Chart 6.3: Mentions of 'women'

As can be seen in the chart, 10% of the statements about women cast them as the marginalised/vulnerable. This is especially observed in the presumption of their innocence in conflicts. Throughout the corpus of 440 statements, there is no mention of women fighters or terrorists. On the contrary, “innocent” acts as an attributive word for women. “Innocent civilians, including women” is mentioned in 6 documents in different contexts: small arms and light weapons targeting civilians (Statement 136 2021, 2; Statement 146 2021, 2; Statement 174 2021, 2), violence in CAR (Statement 92 2021, 2), Tigray (Statement 124 2021, 1) and Syria (Statement 180 2021, 1). Moreover, “innocent lives, especially those of women” are mentioned in the context of Ukraine (Statement 262 2022, 2; Statement 277 2022, 2). In a statement on justice for serious violations of international law, India responded to a statement made by Pakistan, and mentioned the historical treatment of innocent women: “Innocent women...were treated as weapons of war in an

act of calculated genocide by the Pakistan Army...several thousands of women were raped” (Statement 297 2022, 1).

Women are also portrayed as vulnerable populations 18 times in various contexts, which I have charted below:

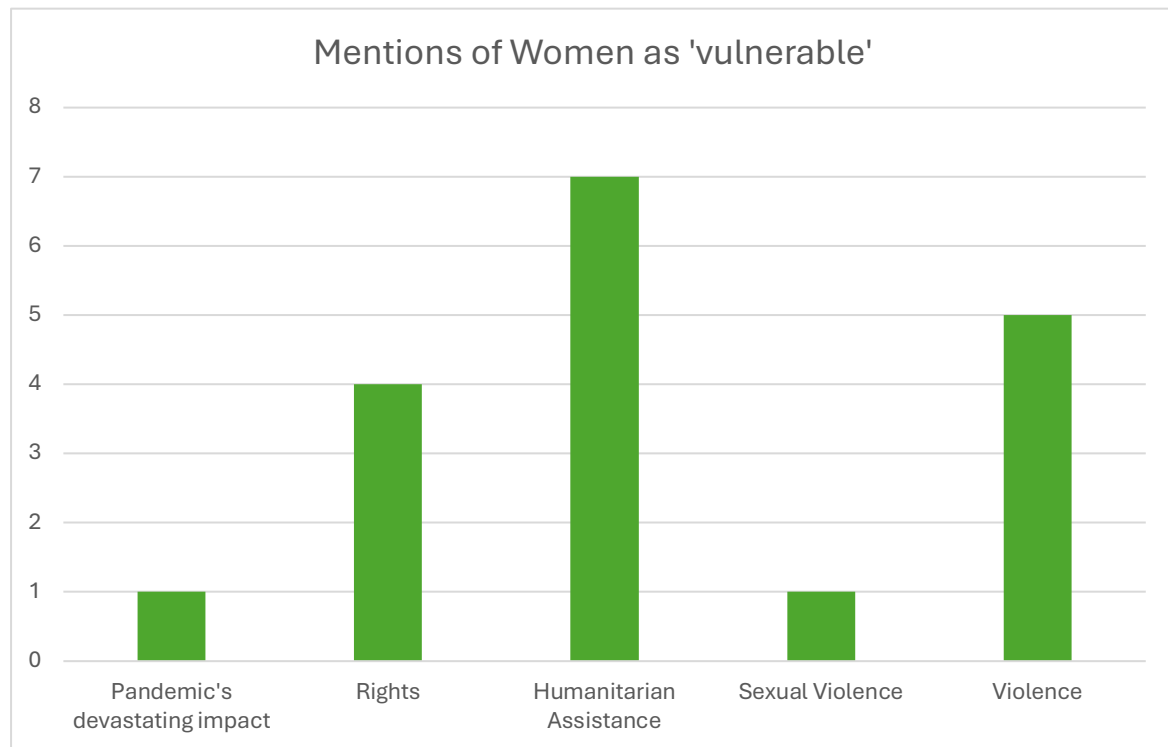


Chart 6.4: Mentions of women as 'vulnerable' in various contexts

As can be seen through the chart, the context in which women are mentioned as vulnerable the greatest number of times is 'humanitarian assistance.' This is seen in statements where India advocated for aid to reach the most vulnerable populations first, 'like women' (Statements 311 2022, 2; 348 2022, 2; 365 2022, 2). Other statements speak of exposure to attack by terrorist groups due to being vulnerable sections of the population (Statement 401 2022, 2) or how armed conflicts attack vulnerable civilian populations first (Statement 206 2021, 2). In terms of rights too, women are mentioned as vulnerable. For instance, how constitutional frameworks must protect the rights of the vulnerable, 'like women' (Statement 40 2021, 2) or rights of vulnerable widows (Statement 40 2021, 2). The portrays of women as innocent and as vulnerable together work to portray them as victims in conflict.

Another notable observation in the corpus was that the greatest number of mentions of women were in contexts of labelling them alongside children or girls: this was done 129 times in the corpus (27% of the total mentions of women: refer chart 6.6). This mention is usually done in contexts highlighting how disproportionately they have been impacted. For instance, “...the worst recipients of their [terrorist groups in Africa] atrocities have been women, children and the vulnerable sections of the population” (Statement 401 2022, 2). FIR scholars have long been critical of the infantilisation of women implied by their lumping together with children. In security studies, it is assumed that men inherently have the violent capacities required to protect the state, while the vulnerable population are discussed in undifferentiated terms as “womenandchildren,” which denies their agency (Enloe 2014).

In the case of Syria for instance, India says that the UNSC cannot turn a blind eye to the issue of the presence of third country nationals, “including women and children,” in the Al-Hol camp (Statement 93 2021, 2). Other contextual examples of the usage of “women and children” are that they are in distress (Statement 118 2021, 1), have suffered the most during the conflict (Statement 121 2021, 2), and are increasingly displaced and abused (Statement 152 2021, 2). In the context of Afghanistan especially, the phrasing “women and girls” has been used several times. For instance: “We join others in calling for ensuring the protection of rights of women and girls and to ensure that the long-fought gains of the last two decades are not reversed” (Statement 311 2022, 3).

Women’s categorisation with girls is also often seen in contexts of sexual violence, for instance: “Young women and girls become vulnerable to various forms of subjugation including sexual and gender-based violence, fall victims of forced and child marriages, and human trafficking” (Statement 182 2021, 2). In a statement on the WPS Agenda, India talks about the nexus between terrorism and sexual violence, and how women and girls are the main targets of the same (Statement 264 2022, 2).

Another observation in the corpus was that women’s issues have been singled-out amid discussing other issues. This is seen in 34 statements. India does this ‘singling out’ using words like “especially” or “particularly.” For instance, in the case of the Iraq, India says that a transparent and credible election will meet the genuine aspirations of the Iraqi people,

“especially women and youth” (Statement 123 2021, 1). In a statement on protection of civilians, India says:

“Countries with rich history and cultural heritage like Syria and Afghanistan are facing serious threats of armed conflict today which have devastated not just the population, especially women and children, but also indispensable civilian infrastructure and historical sites” (Statement 59 2021, 2).

Similarly, I found this singling out visible when India argued for the lifting of restrictions so humanitarian aid can pass through to Yemen. India says that if aid doesn’t reach, “the suffering of the people of Yemen, especially women...” would worsen (Statement 149 2021, 2).

Another signifier word used here is “particularly.” For instance, India says that the pandemic has had a devastating impact on the vulnerable sections, “particularly women” (Statement 13 2021, 2), and that the conflict in Tigray has had a severe impact on civilians, “particularly women” (Statement 142 2021, 1). The singling-out of women can be seen as othering, which is detrimental to the agency of women, relegating them to an afterthought, and not the mainstream.

Following from this, I also found a further binary that makes up this theme, which is the female-female binary observed in some of the statements, resting on a dichotomous understanding of womanhood. In these instances, women are being portrayed as one of either two things: either a panacea to heal conflicts, or as the vulnerable victim who needs to be protected. This is also reflected in P2.1, where inclusion and participation of women was portrayed as important — this postulate goes a step further and to show the rationale behind that thinking, which is that women’s inclusion is often advocated because they are seen as more peaceful. For instance, India says: “Let us not forget that a woman-led development is also a more compassionate one” Statement 32 (2021, 2). On the other side of this formulation, women are often seen as the victims of the war with ‘innocent’ acting as an attributive word as discussed above. Therefore, based on the evidence presented in theme P2.1 on women leaders and their contributions, and in this theme P3.1 on women being viewed as victims, I argue that there seems to be a binary conception of women in India’s UNSC statements. This is seen most starkly in two statements, discussed below.

Statement 152 (2021, 2) on CAR speaks of the status of the peace process, stating approvingly that “The appointments of several women leaders including as the President of the Commission on Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation, is another positive development.” In this sentence, the Indian delegation is highlighting the potential of women leaders and how that is important for CAR. The paragraph following this however says: “The lives of ordinary civilians, particularly women and children have worsened with increased displacement and abuses.” Thus, I observe this binary even within a single statement, that women are not only being praised for starting to lead the peace process of the country, but also, they are still called ordinary citizens particularly vulnerable to violence.

Another statement containing this stark binary is Statement 171 (2021, 1, 2) on Somalia: “Elections to the Upper House have been concluded successfully last weekend. This is an encouraging development, particularly the fact that 13 out of 54 senators are women.” This statement that again appreciates women leaders is followed up with: “These acts of terrorism by Al-Shabaab must be condemned in the strongest terms. Al-Shabaab remains largely responsible for numerous civilian casualties and human rights violations, including against women and children.”

Beyond this familiar essentialising of women as either panacea or victim in state discourses, I also found other instances of the essentialist portrayal of women, that derive from particular claims about womanhood and spirituality in Indian traditions. For example, in Statement 32 (2021, 1) on the participation of women in peace processes, India writes: “We in India have been shaped by the idea of “Shakti”, the divine feminine strength and energy that creates the world. Our history, both ancient and contemporary, hold numerous examples of strong women role models.”

The reference to Shakti here is unique and seen for the first and only time in the corpus. Shakti in this context is a reference to the divine feminine power or the Hindu goddess Shakti (Sugirtharajah 2002, 103). The equation of women to divine or god-like femininity, in this case, is problematic for two reasons: one is that using only a Hindu reference could be reflective of the current rise of right-wing nationalism in India (discussed in Chapter 4)

or the second is that this plays into the narrative of innocent divine women who are victims and not participants in conflict.

Another interesting trend observed in this section is essentialism in the case of environmentalism. India sees women as not only being disproportionately impacted by climate change, but also as being closer to nature:

“The impacts of climate change and its associated security risks have important gender dimensions.

Women and girls experience the interplay between climate change and peace and security in direct and profound ways. Since women are often the providers of food, water and energy for their families they are likely to face increased challenges in accessing resources due to climate change.

As the primary caregivers, women are often living on the frontlines of climate change and have distinct knowledge and experience to contribute to building effective adaptation strategies. There is an urgent need to promote and support the meaningful participation of women and marginalized groups in national-level climate change policy and planning processes” (Statement 25 2021, 2).

There are several presumptions that underline this statement: that women are the primary caregivers and providers of food, that they are often on the frontlines of climate change and that they have ‘distinct knowledge and experience’ about conservation and adaptation strategies. I argue that this is relegating women to the spheres of the home while consigning environmentalism to a ‘feminine’ sphere.

Drawing from this then, India’s statements further ideas of the ‘protection’ of women, since they are the assumed victims. Also aligned with tenets of feminist security studies (discussed in chapters 1 and 2), I found discourses on the protection of women and “preserving the rights of women” (Statement 365 2022, 2; Statement 405 2022, 2; Statement 435 2022, 1) in India’s statements. Most blatantly, India says that “It is primary duty of every Member State to ensure empowerment and protection of women” (Statement 168 2021, 2). In the case of Afghanistan, it says that any political settlement must ensure the protection of rights of women, children and minorities (Statement 91 2021, 2; Statement

113 2021, 2). During its August 2021 Presidency of the Council, India issued a presidential statement on Darfur, which also says: “The Security Council encourages further steps to promote and protect women’s rights and full, equal and meaningful participation in all social, political, economic aspects of life” (Statement 111 2021, 2).

Despite these statements however, I did observe that men and boys did enter the discourse as victims of war occasionally. While women were mentioned 481 times across the corpus in different contexts, in contrast, ‘Men’ were mentioned 15 times:

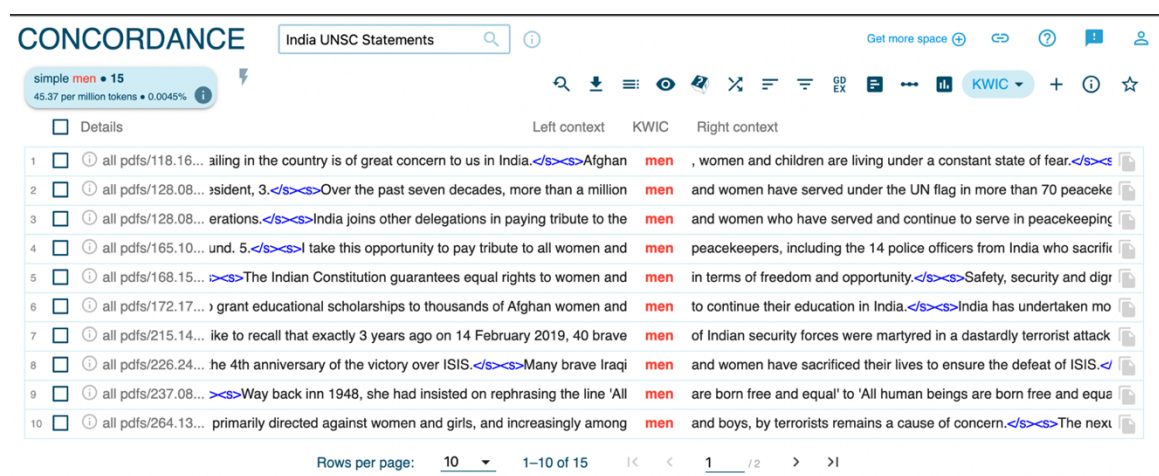


Image 6.6: ‘Men’ mentions, page 1

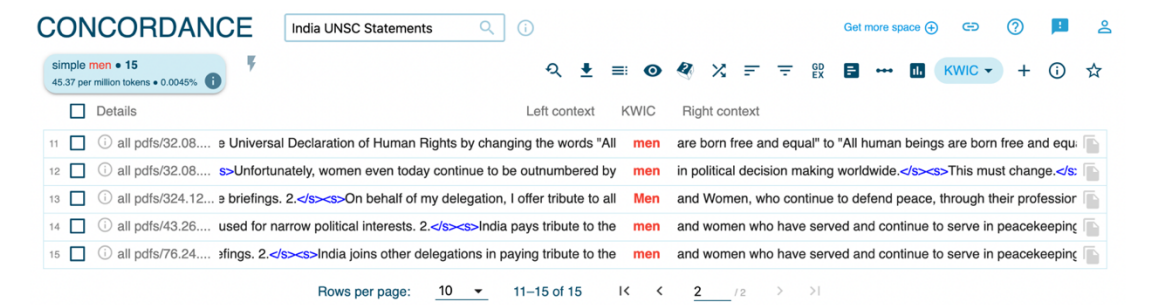


Image 6.7: ‘Men’ mentions, page 2

I have charted these mentions below, categorizing them according to the type of mention:

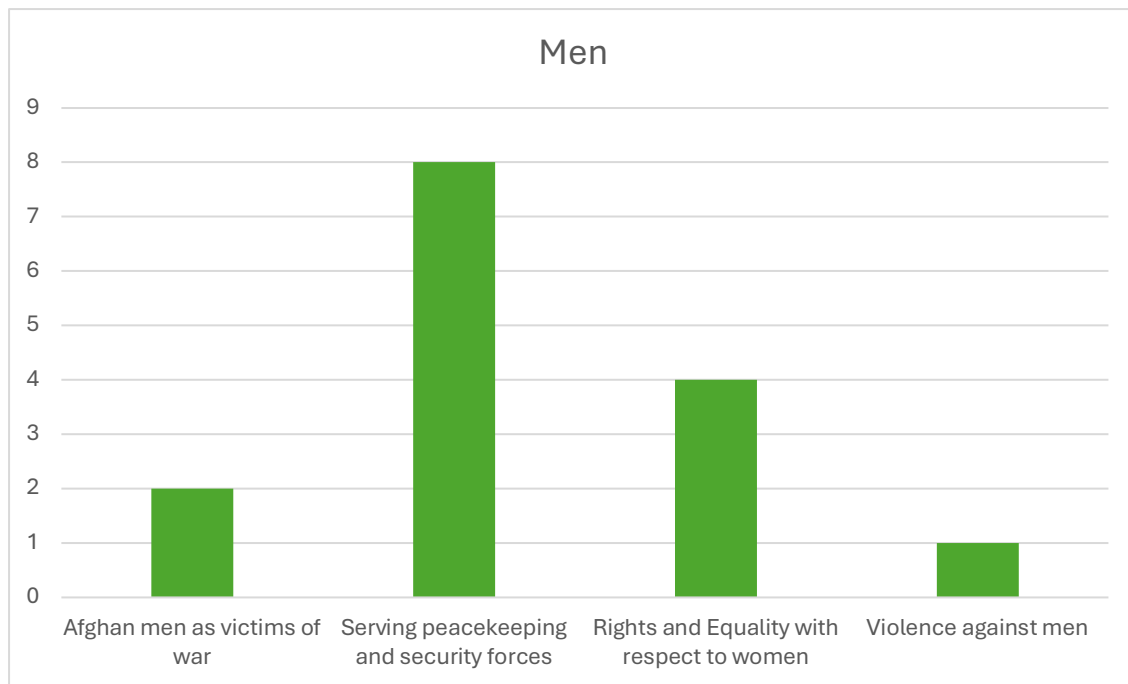


Chart 6.5: Attributive words of ‘Men’

In comparison to mentions of women, men are mentioned very few times. Within these 15 mentions, there are 3 which mention men as victims of war or speak about violence against men in conflict situations. Specifically in the case of discussing the Afghan war, India highlights how Afghan men, women and children live in a constant state of fear (Statement 118 2021, 2). This statement is the only one to mention men as living in fear and facing the brunt of war, and to mention men alongside women and children. While this is progressive in terms of recognizing men also as victims of war, the same statement also says in different places that “Women and children are in distress” (*ibid.*), “voices of Afghan women must be respected” (*ibid.*, 2) and “stability must enable all Afghans including women, children and minorities to live in peace and dignity” (*ibid.*, 3).

A similar statement that indirectly references men as victims of war is Statement 172 (2021, 2), in which India speaks of urgent humanitarian assistance that must be given to Afghanistan, and how it has been awarding scholarships to Afghan men and women to continue their education in India. This statement acknowledges the bloodshed’s impact on education for men and for women. A more direct reference to men as facing the brunt of war is seen in Statement 264 (2022, 2), in which the delegation says: “Sexual violence [is] primarily directed against women and girls, and increasingly among men and boys, by

terrorists remains a cause of concern. The nexus between terrorism, trafficking and sexual violence in armed conflicts needs to be broken.” This statement is important since it recognizes that men too are victims of not just war, but of sexual violence as well. I argue that this statement reflects a nuanced approach to understanding the victims of war and is perhaps pointing to a different direction than viewing only women as the primary victims, despite the disproportionate impact of conflict on women (discussed in finding theme P5.1).

Largely however, men are referred to as serving in the peacekeeping and security forces (Statements 43 2021, 1; 76 2021, 1; 128 2021, 2; 165 2021, 2; 215 2022, 1; 226 2022, 2; 324 2022, 1), and in terms of equal rights between men and women (Statements 32 2021, 2, 4; 168 2021, 2; 237 2022, 1). Therefore, men are largely projected as actors in conflicts rather than as victims.

In a similar way, I also analysed the terms used when discussing girls and boys.

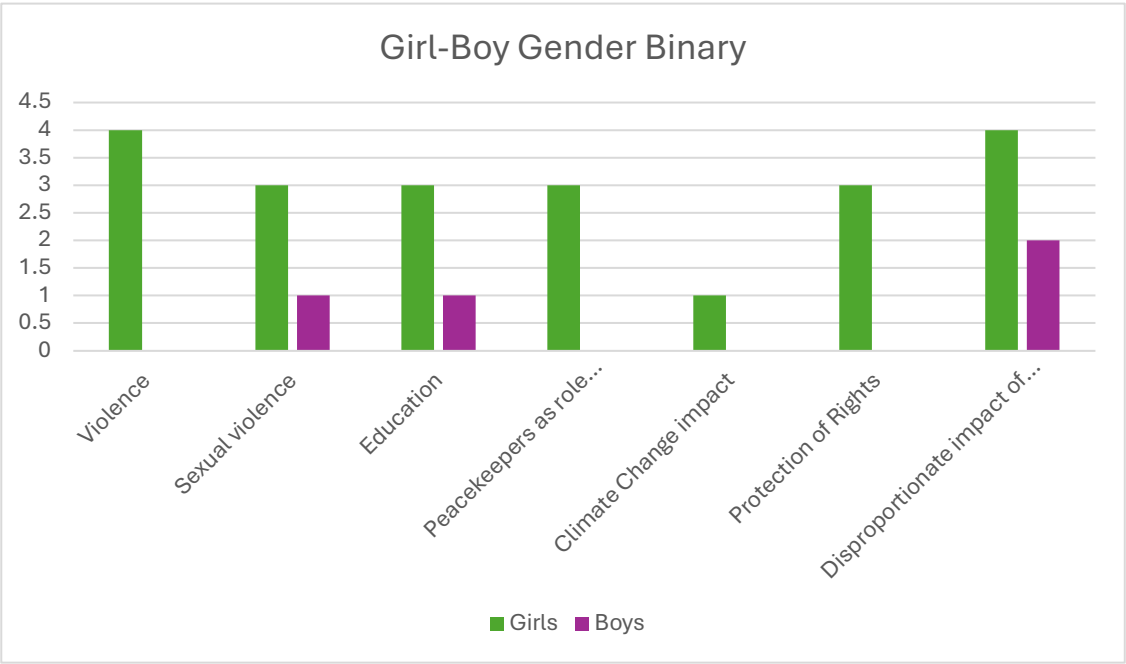


Chart 6.6: Attributive words of ‘Girls’ and ‘Boys’ compared

‘Girls’ were mentioned in the corpus 21 times, and ‘boys’ were mentioned 5 times. While ‘girls’ were mentioned in contexts like targeted killings (Statement 110 2021, 4) and psychological wounds of sexual abuse (Statement 252 2022, 2), it was interesting to see that ‘boys’ were also seen as victims and mentioned in statements on sexual violence

(Statement 264 2022, 2), being used as human shields, or vulnerable and internally displaced (Statement 208 2022, 2). Based on these findings it can be asserted that while the Male-Female binary is wider, the boy-girl binary is not.

Therefore, based on the arguments furthered above, I show that the male-female binaries in India's statements are reflective of a lack of awareness of postcolonial feminist complexities. This is detrimental to understanding the gendered nature of war more clearly as being shaped by gender norms (Cockburn 2013, 433). It also skews the agency of women by painting them as in certain maternal traits (Hall 2021, 1, 8).

In this postulate I have demonstrated that India uses a universalist understanding of women as a unified category in a binary with men and in need of protection by them, thereby portraying them in essentialist ways and casting them primarily as victims. I now argue from a postcolonial feminist perspective that these portrayals of Global South women can constitute epistemic violence. I draw the concept of epistemic violence (discussed in chapter 2) from Gayatri C. Spivak's seminal essay, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' in which she argues that systems of knowledge, particularly Western scholarly work, lead to epistemic violence, or violence through discourse (Riach 2017, 27), which is the "the remotely orchestrated, far-flung, and heterogenous project to constitute the colonial subject as 'Other'" (Spivak 1988, 280). Arguably, India's UNSC statements constitute this form of epistemic violence.

Chapter 1 discussed in detail what epistemic violence as a concept stands for, especially in the context of Western scholarship. Here I'm seeking to further this understanding of epistemic violence in two ways: to look at violence in foreign policy documents (not scholarship) to reframe/reinterpret Spivak's argument as not only the othering of the colonial subject by Western discourse, but also as the othering of women by their own postcolonial government through these epistemic erasures and exclusions (Behera 2023). This is seen in India's portrayals of women as divine, compassionate, closer to the environment and being able to better connect with marginalised populations. These links of women to positive peace aspects and the attached value-judgment about their identities is problematised here. For instance, it can be argued that some statements that derive their arguments from Hindu scriptures homogenise Indian women into one bracket, which could lead to the neglect of the various identities that Indian women espouse.

In a similar way, although it is important to highlight the disproportionate impact of violence, I argue that India's portrayal widens the binary between men and women, and therefore constitutes epistemic violence. This is for two reasons: that there is a presumption of innocence of women specifically with no recognition of their contributions to violence, and that it ignores the sexual violence in conflict experienced by other bodies: male or queer bodies. The argument here draws from feminist research on how the invocation of the 'innocent civilian' is gendered, leaving at grave risk adult men and boys in war-affected zones (Carpenter 2016).

Thus, portraying women as the victims of war not only solidifies the presumption that women are innocent, but also that men are perpetrators, which is not always the case. Positioning 'feminine/feminist foreign policy' in opposition to masculinities, legitimises the "selfless femininity and detached masculinity" logic, which is necessary for establishing hierarchy (Gilligan and Snider 2017, 183). Not only does this ignore women's contributions to violence, but also delegitimises men's experiences of conflict. Therefore, the 'innocent civilian' is gendered, leaving at grave risk adult men and boys in war-affected zones (Carpenter 2016). This also undermines the protection of civilians in international society (*ibid.*, vii).

The assumption of these binarised and essentialised traits has always been problematised by postcolonial feminists. One line of the critique is that the assumptions of these traits can also justify colonialism. For instance, Spivak famously writes that subaltern women are doubly subjugated because "White men are saving brown women from brown men" (Spivak 1988, 296). Thus, these discourses on the protection of women and preserving their rights risks the masculine protector logic, which Duriesmith (2018) writes, dominates foreign policy perspectives despite the apparent integrating of feminist perspectives. Moreover, binaries deny women rights as independent subjects, as they are seen and treated as passive objects (Riach 2017, 46). Drawing from this, I argue that essentialist portrayals of women in India's foreign policy statements do more harm than good, reinforce hegemonic masculinities, and are not working as a stepping stone towards self-representation.

The ‘singling out’ identified above can also be read as a form of epistemic violence. Singling out can be seen as othering, this is also detrimental to the agency of women, relegating them to an afterthought and not the mainstream. This also places an undue amount of expectation and pressure on (some) women who are in the arena of peace and security (Shepherd 2011, 506). For instance, Anderlini (2007, 2) writes that the international community while taking notice of women, fails to see the complexity of women’s roles in conflict and the difficult reality of their experiences. Instead, they focus on extremes: “On the one hand women are vulnerable, passive, in need of protection. On the other hand, women are the panacea, the internal bulwark against extremism: their political participation is the solution to all evils” (*ibid.*). Such extreme outlooks towards women ignores their diverse lived realities and their participation in conflict.

This aligns with Spivak (1988)’s argument that elites are not listening and not understanding, which I argue leads to an inauthenticity of representation, constituting epistemic violence. Spivak highlights that all forms of representation deny subalterns a fair hearing, by virtue of the position of subalternity from which one cannot speak. At the same time, she writes that representation has not withered away and the intellectuals have their task cut out for them — it is not to abstain from representation, but to understand the voice-consciousness of the subaltern.

Overall, a postcolonial feminist critique of India’s UNSC policy reveals binaries, essentialist portrayals and the constitution of epistemic violence. The next postulate looks at India’s UNSC policy to analyse how it is being projected outward to divert from domestic failings.

6.4 Through the lens of Postulate 4:

Postcolonial states project foreign policy outwards in order to drive attention away from domestic feminist failings

Findings:

P4.1 India’s UNSC statements don’t recognise domestic failings like the lack of a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325

This section demonstrates the incisiveness of the fourth postcolonial feminist postulate — that India projects its foreign policy outwards as a means to drive attention away from its domestic failings. This theme is aligned with Basu's (2016) work on UNSCR 1325. She argues that India dissociates itself from implementing the WPS Agenda within its domestic context by ‘using’ its work in UN Peacekeeping (specifically its all-women troops) to project its engagement with WPS Resolutions outwards (*ibid.*, 368). This theme was seen in its UNSC statements in the way India diverts attention from its lack of a NAP by championing itself as a leader of all-women Peacekeeping forces.

There are a total of 7 statements that deal exclusively with the WPS Agenda (excluding those references to the WPS in other statements). Of these 7 statements on the WPS Agenda, the mentions of India’s all-women peacekeeping unit are seen in 6 statements. Each of the statements have a different theme around the agenda, and India brings up its contributions in each of the themes:

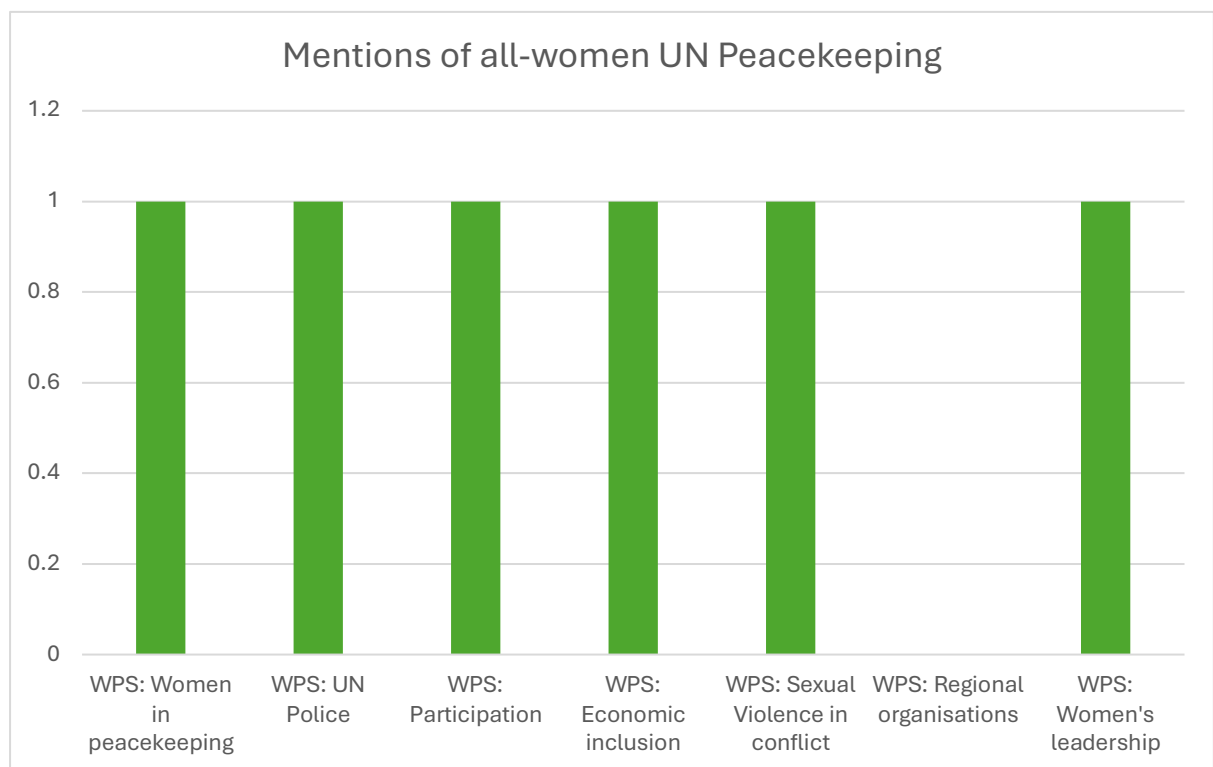


Chart 6.7: Mentions of India’s contributions of all-women UN Peacekeeping units in different WPS statement themes

Research has shown that India has been presenting itself as a champion of gender mainstreaming in UN peacekeeping forces (Klossek and Johansson-Nogués 2021, 527). However, at the same time India seems to divert attention away from its lack of a National Action Plan on WPS. NAPS can be external and internal facing and while vaunting its all-women UN Peacekeeping abroad, India arguably deflects of attention from its domestic issues, like the conflicts within its borders and sexual violence against women.,.

For instance, at the beginning of its first presidency in August 2021, India brought up UN Peacekeeping in response to multiple questions asked by the press. In a question on perceptions of the UN as a party to disputes being the cause for attacks on UN Peacekeepers, India replied saying Indian peacekeepers have maintained the highest standards of professionalism and that they are proud of it:

“We are also championing the cause on the fighting and combating sexual violence. India, as you know, provided the first contingent of all-women peacekeepers, and they actually went to Liberia. So therefore, we are looking at this in a way in which we can implement the mandate to the best of our ability” (Statement 110 2021, 13).

When speaking to its policy priorities as would be seen in its presidency-related events, India said: “The second signature event relates to Peacekeeping. This is an issue that is close to our hearts. India is proud of its long and rich tradition of contribution to UN peacekeeping operations, including the involvement of women peacekeepers” (*ibid.*, 2).

Therefore, peacekeeping, especially the all-women peacekeeping units, are not just a matter of policy priority, but of pride for the nation. I observe that India brings up this issue and its contribution in almost every statement made on the WPS Agenda. In a statement on economic inclusion through partnerships on WPS, India highlights how commissioning more women police officers and peacekeepers can be transformative in the collective response to conflicts (Statement 237 2022, 2). In another WPS debate on sexual violence in conflict, India again quotes its all-women contingent to Liberia and the contribution of the contingent in mitigating sexual violence:

“These courageous Indian women patrolled Monrovia streets at night, taught Liberian women self-defense skills and conducted classes on combating sexual violence...To conclude, India reaffirms its

commitment to actively contribute to our collective endeavour in effectively tackling sexual violence in situations of armed conflict” (Statement 264 2022, 2).

With regards to how much the Liberian society changed after the peacekeeper deployment, India quotes some statistics, like:

- The number of women applying to join the Liberia National Police (LNP) tripled from approximately 120 to 350 within two months of the arrival of Indian FPU
- The number of women enrolled at police academy shot up from four per class to 30 per class in 2007 and 100 per class in 2008 and 2009.
- Female representation in Liberian Security Services grew from 10% to 17%” (Statement 32 2021, 3).

In Statement 30 (2021, 3) on the UN Mission in South Sudan, India elaborates its contributions further by naming some of its women officers, like Major Chetna and Major Suman Gawani, who were women peacekeepers servicing local communities during the pandemic and awarded the UN military gender advocate of the year 2019 respectively. They also highlight how Major Gawani helped the South Sudanese government forces to develop their own action plan to combat sexual violence (Statement 53 2021, 2). Other contexts in which India brings up the contributions of its female units are in the DRC (Statement 46 2021, 2; Statement 128 2021, 2), and in addressing conflict-related sexual violence in the field, for which India asks for more deployment of Women Protection Advisors for effective monitoring (Statement 201 2022, 2).

The delegation in some statements justifies why these officers are important. For instance, they say that women peacekeeping forces play an indispensable role in reaching out to communities where only female police officers may be allowed to interact with members of the community (Statement 402, 2), and that they help in effective implementation of strategic communication and enhancing the impact of peacekeeping (Statement 324 2022, 2). The country thus positions itself as the leader of women peacekeeping, and says it will continue to do so: “We stand ready to contribute further in this regard” (Statement 352 2022, 2) and “Going forward, India will remain committed to enhancing the footprint of our women in UN policing” (Statement 402 2022, 2).

As discussed in previous chapters, India doesn't currently espouse a Feminist Foreign Policy, but its commitment to the WPS Agenda is primarily through this all-women uniformed personnel (peacekeepers and police units) which is a core component of the WPS Agenda (Basu 2016, 367). India however doesn't have a National Action Plan (NAP) as per the WPS Agenda. Despite this, it vocally supports the idea of NAPs:

“Adequate financing is imperative to ensure full and effective implementation of the WPS agenda on the ground. Countries that have developed national action plans on WPS must ensure budgetary allocations in line with their action plans. Attention should be paid to access to credit and finance by women and women's groups in respective national action plans” (Statement 80 2021, 2).

This statement directly supports NAPs, especially the inclusion of women's groups in those NAPs. Paradoxically, despite not having a NAP domestically, India is vocal for their implementation.

Looking deeper through the lens of postcolonial feminist theory, it can be argued that through championing its all-women UNPK forces in almost every WPS statement and paradoxically supporting NAPs despite not espousing one domestically, the country seems to be diverting attention away from its domestic issues. This argument is also in alignment with research on Sweden and Canada, who had/have FFPs, but don't practice their ethical feminist commitments domestically as seen in their treatment of indigenous communities (Bergman Rosamond, Cheung, and De Leeuw 2023). I argue that in India's case, the issues that it seeks to deflect away from are not only to do with the conflicts within its borders, but also sexual violence against women in India.

Research has shown that India is reluctant to “internationalise” the conflicts in Kashmir, its central and northeast parts, for concerns about international interference (S. Basu 2016b). The contentious issue of Kashmir and India's failed attempt to get the UN on its side was briefly discussed in chapter 4. Chapter 4 also discussed how despite the situation in Sri Lanka warranting peacekeeping forces, both India and Sri Lanka did not want to involve the UN for fears of ‘internationalising’ the conflict, thus retaining its internal character (Rupesinghe 1988, 349). I argue that these experiences shaped India's approach to diverting away from them in the international sphere. This also explains why India has dissociated

itself from implementing a NAP domestically, because a NAP would raise questions about these issues. For instance, a NAP would spotlight the gendered sexual violence against the women of northeast India (Manian 2023).

India's problem of sexual violence has been documented in chapter 4. Not only are there legitimate concerns of a "rape crisis" in the country (Manian 2023, 789), the level of inhumanity of this crime has been on the rise (Sharma, Pardasani, and Nandram 2014, 362). Despite the government introducing new measures to make the laws increasingly punitive, it has not addressed the concerns at the root of the problem, focussing on stringent punishment instead (Dash 2021, 7, 9). 'The failure of governance' is seen by the public as the foremost reason for the failures around tackling sexual violence against women, with 'governance' implying not just the government in power, but all law and order structures, the criminal justice system, the armed forces and the police (Simon-Kumar 2014, 452). A NAP would raise questions on this treatment (or lack thereof) of this issue domestically. Based on this context, I argue that the failure of the Indian state to effectively deal with sexual violence in the country could be the other reason for not espousing a NAP, while at the same time diverting attention to its all-women peacekeeping units provides a way to show that Indian women are empowered.

Therefore, as Basu (2016, 368) explains, "India as well as other South Asian troop/police contributing countries...use UNSCR 1325 in their international peacekeeping work, thus projecting their engagement with the WPS resolutions outwards." This foreign policy projection outwards remains unchallenged however, because the UN then focuses on implementing 1325 through regional actors like civil society organisations instead (Olonisakin and Ikpe 2011, 234). Thus, the projection continues to solidify the country's international positioning and works towards strengthening their foreign policy image, rather than effectively question their domestic commitments to women. This can also be seen as a privileging of national interest and links to the postcolonial condition.

I argue that India's privileging of its national security back home, (in conjunction with the findings of chapter 5) can be seen as an expression of its postcolonial and cartographic anxiety, that seeks to provide ontological security to its people and the government (Kinnvall 2019, 283; Cash and Kinnvall 2017, 268, 269; Krishna 1994, 517). India's foreign policy projection and insistence that women are empowered because of its larger

numbers of all-female troops can also be read as an attempt at relegating social empowerment policies to domestic politics (Achilleos-Sarll 2018, 32), away from the sight of the UNSC.

Another critical argument in this postulate is the postcolonial feminist problematisation of peacekeeping as a concept and practice and India's championing of itself as the UNPK leader. The reasons for this are the ways it sustains and reproduces militarisation, that denigrates femininity and sexual minorities, foster norms of masculinity and valorises aggression and violence (Abiola et al. 2017; Joshi 2020, 795). Postcolonial feminism terms peacekeeping a neocolonial practice, for reproducing racial hierarchies due to the reliance on peacekeepers from the Global South, and for being structured as a civilising mission, that aims to export modern liberal modes of governance to the conflict-prone third world nations (Holvikivi 2021, 224): "Peacekeeping, therefore, as critical feminist analyses reveal, involves the enactment of colonial encounters and exploits the inequalities of global political economy."

Yet, despite these critiques of peacekeeping in general and the UNPK politics in particular (the latter of which India is cognisant of and vocal about in its UNSC statements), India champions itself as the leader of all-female troops. Perhaps this is because the Indian government's decision to employ more female peacekeepers is aligned with the UN's priority to increase women peacekeepers in UN Missions (Klossek and Johansson-Nogués 2021, 535). Therefore, India has fulfilled one of the UN's objectives: "...United Nations has been seeking deployment of a female engagement team in its missions as part of its gender parity/sensitisation initiative" (*ibid.*). Therefore, although not officially a part of a WPS NAP, deploying more female peacekeepers is part of the UN's aims. It could also be that this is another reason why India is not implementing a domestic NAP in alignment with the WPS agenda: because in its opinion, it has contributed enough to gender parity through its peacekeeping forces. Perhaps this could also be because of practical reasons to increase India's clout in the international arena. For instance, Holvikivi (2021, 224) argues that the deployment on peacekeeping operations can be understood as a bid by mid-size countries to increase their diplomatic clout on the stage of global governance.

Postcolonial feminist research has complicated this image of India. Research has shown that there is an asymmetric gender-parity approach in different branches of India's all-

women UNPK units: although police forces accommodate more women, a gendered division of labour persists. This is rendered visible when India contests the idea of placing women in high-risk or combat situations due to the “predominant socio-political perception of women as devoid of the agency to ensure their own protection” (Klossek and Johansson-Nogués 2021, 546). For the same reasoning, India contests gender-integrated units, which scholars theorise is because of its understanding of gender mainstreaming as providing better opportunities for women empowerment in women only settings (*ibid.*).

Based on the above discussion, the fourth postcolonial feminist postulate enables a deep critique of India’s UNSC policy as diverting attention away from domestic failings. By lauding its sponsorship of all-women PKU, India claims credit for gendering WPS while avoiding generating its own NAP. Discussing a NAP could open up critical spaces for discussions about conflicts and SGBV within India – and is therefore avoided. The next postulate discusses whether the UNSC policy includes domestic subaltern voices at all.

6.5 Through the lens of Postulate 5:

The necessity of the inclusion/advocacy of bottom-up experiences/approaches/peace strategies of postcolonial women in policymaking

Findings:

P5.1 India’s foreign policy does not fundamentally challenge patriarchy because of the exclusion of bottom-up voices

As discussed in chapter 1, feminist scholars challenge IR for its traditional exclusion of women’s issues, both in the discipline and in its practice by governments (Baylis 2020, 247). Contrary to this, I found that India is not silent about gender inequality, as shown in the previous few sections. At the same time however, India doesn’t fundamentally challenge patriarchy. My argument here is that despite not being silent on gender inequality, India doesn’t fundamentally challenge patriarchy because it doesn’t include or advocate for bottom-up peace strategies and approaches of postcolonial women. I have evidenced this here, beginning with a brief discussion on mentions of gender in/equality to understand why this is not challenging patriarchy in a postcolonial feminist sense.

‘Gender equality’ and ‘gender inequality’ have a combined mention of 12 times:

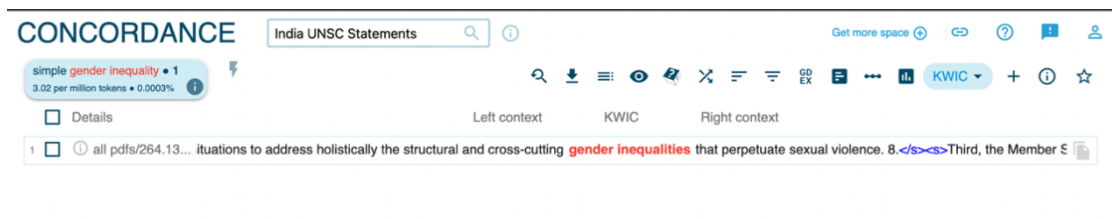


Image 6.8: 'Gender inequality/inequalities' mentions

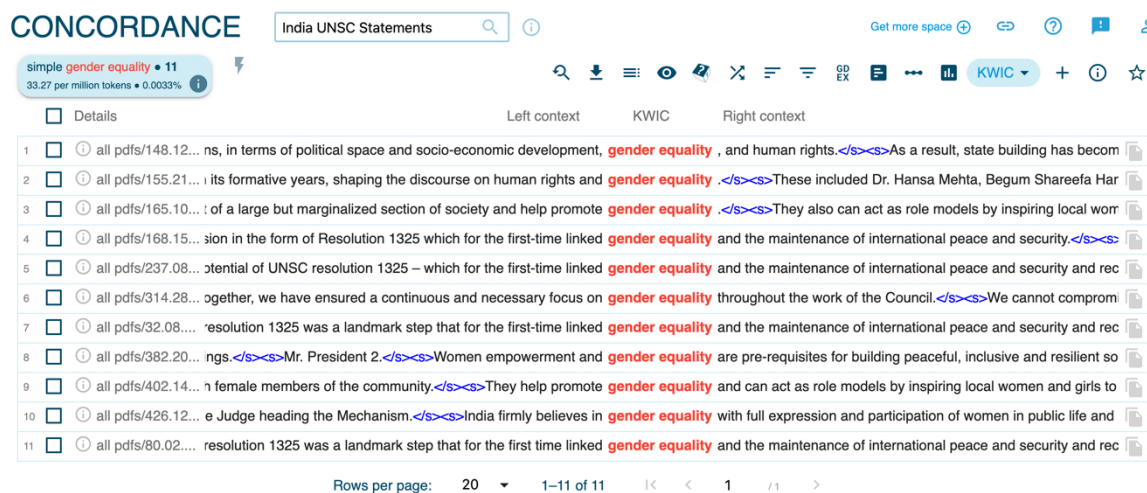


Image 6.9: 'Gender equality' mentions

These statements shown above effectively highlight India's position on gender equality/inequality. The one statement on gender inequality speaks about the UN assisting countries in developing national legal frameworks that can ensure speedy investigation and prosecution of perpetrators of sexual violence in conflict: "This should also be a priority in post-conflict situations to address holistically the structural and cross-cutting gender inequalities that perpetuate sexual violence" (Statement 264 2022, 2). This statement is interesting because it highlights a nuanced argument from India on understanding the cross-cutting nature of gender inequality, that is also structural and is rendered visible in conflict contexts. In a similar statement that addresses the structural nature of gender inequality in post-conflict state-building, India says that in the context of the developing world, sustaining peace has become more complex due to increasing expectations of gender equality, however some countries in Africa have managed to overcome these challenges by

spotlighting diversity (Statement 148 2021, 2). While this statement is phrased in a somewhat complicated way, I believe through this India is trying to argue that gender inequality persists even after conflicts end, which makes post-conflict state building and sustaining peace a challenging task. Therefore, by prioritising diversity like South Africa has done, the state can overcome these challenges.

In other statements, India's recognition of gender inequality as not being fully achieved yet, is seen in its discussion of the WPS Agenda. For example, it argues that while the agenda is pathbreaking for linking gender equality to the maintenance of peace and security for the first time (Statement 237 2022, 2), it says that the agenda has challenges:

“The WPS Agenda has a transformative potential. It is now recognized internationally, but there are still challenges. Member States need to identify and address barriers to women's full, equal and meaningful participation in the prevention and resolution of conflict, and in post-conflict peace-building efforts and activities” (Statement 168 2021, 1).

In other statements, it brings up gender equality in terms of equal access to education and equal participation in electoral processes (Statement 382 2022, 2); how women peacekeepers promote gender equality (Statement 402 2022, 2); women's equal partnership in development (Statement 32 2021, 2); institutional inequalities hindering full participation of women in peace (Statement 80 2021, 2); and how Indian women shaped the discourse on gender equality in the formative stages of the UN (Statement 155 2021, 1). In a statement on the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT), India says: “We are particularly delighted to see a female Judge heading the Mechanism. India firmly believes in gender equality with full expression and participation of women in public life and our socio-economic and political discourse” (Statement 426 2022, 1).

Similarly, in a statement on behalf of the non-permanent elected members of the UNSC on the theme of the working methods of the UNSC, India said:

“Mr. President, our second point,
We believe it is critical that a gender lens be integrated across the working methods of the Security Council. We are happy to note that we have seen important progress over the past year, including but not limited to the shared WPS commitments adopted by some Council members.

Together, we have ensured a continuous and necessary focus on gender equality throughout the work of the Council. We cannot compromise on the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in the work of this Council.

In this regard, we encourage all Presidencies to strive for gender balance and diversity when selecting briefers – we must ensure that women are at the table and their voices are heard and heeded. The E10 is also actively engaging in discussions in the Informal Working Group on Documentation and other procedural matters on a draft Presidential Note on this issue, under the leadership of Albania” (Statement 314 2022, 2).

This statement is unique since it not only calls out the UN mechanisms for not adequately voicing women’s issues, but also suggests ways forward.

Although in total the phrases ‘gender equality’ and ‘gender inequality’ are mentioned only 12 times, India hints at them without using the phrases in several other statements. This is seen in statements that argue that there has been a disproportionate impact of conflict that women face. For instance, on a statement about widowhood, India argues:

“It is indeed disconcerting that women continue to suffer disproportionately in situations of armed conflict. Widowhood further aggravates vulnerabilities for women in armed conflict. Given that the rate of widowhood in armed conflict situations can be greater than 50% of the female population, this meeting is a timely initiative to address and deliberate on this important issue” (Statement 168 2021, 2).

There are many such statements that discuss the disproportionality of the effects of conflict on women, that further entrenches gender inequality. I observed here a connection to the previous findings in chapter 5: India is against withdrawal of humanitarian aid, no matter what the political situation, which is in line with its NAM principles (Chapter 4 and 5). In this context, it spotlights the disproportionate impact of conflict on women when humanitarian aid operations were withdrawn:

“In the absence of a political solution to the conflict, the humanitarian aid operations have been a lifeline for millions of Yemenis. We are worried that these aid operations are now at risk due to severe funding shortfalls. Yemeni women and children are bearing the brunt of the closure or

scaling down of major UN aid programs” (Statements 217 2022, 2; 243 2022, 2).

Another connection I observed to chapter 5 is how India links gender inequality and the disproportionate impact of conflict to countries of the Global South. This is seen in statements about many Global South countries. With respect to Syria for instance, the delegation recognises the disproportionate impact of conflict on women (Statements 105 2021, 1; 122 2021, 2; 93 2021, 1; 44 2021, 1; 60 2021, 2), that Syrian women face miseries (Statement 209 2022, 1), and the unilateral measures imposed on the country that aggravate the humanitarian crisis with devastating effects for women (Statement 28 2021, 2). It also discusses that Syrian women and children are disproportionately displaced (Statements 325 2022, 1; 349 2022, 2; 307 2022, 2). This spotlighting of gender inequality and the Global South is also seen in the case of advocacy for protection of girl students and women occupying positions of responsibility in Afghanistan (Statements 91 2021, 1; 288 2022, 2), women facing abuses in CAR (Statement 152 2021, 2), their suffering in Yemen (Statement 121 2021, 2), and displaced women of Ukraine (Statements 266 2022, 1; 354 2022, 1). These statements show that India is also linking the situation of women in conflict, to the developing countries of the Global South, a trend that builds on the findings of chapter 5 that discusses India’s Global South advocacy.

Through all these statements discussed above, India’s position on gender equality is evident: it fully supports gender equality, recognises the nature of inequality in conflict, how it impedes peace and security, and that “Women’s empowerment and gender equality are pre-requisites for building peaceful, inclusive and resilient societies” (Statement 382 2022, 1).

Despite all these positions and statements on gender equality however, I argue that India still doesn’t fundamentally challenge patriarchy. That’s because drawing from postcolonial feminist theory, I problematise these kinds of recognition of gender equality for their focus on the inclusions of certain types of elite women in discourses of women’s leadership. Some instances of this type of inclusion were discussed in the findings of the second postulate (P2.1). Advocacy of elite inclusion raises the issue of the invisibilisation of those who are not elite. Women’s identities are intersectional, but the corpus is silent on this. Strikingly, for instance throughout the corpus, there is no mention of the word ‘caste.’ In

all the 440 statements, there is not a single use of the word “caste” which is a deeply gendered, deeply entrenched part of Indian society, which has historically led (and continues to lead) to the fragmentation of Indian society.

Secondly, I also argue, that these gender in/equality mentions don’t fundamentally challenge patriarchy because they prioritise changes within the system, and not a change in institutions per se: Post- and Decolonial feminisms seek a stronger dismantling of systems, recognising the role of Euro-American institutions in perpetuating imperialism (Persard 2021, 14). The third argument supporting the finding that India doesn’t fundamentally challenge patriarchy derives from the lack of direct voices of the marginalized, despite advocacy about them with respect to the Global South. These leads me to question where the subaltern woman is in India’s statements. For a country that labels itself the voice of the developing world and the leader of the Global South, India doesn’t give voice to or consider perspectives directly from marginalised populations.

Therefore, India’s foreign policy at the UNSC is not fundamentally challenging patriarchy, despite not being silent on gender inequality, and this is because the subaltern marginalized population does not make or participate in making the policy. This aligns with Spivak’s assertion that “speaking from a subaltern’s position in society means you will never be heard” (Riach 2017, 39).

Conclusion

This chapter analysed India’s foreign policy at the UNSC through the lens of the five postulates of postcolonial feminism.

The first postulate speaks of how gender, race and coloniality together structure IR and foreign policy. Through this lens, I found that India does not position itself as a feminist state (as opposed to how it often presents itself as a postcolonial state), nor does it see gender as fundamentally structuring IR and foreign policy in the way that it sees colonialism doing. These findings are despite India mentioning women as part of its policy priorities and speaking often of gender perspectives and gender sensitivities. The second postulate speaks of how liberal feminist approaches are not always the solution to gender inequality. Analysing through this lens, I found that India highlights economic

emancipatory measures for women, mirroring Global North FFPs. It also focusses a lot on women's contributions to institutional settings, as seen in the emphasis given to women leaders and candidates, as compared to no emphasis given to women grassroots peace advocates. There is also a casting of women's rights as human rights, deriving from the liberal universal human rights philosophy.

The third postulate discusses essentialist, homogenising portrayals of women that deny their agency. Herein I found that India's statements further the male-female and female-female double binaries which are rooted in essentialist discourses that women require protection and are victims of conflict. This I argue constitutes epistemic violence against women, a concept from postcolonial feminism. The fourth postulate speaks of how postcolonial nations project their foreign policy outwards to drive attention away from domestic feminist failings. I found that India does the same, and focusses on its all-women UNPK troops, while ignoring the lack of adoption of a NAP domestically, therefore diverting from both the conflicts within its borders and the sexual violence against women. The fifth postulate speaks of the importance of including bottom-up grassroots experience in foreign policy. I found here that India doesn't fundamentally challenge patriarchy because of the exclusion of bottom-up voices.

Therefore, postcolonial feminist ideas reveal a profound lack in how India approaches gender in its foreign policy. India's positioning of itself internationally is primarily based on an understanding of its postcolonial identity. I argue that the Indian state doesn't position itself as a feminist state because it believes it doesn't *need* to, since it has already granted formal equality in terms of the Constitution. Postcolonial feminism is disenchanted and critical about institutions, since in some cases they are implicated in reinforcing these hierarchies. Thus, India's institutional focus can be critiqued for perpetuating an 'add women and stir' approach. This is indicative of a top-down approach to policymaking that tends to privilege women in institutions and forget women who practice their leadership and activism outside of these institutions. India's discourses also risk the masculine protector logic, which postcolonial feminism problematises. India's emphasis on legal and political rights over social rights is similar to feminist critiques of women's rights as human rights discourse. Postcolonial feminism also shows how women in India's statements are homogenised, victimised, essentialised and portrayed as having divine feminine strength and closeness to nature, which I argue leads to the othering of women. The theory also

problematizes peacekeeping as a gendered practice, and this helps understand how even within Indian peacekeeping there is a division of labour.

Through this research I show that India's foreign policy is susceptible to criticism from postcolonial feminist insights, despite its arguments for decolonisation and Global South representation (discussed in chapter 5) that present a progressive representation of foreign policy. Whether the current government has the political appetite for more nuance in terms of approaches to gender in the context of the current developments can be debated. It can be argued, based on chapter 4, that recent political developments show the government's commitment to 'women-led development,' as seen through cabinet reshuffling and better acts and bills related to reproductive rights. However, the resistance observed through not changing the marital rape law and the usage of the Hijab ban to police women's bodies, casts doubt on the same.

As discussed initially, the diversity that India brings has always confounded political scientists. No trend is predictable, and simultaneous incongruent growth trajectories are highly characteristic of India (Mellor 2019, 10, 11). Despite this, some contradictions and continuities observed through India's foreign policy even as seen through its portrayals of women, can be indicators of its stance. The Conclusion section that follows discusses some of the implications and identifies future research trajectories.

Conclusion: Progressive Representations of Foreign Policy through a Postcolonial Feminist Lens — Contributions

Introduction

This final section of the thesis summarises the work and discusses its original contributions to the field. I will also highlight the impact this work has on understanding progressive representations of foreign policy. I end the thesis with a discussion on limitations of the work, and future research avenues.

What this Research has found: A Summary

Through this thesis, I explored a central research question: How do progressive representations of foreign policy do under the scrutiny of postcolonial feminism? To answer the question, I developed two research axes: one on the Global North states representing a feminist identity through their Feminist Foreign Policies and two, the Global South Indian state that represents its identity as postcolonial. The primary aim of the research question was to understand the many ways that postcolonial feminism as a theoretical framework undertakes an analysis of progressive representations of foreign policy, and what that might reveal.

In answering these questions, I began with first drawing out the very basis of this research, feminist theory. In chapter 1, I discussed several concepts foundational to feminist analyses like gender, sex, patriarchy, women's lived experience as an analytical standpoint and intersectionality. I then situated the thesis in the discipline of Feminist International Relations. FIR exposes how mainstream IR has marginalised women, while also showing the complex ways in which gender is implicated in demarcating boundaries and constructing identities through statecraft tools like foreign policy (Steans 2003, 434). Since the study of FFP and of Indian foreign policy are both studies of foreign policy, I discussed some conceptual tools of IR's sub-field of Foreign Policy Analysis. These are: analysing state-centric articulations of foreign policy (and yet challenging them through problematising conventional FPA); challenging the lack of incorporation of gender in foreign policy; and examining 'foreign policy contexts.' I also highlighted some concepts

from the field of Feminist Peace Research that influence this thesis. FPR embodies the emancipatory goal of a gender-just peace, and simultaneously complicates our understanding of peace by breaking the binaries of the feminine as being seen as peaceful and the masculine as violent, in the context of war and militarisation (Björkdahl and Selimovic 2021, 42; Parashar, Féron, and Confortini 2021, 4). The goal of this exercise was to understand how feminist thinking criticises and contributes to mainstream thinking about peace, security and IR. Building on this critical framework, the thesis then introduced the theory central to this work. I discussed postcolonial feminist theory through its main stalwarts: Said (1991), Spivak (1988), Mohanty (1984), Parashar (2009) and (2016), among others. Bringing their arguments together, I drafted five main postulates of postcolonial feminist theory that guided this research:

1. Gender, Coloniality and Race structure IR and Foreign Policy
2. Liberal themes like representation, ‘add women and stir,’ market-based economic emancipatory strategy, etc., are not the solution to gender inequality
3. Representation of the Global South woman in foreign policy tends towards the construction of narratives of victimhood and homogenisation which are reductive and deny women’s agency
4. Postcolonial states project foreign policy outwards in order to drive attention away from domestic feminist failings
5. The necessity of the inclusion/advocacy of bottom-up experiences/approaches/peace strategies of postcolonial women in policymaking

In chapter 2, I began answering the central research question (How do progressive representations of foreign policy do under the scrutiny of postcolonial feminism?) by exploring the first research axis. The first research axis aimed to critically analyse the seemingly progressive FFPs of some Global North states through the lens of postcolonial feminism. It also scrutinised postcolonial feminist FFP scholarship to reveal the many ways that the theory could expand the scope of the FFP research. I began by introducing the concept of Feminist Foreign Policy for the first time, as a policy which not only critiques mainstream ways of conceptualising and doing foreign policy and IR but also understands peace as an objective of foreign policy (Ansorg, Haastrup, and Wright 2021, 203). I then answered the research question in three parts. In the first part, I analytically engaged with existing critiques in the scholarship and surveyed three postcolonial feminist critiques of

FFP. The first was a critical take on the liberal thought in the conceptual logic of FFP as seen in the focus on the ‘add women and stir’ approach, tokenism, framings of the nation through borders, and the identities that inform the policy. The second critique was on the portrayals of the ‘third world woman,’ and how these are problematic because they essentialise, victimise and homogenise women from the global South. The third critique was on how countries that adopt FFP (especially Sweden and Canada) project their foreign policy outwards, thereby ignoring the racial dynamics within their borders (seen in the othering of indigenous populations) and outside their borders (as seen in the Global South being seen as a site for policy experimentation).

In an original contribution, the next part of this chapter turned an ‘autocritical’ gaze on the existing postcolonial literature on FFP to push the answer to the research question further. I conducted a critical cartography of postcolonial feminist FFP scholarship. The first finding of the cartography was that the scholarship inadvertently creates a power-knowledge matrix that reinforces the very Global North-South hierarchies it seeks to address. Drawing from Alexander and Mohanty (2010), I argued that this spatialisation of power that creates a border between academia and the community, is limiting current postcolonial research on FFP by distancing subalternity as a source of knowledge production. In the second finding of the cartography, I demonstrated that this scholarship meets FFP with ‘Strategic Scepticism,’ which I conceptualised as a sceptical approach towards Western-originated liberal policies, but strategically sceptic for its lack of an entire rejection of FFP. The 16 articles analysed do this in four ways: by not limiting FFP analysis to liberal feminist themes like representation, by analysing the silences in non-/engagement with FFP, by scrutinising adoption of feminist principles without the FFP label, and by studying links between FFP and other policy intersections like healthcare, migration and climate change. Combined together, postcolonial feminism’s critique of FFP, spatialisation of power in scholarship and strategic scepticism as a postcolonial feminist approach answer the research question of how postcolonial feminism scrutinises progressive representations of foreign policy like Global North countries’ FFPs.

The second research axis formed the second part of the thesis. It aimed to critically examine India’s current foreign policy through the lens of postcolonial feminism. This axis critically evaluated India’s identity as a postcolonial foreign policy actor. To do so, the research evaluated India’s UNSC statements through the years of 2021-22 from a postcolonial

feminist perspective. I discussed how looking at India's current foreign policy through the lens of postcolonial feminism is a ripe field of study that could have several implications: First, to reveal the gendered colonial and racial hierarchies in current foreign policy, and secondly, to reveal the strengths and weaknesses of India's current approaches to gender in foreign policy.

To explore this axis, I adopted feminist research principles and the specific research methodology of Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis, manually scoping 440 statements that India made at the UNSC, and corroborating the scoping with analysis from the Sketch Engine software. I began with a theoretical discussion of feminist epistemologies and how they inform feminist methodologies. I discussed how my approaches are derived from two of feminist epistemology's traditions: one of offering a deep critique of mainstream approaches; and two of developing innovative, insightful alternative strategies of ways of knowing. The next section discussed Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis as proposed by Lazar (2014) and I showed how I conducted the FCDA method step-by-step with images and also discussed the DA software Sketch Engine as adding to the analysis.

Before the findings, I provided a background chapter to the case study. Chapter 4 discussed India's political history of colonialism from the mainstream perspectives, followed by feminist perspectives. The section discussed how colonialism has impacted Indian society politically (seen through Partition and the creation of the nation-state of India), economically (the persistence of poverty and the agrarian economy) and socio-culturally (the structure of the legal system, ideologies of the national struggle used as tools even in post-independent India). The feminist political history section outlined how these mainstream perspectives obfuscate women's agency. I used feminist historiography to show that Indian women were not merely the victims of colonialism, but also strategically used colonialism to advance their interests, like accessing legal systems for asserting their agency in their personal life, prioritising education for women and writing journalistic literature on women's rights.

This led to the next section which provided a snapshot of Indian women today. It discussed development through education, health and social dynamics and societal expectations of Indian women, along with issues they face like violence. I discussed the domestic legal and political developments in India that characterised the years 2021-22 (the period of study).

From a feminist perspective the years 2021-22 were characterised by issues like representation in political bodies, empowerment through government schemes, the minimum age and right to marry for women, and reproductive rights, to name a few. I argued that these political developments reflect some of the government's domestic policy priorities when it comes to feminist issues. I also highlighted two legal cases: the Hijab ban case and the marital rape exception case. The former reflected two issues relevant for the postcolonial feminist study of Indian foreign policy. They are: one, the mirroring of liberal tendencies of Global North FFPs in India's Hijab ban, which leads to two, the tensions between women's rights as part of community rights and women's rights as human rights. The marital rape exception case spotlighted sexual violence, and the role of the marriage institution in structuring Indian society. This highlighted the expectations from and lenses through which Indian women are viewed as juggling between tradition and modernity, yet whose rights are still subservient to the institution of marriage.

I then outlined what India's foreign policy phases have looked like over the years. Phase 1 [1947-1965] called the Nehru era was characterised by post-independence idealism. Phase 2 [1966-1989] was the Indira Gandhi Era that saw hard realism and the Cold War. This was followed by Phase 3 [1990-2013] which was the post-liberalisation era characterised by economic growth & re-strategising. Finally, the current phase 4 called the Modi Era [2014-present (2023)] has elements of Hindu Nationalism & what some scholars term the 'New India.' The chapter then discussed India's relationship with the UN, which predates its independence. In sum, this relationship has seen the interplay of idealistic principles and political pragmatism.

The background in chapter 4 provided the basis on which readers can comprehend India's foreign policy trajectories and policy interventions on gender at the UN and so contextualise the findings of the discourse analysis as presented across chapters 5 and 6. The core findings from the same are that India constructs its identity as postcolonial in its UNSC statements. However, these coexist alongside other complex manifestations of national assertiveness to reveal a certain brand of postcolonialism that India mobilises to carve a space for itself internationally. This is followed by a more detailed examination of the statements through a postcolonial feminist lens to reveal the limits and vulnerabilities of India's approach to gender in these statements. These are discussed in chapters 5 and 6 respectively.

Chapter 5 found that India constructs its identity as a foreign policy actor through recourse to its postcolonial positioning and references to the NAM traditions in its foreign policy. For example, it prioritises Global South rights in its statements and advocates for reformed multilateralism to accommodate a new geopolitical reality. It positions itself as a leader of the Global South, for example by highlighting vaccine inequity and the disproportionate impact of various conflicts (especially Ukraine) on food security, energy and fuel costs. India calls for region-specific and local-led solutions to conflicts. It is against external influence in countries, and argues for an increased cooperation with regional organizations, who have a better understanding of local dynamics. India highlights colonialism as a shared historical experience to promote solidarity with the Global South, and links colonialism to the roots of conflicts, especially in Africa. I also observed challenges to the developed countries when India's calls them out for paying lip-service to Africa and attempting to securitise climate change, among others. As the fourth finding explains all of these elements are tantamount to a continuity in foreign policy over time, with themes of humanitarianism and a values-based approach, continuing from the longstanding humanitarian policies of the non-aligned movement. However, there are also other complex aspects to India's construction of itself as postcolonial, seen in instances such as its ambivalent stance on refugees and its lack of support of Ukraine. Chapter 5 therefore challenged and complicated India's construction of itself as postcolonial by discussing how some UNSC foreign policy stances are not just because of India's colonial experience but are pragmatic decisions to instrumentalise the concept of postcolonialism for India's international positioning. Thus, India's postcolonial identity seems to derive from its own brand of what it understands as 'postcolonial,' which involves not only advocating for decolonisation, but also being assertively nationalist, based on different instances at the UNSC. Although this foreign policy behaviour doesn't depart far from the various historical phases of foreign policy evolution, what is seen in this chapter is an overt instrumentalisation of India's own brand of postcolonialism to justify and solidify its international positioning.

Having identified these continuities and contradictions in India's construction of itself as a FP actor in the UN, chapter 6 surveyed the corpus of statements through the 5 postcolonial feminist postulates. In discussing each postulate in Chapter 6, it became clear that India's UNSC policy, while often espousing postcolonialism, is vulnerable to the critique offered

by postcolonial feminism. Thus, at the UNSC, India's advocacy for women's rights is similar to the patterns of the Global North countries' FFPs: there is a focus on liberal emancipatory measures, gender mainstreaming through numbers, with binarized and essentialist notions of men and women and perpetrators and victims. Thus, I showed that despite its claimed postcolonial credentials, postcolonial feminism reveals the limits of the way India constructs gender equality and women-led development in its UNSC policy when tested against each postulate.

The first postulate speaks of how gender, race and coloniality together structure IR and foreign policy. Through this lens, I found that India does not position itself as a feminist state (as opposed to how it often presents itself as a postcolonial state), nor does it see gender as fundamentally structuring IR and foreign policy in the way that it sees colonialism. These findings are despite it mentioning women as part of its policy priorities and speaking often of gender perspectives and gender sensitivities. The second postulate speaks of how liberal feminist approaches are not always the solution to gender equality. Analysing through this lens, I found that India focusses a lot on women's contributions to institutional settings, as seen in the emphasis given to women leaders and candidates, but no emphasis is given to women grassroots peace advocates. India also highlights economic emancipatory measures for women, mirroring the Global North's FFPs.

The third postulate discusses the essentialist, homogenising portrayals of women that deny their agency. Herein I found that India's statements further the male-female and female-female double binaries which are rooted in essentialist discourses that women require protection and are victims of conflict. This I argued can constitute epistemic violence against women, a concept from postcolonial feminism. The fourth postulate speaks of how postcolonial nations project their foreign policy outwards to drive attention away from domestic feminist failings. I found that India does the same, and focusses on its all-women UNPK troops, while ignoring the lack of adoption of a NAP domestically, which might provoke uncomfortable discussions of conflict and violence against women within the country. The fifth postulate speaks of the importance of including bottom-up grassroots experience in foreign policy. I found here that India doesn't fundamentally challenge patriarchy because of the exclusion of bottom-up voices.

Overall, across its chapters this thesis furthers original contributions to FIR and discussions of FFP in answering the research question. The thesis has drawn on existing postcolonial feminist engagements with FFP but has furthered the discussions by turning the ‘autocritical’ lens on the literature by developing a critical cartography of FFP scholarship through a postcolonial feminist lens. This has brought to the fore issues of the spatialisation of power and the recognition of strategic scepticism into knowledge production about FFP. Secondly the thesis turned the postcolonial feminist lens on a nation-state from the Global South that does not espouse a FFP, but has another unique form of progressive representation of foreign policy, that is constructing its identity as postcolonial. This therefore expands the scope of studies of FFP. The thesis therefore not only contributes to problematising FFP through postcolonial feminism, but also problematising India’s constructions of its postcolonial identity and its approaches to gender.

Limitations of the Research and Future Research Directions

I situated this research within the discipline of Feminist International Relations. I have also used the autocritical theory of postcolonial feminism. Thus, by nature, this thesis is situated in a post-positivist qualitative framework, that draws its critical analyses epistemologies and methodologies from feminist theory. This approach to analysing Feminist Foreign Policy and the context of Indian foreign policy has several limitations, of which I will discuss two that stand out.

The first limitation is methodological. Although Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis is by nature a textual method and stands by itself to contribute to the field, I believe this research could be further enriched through qualitative interviews. For instance, interviews with those Indian Foreign Service officers at the UN Permanent Mission who have crafted these statements, would have deepened the analysis. It would be insightful to discuss with them questions regarding what policy directions are guiding them while drafting the statements, and how they understand feminism, gender and India’s role in relation to these issues, etc. While this would by itself suffer from drawbacks concerning access to officials and confidentiality, it could still deepen the scope of this research by analysing the thinking and strategising that goes behind the policy priorities. Alternatively, even without interviews, an FCDA of statements India has made at the UN General Assembly, UN Women, or other

multilateral organizations within and outside the UN to compare them with its stance in the UNSC would help draw out differences in positionings (if any).

Another idea that struck me when conducting the FCDA, which can be explored in further research, would be to do a comparison of Indian UNSC statements from previous tenures. For instance, Mukherjee and Malone (2013) analyse India's previous tenure at the UNSC in 2011-12 to flesh out its performance and policy priorities. A feminist analysis could build on the same. This comparison over time could lead to a richer postcolonial feminist analysis in terms of the *movement* of policy. Future research could therefore ask questions like: Has India changed its postcolonial positioning over time? Do different governments have different foreign policy priorities? Where does gender stand over time or how has India's position on women changed (if at all)?

Future research could also focus on comparative studies between countries. For instance, both India and Ireland shared the tenure of the UNSC from 2021-22. Comparative studies could be framed on these different countries' postcolonial feminist positionings to further tease out India's postcolonial stance.

A second limitation of this work has already been briefly acknowledged in chapters 2 and 3. In my own critical cartography, I showed how postcolonial feminist FFP is reinforcing a spatialisation of power. This is defined as a segregation that normalises the spatial location of the academy as the epitome of knowledge-production, thereby creating insiders and outsiders as those who can and cannot know. The spatialisation of power creates a border around the academy (Alexander and Mohanty 2010, 28, 29). In the scholarship, I argue that this is the case even in postcolonial feminist analyses of FFP because of its privileging of institutional sources of knowledge production, and the location of the scholarship itself in the Global North. When it comes to the spatialisation of power in this study, due to the usage of official documentation and the place and location of this work, it forms a limitation of the study. This stands despite the fact that the whole focus of this thesis is on state representations of foreign policy.

To combat this, incorporating subaltern insights into foreign policy, drawing from postcolonial feminist thinking, can be a goal for further research. This could take the form of examining, cataloguing, interviewing and analysing bottom-up peacebuilding strategies

and approaches in the context of FFP. A key question would be: What do women's peacebuilding networks say about feminist foreign policy, if they do think about it at all?

Contributions of this Research

This section briefly discusses the contributions of this work to existing research. The thesis highlights the necessity to take a re-look at foreign policy, even the "progressive" versions of foreign policy. This thesis used the theoretical lens of postcolonial feminism to reveal in this thesis that gendered, colonial and racial hierarchies still exist in these progressive forms of FP. The hierarchies in these cases take the form of the colonial aspects of FFP and the gendered aspect of Indian foreign policy, as discussed throughout the thesis. Chacko (2019, 50) discusses in the context of constructivist IR how progressive norms such as humanitarianism and cooperation can be problematised further using critical analyses, which critique the neglect of politics and power in the former. Thus, this thesis has demonstrated the importance of using critical theories like postcolonial feminist theory to examine progressive representations of foreign policies.

In my research, I came across very few studies on progressive foreign policies, let alone critical approaches to progressive foreign policies. Some noteworthy research that informed this thesis are the recent works of Mattoni (2025), Rosenkranz (2025), Szöllösi-Cira (2022) and Jackson (2022). By critically examining progressive foreign policies, the thesis contributes to the emerging sub-field of progressive foreign policies within International Relations.

By furthering the rich postcolonial feminist analysis being conducted in the field of Feminist Foreign Policy today, this thesis will further works like (Eroukhmanoff 2024; Cheung and Scheyer 2024; Achilleos-Sarll et al. 2022; Ansorg, Haastrup, and Wright 2021) among others. With them, I take up a strategically sceptical approach to the research of FFP, cognisant to the importance of the idea, sceptical about how it has been realised to date but hopeful that it can be expanded in scope and meaning through postcolonial feminist approaches. In terms of the field of Indian foreign policy, while works on its postcolonial identity have been done before (Miller 2019; Chacko 2013; Chiriyankandath 2004; Cohen 2004; Bajpai 2003), and feminist work on its foreign policy does exist (Rathore 2024; Tamang 2024; Parashar 2009; 2016; 2018; Basu 2016; Khullar 2024; Chakraborty 2017),

this thesis is the first of its kind to further a postcolonial feminist analysis of India's UNSC policy.

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