

# Gender as a category of Colombian Foreign Policy Analysis<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

The article provides a gender approximation to foreign policy analysis using Colombia as a case study. It examines if women decision-makers think differently from men in regards to foreign policy, so as to evidence if there is a *female-way* of foreign policy making. Explicitly, the study hopes to lend some insight into the empirical consequences of gender in FPA, so as to present alternative theoretical tools for International Relations research making. Thus, by inquiring how gender shapes how diplomats perceive foreign policy, the study expounds its empirical findings into the feminist theoretical debates.

**Keywords:** Foreign Policy Analysis – feminism – gender – Colombia

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is the result of the WomanStats project in Colombia which is currently located at Sergio Arboleda University.

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## Resumen

El artículo propone una perspectiva de género para el análisis de la política exterior colombiana. En particular, examina si las mujeres que forman parte del cuerpo diplomático perciben diferente que los hombres temas de política exterior. Así, busca evidenciar si existe una *forma femenina* de hacer política exterior. A partir del estudio de caso, se analizan las perspectivas feministas metodológicas y analíticas para la investigación de la política exterior. En suma, al indagar cómo el género influye en la toma de decisiones de política exterior, el estudio contrasta los hallazgos empíricos con los debates teóricos feministas.

**Palabras clave:** Política exterior – feminismo – género – Colombia

## Introduction

A major feminist inquiry supported by Tickner states: “Apart from the occasional head of state, there is little evidence to suggest that women have played much of a role in shaping foreign policy in any country in the twentieth century” (1992: 1). It is from this reality that feminists proposals to overcome women’s exclusion from the arenas foreign policy decision making originate. By placing gender at the heart of the discussion, feminist research in international relations seeks to comprehend how women and men’s perceptions and preferences shape the foreign policy.

The present study aims to explicate how Foreign Policy Analysis (from now on FPA) may be an easier route for the formulation of gender theoretical discussions of International Relations (from now on IR). The paper assesses Colombia’s foreign policy from a gender perspective. It examines if women decision-makers think differently from men in regards to foreign policy, so as to evidence if there is a *female-way* of foreign policy making. Explicitly, the study hopes to lend some insight into the empirical consequences of gender in FPA, so as to provide alternative theoretical tools for IR research making. Thus, by inquiring how gender shapes how Colombian diplomats perceive foreign policy, the study expounds its empirical findings into the feminist theoretical debates.

The study was developed according to a three-phase methodology. Firstly, it provides an overview of some of the seminal works in regards to gender and International Relations. Secondly, it explores the intersection between gender, sex, and foreign policy, so as to explicate how gender is tethered to the national character of a country. In this section, it takes into consideration actor-specific theory models, which open the door for proposals that situate

gender as a key input of FPA (Snyder, Bruck, Hudson & Burton, 2002).<sup>2</sup> Lastly, the application of a gender lens is used to inspect Colombia's foreign policy. Here, it discloses the results of the case study, so as to discuss if men and women's perceptions shape Colombian foreign policy.<sup>3</sup>

## **1. Preliminary Discussion: International Politics vs. Foreign Policy**

### *Where Are the Women?*

The field of study of International Politics has traditionally disregarded issues of gender. Based on the conception of international politics as a masculine issue (Tickner, 1992), it has ignored women's role in foreign policy making. Hence, in the predominant theories of International Politics, gender does not constitute a relevant variable for the theoretical elucidations of international phenomena.

If one seeks to provide a gender approach to foreign policy, one must first be aware of the differences between International Politics and Foreign Policy Analysis.<sup>4</sup> This is because their distinction in meaning provides a more comprehensive understanding of where feminists' perspectives in International Relations stand. Particularly, it facilitates to apprehend how a feminist proposal to Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) can take into account the role women play in shaping foreign policy.

Both International Politics and Foreign Policy aim for the same objective, that is, to understand why, how, and for which purpose do States behave

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<sup>2</sup> The outputs are regularly analyzed throughout actor-general, systemic level of analysis, among others. The combination of the two, outputs and inputs, will provide a more accurate foreign policy analysis.

<sup>3</sup> As Harold and Margaret Sprout stated in 1965, "Instead of drawing conclusions regarding an individual's probable motivation and purposes (...) on the basis of assumptions as to the way people are likely on the average to behave in a given social context, the cognitive behavioralist (...) undertakes to find out as precisely as possible how specific persons actually did perceive and respond in particular contingencies." (cited by HUDSON, 2008: 15). Hence, one has to direct the main issues to a case study where humans interact in foreign policy making.

<sup>4</sup> The literature review on women and foreign policy we present in this paper, was based on the search for feminist studies on the role and gendered perceptions of women in foreign policy, nevertheless, most authors do not differentiate foreign policy from International Politics or foreign affairs. This is the main reason why we chose to establish these differences in order to proceed with this research.

the way they do. The main difference, however, is that International Politics, as conceptualized by Kenneth Waltz's (1979), focuses on the systemic level of analysis, while FPA includes systemic, domestic, and individual levels. As J. Ann Tickner stated: "Waltz asserts that it is not possible to understand states' behavior simply by looking at each individual unit; one must look at the structure as a whole and see how each state's capabilities stand in relation to others'" (1992: 35).

From Waltz's neorealist perspective, the study of International Politics focuses on the systemic forces, so as to "locate the causes of war and define the conditions of peace" (Waltz 1979; 2010: 18). Furthermore, it sees the State as a unitary, rational, and masculine actor, which behaves according to a self-help, autonomy, and power seeking logic (Tickner, 1992). By positing a materialist prism of the world, Waltz's notion of International Politics stresses on the importance of external constraints rather than on unit-level explanations: "States are unitary actors with a single motive - the wish to survive (...) The theory explains why States similarly placed behave similarly despite their internal differences" (Waltz, 1996: 54). This makes the conceptions of the international system particularly materialistic, power-centered, and unemotional (Tickner, 1992), which also gives the study of IR some traditional masculine traits.

Differently from Waltz systemic reasoning, FPA is a multilevel-multivariable research scheme (Hudson, 2007). It implies a holistic approximation to human decision-making, which takes into account preferences, motivations, structural constraints, social constructions, and perceptions. In stark contrast to the neorealist vision of International Politics, by focusing on human agency, FPA constructs an alternative ontology and epistemology to the study of foreign policy (Scott, 2002). It views the world as a construction of ideas and practices that shape state preferences and interests. Basically, it seeks to comprehend how policy decision-making materializes as a result of human action, both of men as well as of women (Hudson, 2007). Thus, Foreign Policy Analysis refers to the subfield of International Relations that seeks to explain foreign policy, or, alternatively, foreign policy behavior, by paving a theoretical ground that pays particular attention to human decision-making (Hudson, 2008; Locher & Prugl, 2001).

Taking this into account, FPA is a type of actor-specific theory. As stated by Hudson,

Actor-specific theory is a theory that explains the behavior of specific actors [...] given its nature, actor-specific theory allows for richer

explanation and even prediction of the foreign policy behavior of particular entities than does actor-general theory (2008: 8).

In other words, by taking into account cognitive processes, leader personality and orientation, small group dynamics, among other levels of analysis, actor-specific theory reshapes the ontology and epistemology of IR. It steps away from unitary visions of the State and from the materialistic conceptions of the system; and it formulates an understanding of FPA that goes beyond the idealist-materialist and agent-structure debates (Freeman, 2001).

For FPA scholars, decision-makers are those who are responsible for foreign policy, acting in the name of the State (Snyder, Bruck, Hudson & Burton, 2002; Tickner, 2003). Therefore, international theorists must inquire about those who are acting in the name of the State, as well as about the interest groups that influence foreign policy decisions. A feminist proposal to FPA takes into account how gender affects human choices (Young, 2003). Moreover, just as FPA reflects a multi-method research proposal to analyze foreign policy behavior, feminism in IR includes “various disciplines and intellectual traditions” (Tickner, 2014) i.e. how gender affects foreign policy decision-making.

#### *a. Feminist inquiries on Foreign Policy*

Sex refers to both physical and biological differences between human beings, this being, a man and a woman. In other words, it is a biological criteria for the classification of persons as males and females. Gender refers to socially constructed differences between what is considered feminine and masculine. As recognized by Candace West and Don H. Zimmerman, it “is the activity of meaning situated conduct in light of normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for one’s sex category” (Zimmerman & West, 1987: 127). These socially constructed conceptions perpetuate specific social behaviors that emerge from imagined and perceived notions of a determined but not necessarily existent reality. Both characteristics are used by feminist theorists to explicate why countries behave the way they do. More precisely, feminist methodologies to FPA try to apprehend how sex and biology interact with socially constructed realities, so as to evaluate the impact of gender in foreign policy.

#### *b. Feminist inquiry of the relation sex – physical traits and foreign policy*

An array of feminist scholars has investigated how maternity may impact foreign policy-making. The fact that women are able to procreate—that is

women's "reproductive potential" (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2013)—provides one initial sexual distinction that originates certain socially constructed structures. As expressed by Ruddick (1989), birth giving entails maternal thinking, which constitutes a practice that gives particular weight to nurturing, feeding, respecting, and taking care of those who are in need of protection. Moreover, it also focuses on the preservation of life, so as "to foster a domestic environment conducive to these goals, tranquility must be preserved by avoiding conflict where possible" (Tickner, 2014: 14; See also: Eschle, 2005). Hence, maternity becomes a practice that not only concerns women but also includes all human beings that are devoted to take care and respond to children's needs and demands. Namely, maternity thinking encompasses all individuals that incorporate caring and nurturing as a fundamental objective in their lives (Ruddick, 1989).<sup>5</sup>

In addition to maternal thinking, another powerful explanation to how gender differences might affect foreign policy making arises from attachment theory (Bowlby, 1988). This proposal considers how early patterns of attachment may explain why humans develop behaviors of dependency, such as looking for someone to provide support, protection, and care (Fraley, 2010). This theory, first developed by John Bowlby, states that parenting is "pre-programmed" by means of "strong biological roots" (Bowlby, 1988). Consequently, women usually exhibit certain behaviors of protection and nurturing that are related to the responsibilities of motherhood. Thus, one could explore how parenting and motherhood can actually shape someone's behavior and transcend into other social practices.

The second relevant sexual insight to FPA could be categorized as those that are visually evident. These involve a combination of "anatomical, endocrinal, and chromosomal features" (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2013: 2) that differentiate women and men. Despite some physical similarities, women are biologically different from men. In Hudson's words, "men and women do not have to be the same to be equal" (Hudson *et al.*, 2012: 7). Thus, visually evident differences are essential to comprehend gender constructions that mark social interactions and to explore how differences between men and women might have powerful effects on foreign policy making.

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<sup>5</sup> This is to say that men may think maternally as well and that not all women do. Maternity is associated with feminine. This, nevertheless, does not impede that men fulfill certain functions which concern maternity.

Some behavioral theorists have explored how physiological characteristics impact foreign policymaking processes. For example, if testosterone leads men to be more aggressive and how left-brain dominance might lend them to be more rational (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2013). As Enloe elucidates: “men are men, and men are seen almost inherently prone to violence; so violence is bound to come about if men are allowed to dominate international politics” (Enloe, 1989: 5). If men are believed to be more aggressive, the question that arises is how does the belief that women are weak and/or emotional play a key role in their exclusion from policy-making decisions. This will be discussed further on.

Sexual characteristics do not necessarily indicate that the roles and perceptions of a man or a woman are completely biologically determined. There are many cases of men that, though strong and manly, feel feminine, or of beautiful and delicate looking women that feel masculine. This goes beyond discussion of sexuality and comes into the realm of socially constructed criteria that generate certain roles in which men and women are expected to fit in. Under this conception, masculine and feminine become synonymous to men and women. This binary logic, however, hinders a more comprehensive understanding of human behavior (Scott, 2002). Hence, gender emanates as a key analytical category that helps explicate social constructions that attribute certain traits to a particular sex; and, at the same time, it helps clarify how gender stereotypes are socially created and replicated.

A feminist proposal goes beyond a mere description of gender roles. It unveils how these have served as a way of continually excluding women from the public sphere. Particularly, by incorporating a feminist view to FPA, the following pages hope to analyze how women are often precluded from becoming part of State’s action in the international arena. It is from these theoretical underpinnings that debate about the relation between gender and FPA is elaborated.

### *c. Feminist inquiry of gender in foreign policy*

According to Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2013), gender is something we do and perform: gender is action. On the other hand, Valerie Hudson defines gender as an adjective in reference to what she calls “gender beliefs” or beliefs held within a society about the relationship between genders and sexes (Hudson, Ballif-Spanvill, Caprioli & Emmet, 2012). Subsequently, for Hudson, one cannot write about gender without referring to sex because the former is dependent from the latter. So, when discussing gender and foreign policy, one must refer to social and *sexed* constructed differences.

Why is gender relevant to foreign policy analysis? A plain answer might be that gender plays a key role in the beliefs, practices, and accepted knowledge of foreign policy. In order to explicate this response more completely, however, a more detailed examination of the meaning of gender and FPA is required.

Gender usually replicates stereotypes. According to Mary Caprioli, “there are no inherent differences based on gender, as both males and females are forced into stereotypical roles” (Caprioli, 2000: 52). Thus, one must seek definitions and categorizations of gender that allow foreign policy students and practitioners to interpret and later deconstruct gender roles. These gendered stereotypes or adjectives (Hudson, Ballif-Spanvill, Caprioli & Emmet, 2012) offer evidence that women possess certain features such as cooperativeness, compassion, tenderness, and kindness, while men are seen to reflect traits such as aggressiveness, strength, authority and power (Koch & Fulton, 2011).

Socially constructed gender stereotypes have also influenced conceptions of politics and, in particular, of the international order. For example, according to Koch and Fulton, in the political arena “women are viewed as more politically liberal, and are perceived as being more competent on compassion issues such as education, programs for the poor, healthcare and the environment” (2011: 8). And, as highlighted by feminist IR scholars, whereas “strength, power, autonomy, independence and rationality are typically associated with men and masculinity”, and, hence, placed as attributes of the State, women’s involvement in foreign policy are depicted as “naïve, weak and even unpatriotic” (Tickner, 1992: 3). All of the above hypothesize a direct impact on foreign policy.

Because of the strength of the socially constructed stereotypes of masculinity and femininity, in the absence of a proper deconstructive process, individuals tend to accept and prolong these social practices. If gender represents an idea that is constructed throughout historical and social interactions between human beings (Bermúdez, Londoño & Tickner, 1999), it requires human agency to reshape social interactions that segregate women from the public sphere. In Eckert’s words: “The making of a man or a woman is a never-ending process that begins before birth – from the moment someone begins to wonder if the pending child will be a boy or a girl” (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2013: 7). The result is that the child will have a differential treatment if it is a boy or a girl; and this will imply that society itself will designate some specific tasks or chores that have the label of “man” or “woman”.

In recent years, women are moving into “men’s jobs” and vice versa. This phenomenon is gradually reshaping traditional conceptions of gender (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2013). Nonetheless, social practices that



propose a masculine vision of foreign policy continue to exist. These collective stereotypes construct a “hierarchical and unequal relation between men and women” (Tickner, 2005: 7) and contribute to maintaining women’s exclusion from foreign policy decision-making (Tickner, 1992). If foreign policy has traditionally been imagined as a masculine sphere, one might ask, nevertheless, what ramifications might this have?

#### *d. Women and Foreign Policy*

The two most influential books on women and foreign policy are Cynthia Enloe’s 1989 *Bananas Beaches and Bases* and J. Ann Tickner’s 1992 work on *Gender in International Relations*. They both claim that women have historically been excluded from the foreign policy sphere due to the fact that this public arena deals with traditional security issues such as war. Since it is envisioned as an unemotional, power-based, materialistic act which demands manliness (Tickner, 1992), war is seen as a sphere of influence that must be controlled by men.

If foreign policy is for men, what role do women play? According to Eckert, “[m]ales in most cultures have more access to positions of public power and influence than females” (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2013: 25). Taking this into account, Enloe evidences how “[w]omen’s roles in creating and sustaining international politics have been treated as if they were ‘natural’ and thus not worthy of investigation” (Enloe, 1989: 4). Based on these masculine conceptions of the world, women were excluded from government’s policy-making. Succinctly put, the authors describe foreign policy was “men’s club” ruled by a political male elite: “only men, not women or children, have been imagined capable of the sort of public decisiveness international politics is presumed to require” (Enloe, 1989: 4). Thus, women were continually segregated from decision-making because their apparent weakness was “considered a danger when issues of national security” (Tickner, 1992; p. 3). This fact, nevertheless, must not lead one to conclude that gender does not matter in FPA.

According to the above, foreign policy has traditionally coped with the “relevant” masculine-perceived issues belonging to the top, that is, the difference between “high and low” politics. A high politic foreign policy agenda includes strategic, military, and political issues, mainly focused on preserving National Security (Lorcher & Prugl, 2001). Low politic foreign policy agenda, on the other hand, includes economic, social, and cultural issues (Bermúdez, Londoño & Tickner, 1999). These have been labeled as “soft” foreign policy issues, because from a materialist conception they tend to lack military relevance.

When discussing the foreign policy sphere, we must first picture a division of labor that has gradually changed along with the reconceptualization of security: “When women enter politics, particularly in areas of foreign policy, they enter an already constructed masculine world where role expectations are defined in terms of adherence to preferred masculine attributes such as rationality, autonomy and power” (Tickner, 2005: 17). As has been evidenced, initially, men were designated to act in the name of the State. Under this conception, men were seen as “bellicose” while women were perceived as “passive” in foreign policy (Caprioli, 2000). This realist/masculine approach of IR and foreign policy is being challenged today, so as to establish a newly broadened concept of foreign policy. The shifting paradigm brings gender into the theoretical debates and questions the monopoly of foreign policy decision-making by men.

*e. Women in Foreign Policy: is there a Female Way?*

Women in power have demonstrated a change in the traditional policy-making processes. For instance, in Latin America, Teresa Valdés (2010) has shown how Bachelet preferred working with a significant number of women, provoking men to feel strange and “feminized”. According to the author, once in office, Bachelet increased the number of women working in governmental positions, 10 men and 10 women as Ministers, demonstrating that parity could be possible, as well as challenging gender stereotypes that limited women’s participation. Her policies were socially oriented and implemented a gendered approach as a transversal feature of her administration, including social justice and antidiscrimination strategies (Valdés, 2010). In sum, Bachelet’s government is a great example of a *female-way* when it comes to decision making because women in fact have benefited from her being in charge of decision-making.

On the other hand, some studies also explicate personality as a trait that may determine, at least up to some point, the way a particular leader organize the national agenda. As stated by Alexander George,

Thus, the political behavior of the executive power will also be configured from a variety of cognitive beliefs (ideology, worldview, beliefs about appropriate policy strategies and tactics) that you purchased during the course of their education, personal development and socialization in political affairs (George, 1991: 18).

Furthermore, De Rivera (1968) refers to personality and decision making processes in one of his key works. The author states:

The objective situation will influence the decisions of any man, but his personal view of national interest and personal interests also shape the

decision [...] therefore, we must insist that the character of official decision makers is always an important determinant of decisions and, therefore, the policies of the nation (De Rivera, 1968: 165).

In summary, the IR literature on the impact of women in foreign policy suggests that they tend to be more peaceful in the sense that they are less likely than men to agree on the use of international violence. And, for this reason, “the inclusion of women as equal members of society, with equal political, social and economic access, would impact foreign policy” (Caprioli, 2000: 53-54). Accordingly, “the higher a state’s level of gender equality, the more peaceful that state is likely to be” (Caprioli, 2000: 54). Koch and Fulton (2011) have reaffirmed this conclusion. They indicated that women are less likely than men to support the use of force to solve international problems.

An important contribution to the literature on women and foreign policy may be found in *Sex and World Peace* (2012), where Caprioli, along with Valerie Hudson, Bonnie-Ballif-Spanvill, and Chad Emmet, develop the “women and peace theory”. This theory explicates the relation between gender equality and state’s peacefulness. Thus, it proposes two main premises: 1) “foreign policy aimed at creating peace should focus on improving the status of women”; and 2) “those states that foster gender equality through laws and enforce those laws are less likely to go to war” (Hudson, Ballif-Spanvill, Caprioli & Emmet, 2012: 3).<sup>6</sup>

From these feminist theoretical approximations, empowering women in the foreign policy sphere would help create more inclusive peaceful foreign policies: “studies show that the more women in government, the greater the attention given to social welfare, legal protection, and transparency in government and business” (Hudson, Ballif-Spanvill, Caprioli & Emmet., 2012). This conceptualization, however, amplifies the realm of FPA into social structures that go beyond the military arena. Hence, “[g]enuine security requires not only the absence of war but also the elimination of unjust social relations, including unequal gender relations” (Tickner, 1992: 128).

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<sup>6</sup> It is worth noting that the WomanStats Project (Project s.f.) seeks to explore the relationship between the situation of women and security of states through a compilation of information (data and scales) on different type of practices, legal status, democracy, wealth, among other essential information relevant to the security of women around the world. In addition to women’s leadership and participation in foreign policy, the WomanStats Project advocates for women’s empowerment and safety, not only understood as women’s right to be free from physical violence, but as a political, economic and social because the security of women does impact the security of States.

How has the feminist theoretical proposal transcended into foreign policy decision-making? Gayle Tzemach Lemmon, from the Council on Foreign Affairs, for example, has incorporated the feminist proposal to FPA. She believes that empowering women is vital not only for the well being of their own families and communities but also for international development. This is a powerful reason why states should invest in women (Lemmon, 2013). Likewise, Liz Elfman has exhibited women's tendency to display interest in the "soft power regions of policy", that is a focus on economic and cultural influence over war (Elfman, 2011).

Taking into account the theoretical discussion posited in this section and keeping in mind the lack of feminist empirical analysis in the global south, we now scrutinize Colombia's foreign policy from a gender perspective. Specifically, the case study explores if gender plays a crucial role when making a foreign policy decision and if the theoretical premises offered survive empirical testing.

## **2. Gender and Colombian Foreign Policy**

Before analyzing Colombia's foreign policy, one must highlight some of the voids that exist in the country's IR research agenda and the relevance of the case study. According to Martha Ardila,

There is minor information of the Colombian foreign policy-making process. It seems that those academics that at some point have participated in the process would deny themselves to speak of it. The existence of a presidential and personalized diplomacy, furthermore, improvisation, lack of coordination, limited and biased knowledge when taking decisions, are some of the elements that contribute to the refusal to really analyze Colombian foreign policy (Ardila, 2008: 13).

Also, as Leonardo Carvajal explains, there is a "divorce between theory and politological practice" in Colombia, that is to say, "there are few theoretical and analytical research on Colombian foreign policy and in general, in IR" (Carvajal, 2008). The lack of empirical studies gives relevance to the current research proposal.

The importance of studying Colombia's reality also emanates from the institutional mutations that have taken place in the country in the past decade. In order to remedy women's unequal participation in public administration, in 2000, the government passed the Law 581. This law promoted women's participation in decision-making bodies. Accordingly, there has been a gradual incorporation of women into the public

administration, which provides a unique opportunity to analyze how gender has affected foreign policy making.

### 3. Survey on Gender and Colombian Foreign Policy

In order to examine the perceptions of both men and women that belong to the diplomatic career in the Colombian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the case study employs both quantitative and qualitative methods. This resulted to be a difficult task due to the fact that these women and men are not allowed to express certain opinions related to specific issues.

Despite the difficulties, 68 men and women working directly in foreign affairs policy-making responded to the survey. The survey adopted a snowball sampling. It was directed to public servants that work in Colombia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The questions were designed according to the theoretical premises presented in the previews sections. In other words, the purpose was to examine if women reflect a more pacific attitude towards foreign policy than men; and if so, demonstrate that women are in fact more pacific because they are less likely to support the use of violence compared to men (Caprioli, 2000; Hudson, Ballif-Spanvill, Caprioli & Emmet, 2012; Enloe, 1989). Hence, the survey took into account research findings that propose that women possess certain natural traits (gender as an adjective), such as cooperativeness, compassion, tenderness, whereas men tend to be more aggressive and authoritative (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2013; Koch & Fulton, 2011). Also, the survey sought to examine if women privileged "low" agenda politics, including economic, social, and cultural ones (Bermúdez et. al., 1999), i.e. if women were more inclined towards "soft" issues while men towards "hard" ones (Elfman, 2011).

Sample characteristics were as follows:

Place	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bogotá-Colombia <sup>7</sup>
Sample	34 women 34 men
Total sample	68 diplomats (diplomatic career)
Method	Personal anonymous survey application
Survey	Multiple choice

<sup>7</sup> Disclaimer: The information and results contained in this survey, and presented in this research, are those of the people surveyed and do not necessarily reflect the views, opinions and position of the Colombian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

#### 4. Sample composition

Before examining the results, it is important to ask: are Colombian women disempowered regarding foreign policy?

Surprisingly, there are more women than men in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 679 women and 576 men (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, 2013). This number represents a combination of diplomats (diplomatic career), contractors (are not considered diplomats), which perform specific tasks due to an insufficient number of diplomats. Also, they are called “political nominees” who work in Foreign Service but do not belong to the diplomatic career. Nevertheless, women exceed men in number.

What role do women play within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs? Talking about Foreign Service and women’s leadership, Colombian women are underrepresented when analyzing the number of Colombian ambassadors abroad. For instance, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in 2013, there was a total of 55 Colombian Embassies around the world. In 39 of them, men were ambassadors, whereas the number of women ambassadors was 16. In 2015, the number of Colombian Embassies raised to 58. The number of female ambassadors, nonetheless, diminished to 13, while the total number of male ambassadors rose to 45. Furthermore, in 2013, of the 37 *Ad-Honorem* Colombian Consuls 29 were men, while 8 were women. Although the number of *Ad-Honorem* Consul positions remained constant for 2015, the number of women was brought down to 4 (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, 2015). Thus, notwithstanding the fact that a woman, María Ángela Holguín, heads Colombia’s Foreign Affairs Ministry, during her functions, the number of women has not increased. Contrarily, women are holding less ambassador and *Ad-Honorem* Consuls positions than before.

The underrepresentation of women in the diplomatic sphere is a sign of masculinism, in the sense that it reproduces “male privilege and power in the gender order” (Hooper, 2001: 4). Male dominance, in turn, engenders a masculine identity, which naturalizes the maleness of foreign policy service. Basically, the unbalanced representation of males and females intensifies masculinity’s hegemony. It creates a “homosexual reproduction”. This term, which was originally coined by Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1977), describes how certain filtering personnel approaches foment male numerical prevalence in different spheres. Within Colombia’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, this means that the probability of a woman attaining decision-making positions is reduced due to the fact that these are considered ‘male areas of influence’. Appropriating Elisabeth Prügl findings in Europe, “labor force statistics paint a picture of masculine domination based on pronounced gendered division of labor” (Prügl, 2010: 458). In sum, women’s underrepresentation in

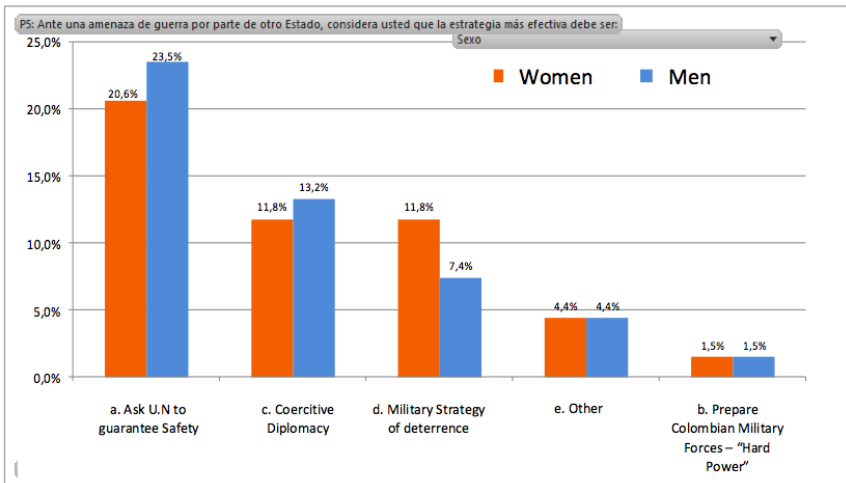
decision-making roles is not only a consequence of masculinity's hegemony, but it also serves as a way of maintaining the maleness of public foreign service.

## 5. Results

We now turn to whether the respondents held different attitudes with regards to foreign policy. As will be evidenced, one can observe that women and men demonstrate a similar attitude towards the role of women in Colombian foreign policy. Nevertheless, if one analyzes the different dimensions of women and men participation in detail, one can find slight differences between men and women's perception toward the role women should occupy in foreign policy making.

The first question asked to the respondents was to identify the most efficient strategy when faced with an external national security threat.

**Figure 1:** "Q1: The most efficient strategy when encountering an external threat should be":



**Source:** Author's own elaboration based on the "Gender and Colombian foreign policy" survey.

Both men and women preferred the first option, deciding to ask the U.N. to guarantee the safety of the State. On the other hand, only 1 % of both men and women favored a hard power strategy. In general, both men and women

demonstrated a pacific attitude, giving particular importance to negotiation strategies and trusting international law and institutions for the preservation of international peace. When reading through the data, the similarity in the respondents also jumps to sight. Both female and male respondents seem to share certain preferences in regards to strategic options.

Taking into account Colombia's political reality, the second question asked is quite relevant. Here, respondents were asked if they approved a foreign policy strategy that negotiates with terrorist groups.

**Table 1:** "Q2: Are you in favor or against negotiating with groups considered terrorists?"

Are you in favor of negotiating with groups considered terrorists?	Female	Male	Total general
a. In favor	29 %	22 %	51 %
b. Against	21 %	28 %	49 %
<b>Total general</b>	<b>50 %</b>	<b>50 %</b>	<b>100 %</b>

**Source:** Author's own elaboration based on the "Gender and Colombian foreign policy" survey.

More women favor negotiating with terrorists than men. Nevertheless, the results represent only a slight difference in perceptions. In general, half the diplomats surveyed are in favor and half against negotiating with terrorists.

The third question focused specifically on the use of force in Colombian foreign policy.

**Table 2:** "Q3: Are you in favor or against the use of force when facing an external threat?"

Are you in favor of against the use of force when facing an external threat?	Female	Male	Total general
a. In favor	24 %	25 %	49 %
b. Against	26 %	25 %	51 %
<b>Total general</b>	<b>50 %</b>	<b>50 %</b>	<b>100 %</b>

**Source:** Author's own elaboration based on the "Gender and Colombian foreign policy" survey.

Half of the diplomats surveyed agree and half disagree with the use of force if facing an external threat. Once again, there are no considerable differences between men and women's perception on the use of force.



A fourth question asked the respondents if they supported an increased spending on advanced military weaponry.

**Table 3:** “Q4: Do you agree or disagree with supporting the development of new military technology?”

<b>Do you agree or disagree with supporting the development of new military technology?</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Total general</b>
a. Agree	38 %	34 %	72 %
b. Disagree	12 %	16 %	28 %
Total general	<b>50 %</b>	<b>50 %</b>	<b>100 %</b>

**Source:** Author’s own elaboration based on the “Gender and Colombian foreign policy” survey.

As seen in Table 3, 72 % of the diplomats surveyed support the development of new military technology. That is, they are aware of the importance of a deterrence strategy.

How do our respondents feel about greater inclusivity for women in foreign policy decision-making? The fifth question asked respondents for their views on including more women in the military.

**Table 4:** “Q5: Do you agree or disagree with including more women in the military?”

<b>Do you agree or disagree with including more women in the military?</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Total general</b>
a. Agree	15 %	28 %	43 %
b. Disagree	35 %	22 %	57 %
Total general	<b>50 %</b>	<b>50 %</b>	<b>100 %</b>

**Source:** Author’s own elaboration based on the “Gender and Colombian foreign policy” survey.

The results show that women tend to disapprove a higher inclusion of women in the military.

Though the UNSCR 1325 committed the nations of the world, including Colombia, to involve more women in peace negotiations, President Santos had not included women in the peace process. Only after various social demands, two women were included in the peace process. This led us to research how our respondents feel about greater inclusion.

**Table 5:** Q6: Do you agree or disagree with including more women in the peace negotiating process?

Do you agree or disagree with including more women in the peace negotiating process?	Female	Male	Total general
a. Agree	50 %	49 %	99 %
b. Disagree	0 %	1 %	1 %
Total general	<b>50 %</b>	<b>50 %</b>	<b>100 %</b>

**Source:** Author’s own elaboration based on the “Gender and Colombian foreign policy” survey. Rounded numbers were used in Table 5.

A nearly unanimous 99 % of the diplomats surveyed agree with including more women in the peace process.

As noted previously, feminist theory suggests that women and men might have different priorities not only for their own lives, but also for their nation. Accordingly, we asked our respondents to list and rank the five most important foreign policy issues facing Colombia today.

**Table 6:** “Q7: Organize the following foreign policy issues in the order of importance according to your own opinion. 5 stands for “low priority” and 1 for “high priority”

FEMALE		MALE	
PRIORITY	FP ISSUE	PRIORITY	FP ISSUE
1	Social Policy	1	Economics
2	Economics	2	Social policy
3	Security	3	Security
4	Environment	4	Environment
5	Culture	5	Culture

**Source:** Author’s own elaboration based on the “Gender and Colombian foreign policy” survey.

Women consider social policy the most important issue in foreign policy-making. Men however, showed a similar perception. Whereas economics was the one with most priority, the order was not altered for the other issues asked. The similarity between female and male respondents must be underscored. In regards to culture, environment, and security, both genders placed these issues at the same priority level.

Moreover, the survey offered the opportunity to ask men and women in the foreign policy establishment whether they felt women or men were more influential in the policy process.

**Table 7: “Q8: Who do you consider to have been more influential on Colombian foreign policy-making process 2010-2014, women or men?”**

Question 8	Female	Male	Total general
b. Women	22 %	29 %	51 %
c. No difference	26 %	18 %	44 %
a. Men	1 %	3 %	4 %
Total general	50 %	50 %	100 %

**Source:** Author’s own elaboration based on the “Gender and Colombian foreign policy” survey.

Interestingly, there is a slight plurality among men holding the attitude that women are more influential. One possible explanation might be that both women and men have this perception due to the fact that first, since women overexceed men in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, they will probably notice a higher female representation therefore participation; and, second, they take into account the fact that the Minister of Foreign Affairs is a woman, María Angela Holguín. Despite that the head of the Ministry is a woman, President Santos is still in charge of the formulation and implementation of foreign policy, although as shown above, his policies belong to a more equal and integrated agenda.

Our last question asked whether our respondents felt that women’s efforts in the foreign policy realm were given appropriate value.

**Table 8: “Q9: Do you consider women’s work in International Affairs is:”**

Question 9	Female	Male	Total general
a. Underestimated	31 %	28 %	59 %
c. Correctly estimated	10 %	10 %	21 %
b. Overestimated	9 %	12 %	21 %
Total general	50 %	50 %	100 %

**Source:** Author’s own elaboration based on the “Gender and Colombian foreign policy” survey.

Despite a perception of a high representation and participation of women in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it is evident that the diplomats surveyed feel that there is still an “influence gap” between men and women in Colombia. Once again, however, the similarity of the answers given by male and female respondents appears. There is only a slight difference between women and men’s perception in regards to women’s participation in international affairs. It would be very interesting, as a further investigation, to apply this same method in other Colombian cabinets such as Ministries, including the Ministry of Defense, also public and private sectors.

## 6. Result analysis

The results show that women in Colombian foreign policy *do not* seem to think differently from men, nor perceive foreign policy issues from a different perspective that may demonstrate women’s maternal trait, cooperativeness, social traits or peacefulness. Nevertheless, although at first sight the findings seem to invalidate some of the main theoretical approximations discussed in the first section, a closer analysis is required. Brooke Ackerly, Maria Stern, and Jacqui True state, “Feminism is not about studying women and gender exclusively. Just as states, conflict, institutions, security, and globalization cannot be studied without analyzing gender, gender cannot be studied without analyzing these subjects and concepts” (2006: 4). In this way, the explication of the result must not be reduced to evidencing the similarities and difference between male and female respondents. It must also explore the gender identities that characterize international relations.

Feminist scholars have recurrently unveiled the hegemonic masculine attributes of the international sphere. As recognized by Charlotte Hooper, “international relations is a world of traditionally masculine pursuits – in which women have been, and by and large continue to be, invisible” (Hooper, 2001: 12). Consequently, one must keep in mind the gender order of the foreign policy service. By comprehending the gender environment, the examination of the data can be more precise.

One possible explanation from a foreign policy analysis perspective has to do with the organizational model and bureaucratic politics. As Hudson explained,

“Researches began to study the influence of organization process and bureaucratic politics on foreign policy decision-making. Organizations

and bureaucracies put their own survival at the top of their list of priorities; often they will seek to increase their relative strength. It was found that the ulterior objectives of foreign policy decision «players» influenced their decision-making” (Hudson, 2008).

The organization will influence individual behavior by defining a sequence of activities from a top-down structure that will impact beliefs and perceptions, indirectly imposing identity and organizational culture (Snyder, Bruck, Hudson & Burton, 2002; Lorcher & Prugl, 2001). On the other hand, from a bureaucratic politics perspective, only the policymakers that are perceived as more powerful will be the ones that decide and influence foreign policy behavior. Women have a chance to influence foreign policy decision-making if the number of women in foreign policy continues to increase. In the words of Tickner, “In the world of statecraft, no fundamental change in the hierarchy of the sexes is likely to take place until women occupy half, or nearly half, the positions at the levels of foreign and military policy-making” (Tickner, 1992: 141).

A second explanation could be detailed from Terrel Northrup’s statement on women in the military and foreign policy. The author formulates the following question: “As women increasingly populate the inner sanctum of military and foreign policy decision-making, will their presence change the use of military force and the conduct of international affairs, or will they behave as one of the boys?” (Northrup, 1994: 276). Terrel explains how women will on occasions emulate men’s behavior to fit in a previously male-constructed world. Furthermore, Cynthia Enloe, when referring to the exceptional cases of Margaret Thatcher and Jeanne Kirkpatrick in foreign policy, affirms: “it is presumably because she has learned to think like a man” (Enloe, 1989: 197). Hence, the incorporation of masculine traits by women blurs existing differences between men and women when talking about foreign policy (Koch & Fulton, 2011). Only as more women rise in the ranks of real political influence in Colombia might we see a divergence of views along gender lines.

The results of the case study also evidence the strong bureaucratic structures in Colombia’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs. For example, the similar gender results in regards to a deterrent strategy could be a reflection of Colombia’s current policy towards Nicaragua. In 2012, the International Court of Justice ruled over a maritime dispute between Nicaragua and Colombia. Since then, the latter has developed new military technology and is presumably receiving Russian assistance (El Espectador, 2013). This has triggered a strong deterrence strategy from Colombia, increasing the amount of spending in military technology.

Moreover, the fact that most respondents stated that they would negotiate with terrorist organization and placed economic and social issues as a priority of the foreign policy agenda, can also be interpreted as a consequence of the current government's policy. When President Juan Manuel Santos started in office, he immediately changed the previous foreign policy priority given towards security issues during former President Uribe's mandate, shifting to economic issues instead. To exemplify this argument, President Santos in 2011 negotiated a relevant number of Free Trade Agreements. One of his greatest achievements was the ratification of the FTA with the U.S. which former Presidents could not accomplish. Furthermore, President Santos initiated the dialogue with the FARC, drawing away from Uribe's position that rejected the possibility of negotiating with terrorist groups.

## **Conclusion**

In this paper, some of the most relevant works on gender and IR were discussed, in order to explore the linkage between women and foreign policy. The paper reviewed the existing research on how women and men think and behave differently or alike when it comes to foreign policy. Firstly, different feminist proposals that argue that women's involvement may actually contribute to more peaceful and inclusive foreign policies were explicated. Secondly, the research examined their validity by proposing a case study. A survey was elaborated with the objective of analyzing if a group of women and men that work in Colombia's Foreign Service respond differently to certain foreign policy questions. The aim was to contrast the theoretical proposals with actual empirical findings.

Overall, the research challenges the naturalizing visions of gender. Paraphrasing Hooper (2001), masculine and feminine attributes are not immutable. They depend on the circumstances and are subject to struggle and change. Femininity and masculinity are not monolithic structures. They are categories that mutate. Taking this into account, this research delved into the gender order of foreign policy service. Confronted by the similarity in the answers of female and male respondents, the research went beyond a comprehension of gender as a study of women. It reflected upon the masculine biases that have historically characterized international relations. By doing this, it insisted that masculinism has rendered certain spheres with masculine attributes.

According to Cadance West and Don H. Zimmerman, “Doing gender means creating differences between girls and boys and women and men, differences that are not natural, essential, or biological” (1987: 137). When scrutinizing foreign policy decision-making, “doing gender”, frequently, means replicating the hegemonic masculine rationale. It implies performing according to certain expected behaviors and reacting to contingencies in a determinate way. Whether male or female, masculinism’s hold in international relations acts upon the individual. It writes the script that public servants must follow.

The question that remains is how to break away from masculinity’s hegemony in foreign policy-making. The words of Scott Nicholas Romaniuk and Joshua Kenneth Wasylciw provide valuable insight:

Men will need to voice ideas and values that were designated as being feminine in the decision-making rooms, where the discourse has been structured to be masculine. Men will need to voice women’s security concerns. Women will need to be in these rooms as well. It is both sexes, in offering ideas and making statements that are viewed as traditionally feminine, and also those that are seen as masculine, that will denaturalize these social constructions and allow for the elimination of the gender inequalities that at present predominantly threaten the security of women (Romaniuk & Wasylciw, 2010: 36).


In order to rewrite the masculine scripts that characterize Foreign Policy, both men and women need to be taken into account. Excluding males from the equation only replicates dichotomous understandings. For the transformation of the gender order, it is not sufficient to simply add more women to the equation. It actually requires both male and female resistance to the hegemonic masculine identity. Succinctly put, a strategy for the denaturalization of the gendered order of foreign policy-making cannot be built on a counter naturalization strategy. Contrarily, it needs to question essentialist perspectives of the gender order.

Keeping the theoretical discussions in mind, this case study explored the gender identities of Colombia’s Foreign Service. It analyzed the responses of male and female career diplomats, with the purpose of examining if gender plays a role in the way they go about making foreign policy decisions. As J. Ann Tickner has stated,

Feminist IR must also produce research that is useful and accessible to those who work in policy communities and who must convince policy-makers that gender and women matter in all aspects of global policy-

making. Mindful of its roots in social activism, feminism must stay committed to effecting social change that can benefit those marginalized by global politics, both women and men (2014: 185).

By proposing a gender approach to FPA, the study materializes as a way of fomenting feminist theoretical debates in regards to the study of IR. It evidences that future studies must balance women and men's perspectives on foreign policy with other levels of analysis, such as the country's domestic features, history, social composition, culture traits, and foreign policy elite. This goes hand in hand with Valerie Hudson's explanation of foreign policy, as a multilevel and multicausal approach; and it combines J. Ann Tickner's feminist method that proposes a more holistic approximation to State's behavior.

Bringing gender into the spectrum of analysis provides a new dimension for examining Colombia's foreign policy, as one in which women and men interact and decide. Furthermore, it calls for future works that explore how institutional forces constrain women and men's foreign policy decision making. 

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