

Feminist foreign policy as a new approach to peaceful resolutions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia conflicts in Georgia

Gunel Madadli ¹

¹ Jagiellonian University, Doctoral School of Social Sciences, Political and Public Administration Sciences, Krakow, Poland

Abstract

The paper explores the current strategies and peaceful resolution processes as well as the state response to territorial conflicts in Georgia and democracy, the rule of law, and the rights of internally displaced persons (IDPs). Conflicts over the status of Abkhazia and South Ossetia resulted in two full-scale wars in 1991 and 2008, with the demand for secession from Georgia and international recognition of independence. The peace talks negotiated by the different international organizations over decades have not achieved any significant solution to resolve the issue. Therefore, there is a need for a new approach to investigate the benefits of Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP) directions in conflict resolution to look at Georgian territorial conflicts from a different perspective. The purpose of this research is to analyze the potential application of FFP in addressing the conflicts over Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia. By examining FFP's principles and their alignment with Georgia's National Security Concept (NSC) and engagement policy, the study seeks to uncover innovative approaches to conflict resolution that prioritize inclusivity, equality, and gender-sensitive strategies. The analysis illustrates that the Georgian National Security Concept encourages only peaceful solutions to the conflict, and there is a possibility of including the FFP features in the foreign policy strategies of Georgia. The research investigates peace and security matters in the context of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, such as human rights, democracy, and the rule of law in the perceptions of IDPs to answer the questions of the applicability of FFP to the resolution of violent clashes in Georgia.

Article History

Received 28.08.2024

Accepted 01.02.2025

Keywords

Feminist foreign policy;
Georgia; conflict
resolution; Abkhazia;
South Ossetia

Introduction

The preamble of the Constitution of Georgia declares the peaceful co-existence with other nations to ensure universal human rights and freedom (The Constitution of Georgia, 1995). This notion reflects the core principles of the National Security Concept of Georgia (NSC) adopted in 2005 and revised in 2011 to prioritize the internal and external security issues of the country (National Security Concept of Georgia, 2011). Since the Concept explores different areas of security risks and threats, it provides a great opportunity to explore the foreign policy strategies of the country to discover the significant matters and approach towards them. Therefore, in the following paragraphs, the analysis of the NSC has been conducted to identify

Corresponding Author: Gunel Madadli  gunel.madadli@doctoral.uj.edu.pl  Jagiellonian University, Doctoral School of Social Sciences, Political and Public Administration Sciences, Krakow, Poland

the strengths and weaknesses of the document. Even though the NSC considers extensive coverage area, it expands the vulnerability of the state in the case of unrealistic expectations (MacFarlane, 2012).

The federal structure of ethnic regions, such as Abkhazia and South Ossetia, despite being a minority, enjoyed a privileged position in the party and was established to cause territorial disputes in the case of the collapse of the Soviet Union (Buzaladze, 2020). The conflicts over the status of these two regions resulted in two full-scale wars in 1991 and 2008 (Cheterian, 2013), with the demand for secession from Georgia and international recognition of independence (Center for American Progress, 2011). The separatist movements are supported by Russia both militarily and politically, even though both Abkhazia and South Ossetia are internationally recognized as integral parts of Georgia. The peace talks negotiated by the UN, the EU, and the OSCE over decades have failed to resolve the issue (Wolff, 2008). There is a need for a new approach to investigate an alternative option to the traditional foreign policy stance. Hence, the Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP) should be assessed in this context to analyse the benefits of FFP in conflict resolution as well as to look at Georgian territorial conflicts from a theoretical perspective of the FFP.

A Feminist Foreign Policy was initiated by the government of Sweden in 2014 to conduct a systematic gender equality perspective in foreign policy (Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 2014). Sweden, Canada, France, Mexico, Spain, Luxembourg, Germany, and Chile have embraced this phenomenon, while The Netherlands and Belgium are in the process of developing their perspective of FFP (UN Women, 2022a). Although there is no agreed definition of the concept, the trend suggests an alternative approach to promoting gender equality and empowerment of women in external action. According to the Swedish version, four main attributes of the FFP suggest that the features of the policy should consider equal representation, fair distribution of resources, equal rights and opportunities, and a full understanding of how the policy will affect each gender and society (Thompson et al., 2021). The action plan of application of this approach to the foreign policy of Sweden indicates “women’s participation in preventing and resolving conflicts, and post-conflict peacebuilding” as one of six essential objectives. Unlike Sweden, Canada’s policy called the Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP), prioritizes the commitment to development assistance more than disrupting the patriarchal power structures (Thompson et al., 2021). The French version of FFP differs in its accountability mechanism, which measures the progress of the policy, as well as the establishment of the High Council of Gender Equality, which observes the foreign and domestic policymaking and implementation of gender policies. The main characteristic of FFP is its ability to be adopted by each country with different implementation strategies based on the political, social, and cultural conditions of the state and the society.

Feminist Foreign Policy takes its origin from the idea of the different experiences of men and women in conflict and war due to their different roles in society (Adebahr & Mittelhammer, 2020). The consequence of conflict varies between genders as well as their contribution to peacebuilding. While the traditional approach to foreign policy does not include these differences, FFP balances the political analyses by eliminating gender-blind visions and gender inequalities in foreign policy decision-making. Furthermore, FFP expands the concept

of security by not limiting it to the absence of war but rather as “constitutive elements of a positive peace” (Cheung et al., 2021). It means that the gendered approach includes systematic inequalities (rights and representation) as well as unequal distribution of resources (realities and resources), which are also considered security threats. Hence, examining the role of the FFP in the peaceful resolution of the conflicts in Georgia could consider the possibility of application and potential benefits of the approach by considering the needs and demands of Georgia at different levels. There is a need to investigate which pro-gender norms and feminist goals are present, adopted, and practiced in foreign policy to comprehend the whole process of increasing women’s involvement in international relations while analyzing the contributions of the pro-gender equality norms in conflict resolution.

The main research questions are: How does FFP approach conflicts, and is it possible to apply FFP theory to peaceful resolutions of the Abkhazia and South Ossetia conflicts? In order to answer these questions, the claim on whether the pro-equality approach in foreign policy limits the number and moderates the intensity of conflicts in which the state is involved should be discussed. According to Georgia’s engagement policy adopted in 2010, one of the main objectives of Georgian foreign policy is achieving the de-occupation of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region / South Ossetia) with the support of the international community in non-recognition of occupied territories. Furthermore, it encourages interaction among the divided populations of Georgia due to current occupation lines and guarantees that the inhabitants of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region / South Ossetia enjoy the rights and privileges available to every citizen of Georgia (National Security Council, 2010). This approach toward conflict resolution establishes an opportunity for the application of the FFP as a new method for a peace process. Considering equal rights and representation as well as equivalent distribution of the resources among parties, the so-called 4Rs of FFP (rights, representation, resources, and reality), Georgia’s engagement policy could be a great common ground for an initiation of FFP in the South Caucasus.

The purpose of this research is to analyze the potential application of FFP in addressing the conflicts over Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia. By examining FFP’s principles and their alignment with Georgia’s National Security Concept (NSC) and engagement policy, the study seeks to uncover innovative approaches to conflict resolution that prioritize inclusivity, equality, and gender-sensitive strategies. This research contributes to the existing body of literature on conflict resolution by introducing a gendered perspective into a traditionally patriarchal and power-driven domain. It highlights the role of women’s participation and gender equality in fostering sustainable peace, thereby enriching the discourse on foreign policy and international relations. The study is of critical importance as it offers an alternative framework to traditional approaches, which have failed to resolve the long-standing territorial disputes in Georgia. The study aims to analyze the core principles of Feminist Foreign Policy and assess their relevance to the Georgian context, to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of Georgia’s National Security Concept and engagement policy in addressing the Abkhazia and South Ossetia conflicts, and to explore the role of gender-sensitive strategies in promoting conflict resolution and sustainable peace in Georgia. The objective of the study is to investigate how the 4Rs of FFP—rights, representation, resources, and reality—can be integrated into Georgia’s foreign policy to bridge divides and address security challenges.

While Feminist Foreign Policy has been successfully implemented in various countries such as Sweden, Canada, and France, its applicability to post-Soviet conflicts, particularly in

Georgia, remains unexplored. Current literature lacks a comprehensive analysis of how FFP principles could influence the resolution of the Abkhazia and South Ossetia conflicts, particularly in a region characterized by deeply entrenched geopolitical struggles and gender inequalities. This study fills this gap by investigating the theoretical and practical implications of adopting FFP in Georgia's foreign policy framework. The novelty of this research lies in its application of Feminist Foreign Policy principles to a post-Soviet conflict zone, offering a groundbreaking perspective on peacebuilding in Georgia. The study introduces an innovative lens for addressing deeply rooted territorial disputes by bridging the gap between theoretical frameworks and practical applications. This work is important because it challenges traditional conflict resolution strategies and emphasizes the transformative power of gender equality in diplomacy and international relations. This research could significantly influence future academic inquiries and policymaking by encouraging further exploration of gender-sensitive approaches in conflict resolution across different geopolitical contexts, providing a model for integrating FFP into post-Soviet foreign policy frameworks, potentially inspiring similar initiatives in other regions, and highlighting the importance of inclusive representation in peace processes, which may influence future international policy designs and agreements. The broader impact of this study includes advancing the global discourse on the importance of gender equality in foreign policy and conflict resolution. By proposing a practical application of Feminist Foreign Policy in Georgia, it paves the way for more inclusive and equitable international relations. Furthermore, the research underscores the value of women's participation in peacebuilding efforts, which can have long-term implications for societal cohesion, governance, and regional stability. Through its focus on a transformative policy framework, this study not only aims to address Georgia's specific challenges but also contributes to the global movement toward a more just and peaceful world order.

The research data has been mostly collected from primary sources. This study is part of a larger thesis project but only addresses the gendered approach to conflict resolution in Georgia. In order to understand the perspective of the Georgian narrative of the conflict, key informant interviews (KII) have been performed with two independent political analysts, two academic researchers, one representative of state entities, and six IDP women. Additionally, another international gender expert with over 35 years of significant experience in promoting women's human rights and gender equality was interviewed to understand the traditional concept of womanhood and the role of women in Georgian society. The other part of the interviews focused on the academic background of conflict resolution and women's involvement in Georgia where the interviews were carried out with academic researchers from the Caucasus International University and the Georgian Technical University. To comprehend current government policy in occupied territories and attempts to establish a connection between conflict-divided societies, the representatives of the Office of State Minister for Reconciliation and Civic Equality have been interviewed on the latest state integration projects. Finally, additional interviews were carried out with IDP women from Tserovani IDP Settlement to observe their experience and mindset in current negotiations for conflict resolution, as well as their desire to participate in the peace talks. The analysis of specific initiatives by the Government of Georgia intentionally is not included. Since this paper focuses on the characteristics of FFP within the scope of the Georgian National Security Concept, those initiatives will be analyzed separately for discussion in the thesis project.

FFP and Conflict Resolution

FFP theory defends the inclusion of women in many forms, especially in the effort to deal with rising global violent conflicts, which dramatically increased after the end of the Cold War occurring within states, with armed insurgencies, or with civil wars and endangering peace and security of the world. The significance of the theory is to encourage inclusiveness by emphasizing the participation of multiple stakeholders at the negotiating table along with the parties of the conflict. This comprehensive involvement suggests playing more pivotal roles in building peace in every layer of the negotiations by including not only the input of heads of the states and capital cities but also communities at the local level where the communication is weak and could unravel any peace deal (Lindborg, 2017).

There are several studies that have shown that women prioritize relationships over agendas more frequently than men during times of conflict (Steen & Shinkai, 2020). While one study of undergraduate students illustrates that women were more likely to be collaborative than men during a conflict (Brahnam et al., 2005), the other research demonstrates how men divide their focus on work based on agenda and at home based on relationships. The same study indicates that even though women are agenda-focused as well, they are broadly more relationship-focused than men (Chusmir & Mills, 1989). Considering the importance of the balance of agenda and relationship in deciding the conflict-resolving approach, female leaders have a better opportunity to know when being directive or being accommodating, although women are still facing challenges and criticism disfavoring a consistently assertive or aggressive style (Steen & Shinkai, 2020). On the other hand, several international agreements acknowledge women's role in conflict resolution and achieving sustainable peace (Kangas et al., 2014). Although there are not many cases to analyze the peace negotiations with female participation, the small number of case studies demonstrate that agreements signed by women create a more suitable environment for political reforms with higher implementation rates due to female representatives' preferences for spending resources on durable peace instead of military expenditures (Gizelis, 2018).

According to Resolution 1385 of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (2004), approximately 80% of today's civilian casualties were women, and 80% of all refugees and internally displaced people worldwide are women and children. Therefore, it is very significant to involve women in mediation to achieve lasting, positive peace. It is crucial to recognize women's contribution to economic recovery, social cohesion, and political legitimacy, which also shows positive possibilities of women's participation in a mediation process to reach a diversity of opinions and approaches in peacemaking (UN Women, 2022b). After the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 in 2000 in the framework of women, peace, and security, the expectations of pro-active involvement of women in peace processes and negotiations were not met since only 9% of the negotiators were women a decade later (Hedström & Senarathna, 2015). The numbers didn't change in 2020, while peace talks have similarly struggled to include women. Looking at the worldwide resolution processes, the data shows that women represented only around 10 percent of negotiators in the Afghan talks; in Libya's political discussions, the percentage of negotiators is just 20 while in Libya's military talks and Yemen's recent process did not include any female negotiators at all (Council on Foreign Relations, 2020). There is only one recent example of the peace process led by a woman chief mediator (Stephanie Williams, acting head of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya), illustrating the first time in six years that a woman holds this role. It should be considered that the majority of peace agreements reached since 1990 fail

to address the interests and contributions of half their countries' populations (Council on Foreign Relations, 2020).

The objective of gender-responsive governance in a post-conflict context originates from understanding the needs of women and proper management of public resources. Direct involvement allows women to access the rights and opportunities that they might be deprived of before and during the conflict period. Considering the fact of conflict's effects on women, their involvement in decision-making considers women's consultations for conflict resolution and recovery process (UN Women, 2012). The data shows that those conflict-affected communities that reached faster economic recovery and poverty reduction have higher women involvement than others (UN Women, 2019). Therefore, creating an enabling environment for the implementation of women, peace, and security (WPS) agenda, as well as ensuring and increasing women's direct and meaningful participation in decision-making and formal and formal peace processes via capacity development in mediation and peacebuilding negotiations, can increase the chances of conflict prevention, transformation and strengthen the Government's accountability. This process should also consider the realities of the policies by recognizing the possible implications of each procedure and action on relevant gender as FFP suggests.

Women's Political Participation in Georgia

Feminist Movement in Georgia

Unlike Western feminism, which is divided into four waves based on chronological and ideological progress, the women's movement in the South Caucasus had a different pattern of development. While Hooks (1984) argues the differences between social classes and races in explaining feminism, the argument in this study focuses on the regional differences where the Western feminist demands and needs are not the same as the other parts of the world. The historical progress of the gender equality demands of the feminist movement in the South Caucasus brings the debate on sexism to a new level, with social and cultural constructions and taboos standing in the way of implementing adopted legal rights and legislation. Ann Towns (2019) interprets the wave movement in terms of countries and regions by dividing the first two waves in the West and socialist East which ended in 1920, while the third wave was between the 1920s-1940s in Latin America. The final wave was identified after World War II till the 1970s, covering many African and Asia countries based specifically on the suffrage movement, not larger political participation. It should be emphasized that the four overlapping waves had different backgrounds, origins, and progress paths. The historical path of women's rights can be looked through as the pre-Soviet period, Soviet era, and post-Soviet or independence years. Gender in Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia has been influenced by the country's post-Soviet history. During the Soviet era, the education system aimed to redefine women's roles in society, emphasizing their dedication to family and motherhood while also supporting their involvement in the state's economic life. Men, on the other hand, were expected to prioritize earning money and being politically and socially active, with limited family obligations (Gorgadze & Tabatadze, 2021). While living through a similar historical path, three South Caucasus countries have different characteristics even though they are facing serious gender inequality issues. The reasons behind this problem are both alike and various based on the political, social, and cultural structure of the societies of these countries.

After the Bolshevik Revolution (1917) and the invasion of the three South Caucasus countries, women had trouble adjusting to additional responsibilities of career and heavy domestic duties. This social change in gender-based dynamics was to develop a new system of reliance on family and intergenerational support while contributing to the economic, political, and social lives of the country (Acar, 2021). The new era for women of the South Caucasus started after the collapse of the Soviet Union (USSR), which forced women again to cope with and accommodate different social and political orders where neoliberal and Western ideologies entered academia and public life (Barkaia & Waterston, 2017). The countries of the South Caucasus had to pass through two main events after becoming independent in terms of gender relations, which was ignored during the socialist era by assuming the “woman question” had been resolved via the socialist revolution (Kaser, 2021). The first one is the establishment of conservative morality and mentality because of the anti-liberal values that “barged into” the region after the collapse of the USSR and were interpreted as another form of invasion, and the second event was the revitalization of the religious life which was restricted during the socialist regime. The feminist label came into relatively wider use in private and public life in the 2010s, almost 20 years after the collapse of the Soviet Union. These feminist women belonged to a new generation of activists, born in the 1980s and 1990s, and largely came from well-educated middle-class families, spoke several languages, had easy access to the Internet, and were more receptive to “Western values” (Aliyeva, 2020, pp. 240-241). Some feminist women of the time took on the slogan “Yes, I am a feminist – I am a bad girl” as a protest against such branding of the identity (Walsh, 2020). In general, the 2010s can be designated as a period during which the initial network of self-proclaimed feminists, including some small youth groups, communities, and individuals, started to grow.

Even though the first women’s movement in Georgia emerged at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century by forming the first organization named “Georgian Women’s Union for Equal Rights”, it did not achieve strong political success (Beraia & Kutranidze, 2017, p. 12). However, this initiative managed to send a representative to the Third Conference of the International Women Suffrage Alliance in 1906 in Copenhagen (Beraia & Kutranidze, 2017, p. 12). The movement expanded throughout the 20th century by founding the “Caucasus Women’s Society” and the publication of the first feminist newspaper, “The Voice of a Georgian Woman”, to unite women across different political parties and social classes to support their political activism (Beraia & Kutranidze, 2017, p. 8). It is worth mentioning that the emancipation of women from Georgia was granted on November 22, 1918, when the Georgian National Council (referred to as “Parliament” since 8 October 1918) approved the law – “Regulations on Elections to the Constituent Assembly” (Abramishvili, 2021). Considering the time period, the draft law was highly progressive due to its substantive and political significance, which made Georgia one of the first countries in the world to give women the right to vote. According to the first article of the first chapter of the general provision, the members of the Constituent Assembly were elected by the general population – despite gender – by equal, direct, and secret ballot with proportional representation, and Article 3 of the second chapter referred to voting rights, emphasizing the rights of both genders to vote if they are above the age of 20 (Abramishvili, 2021). Consequently, in these elections, five women were elected to the Constituent Assembly, which was the Legislative Body of the Democratic Republic of Georgia and consisted of 130 deputies. After the Soviet occupation, the concept of women’s activism changed due to the political nature of the Bolsheviks prioritizing the class factor more than gender, which discouraged independent initiatives, especially concentrating on women’s rights.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the foundation of the independent Georgian Republic, the fight for gender equality and women's rights had to be carried on where it was left during the Georgian Democratic Republic (GDR), while the global feminist movement launched its third wave. Georgia has taken important steps toward implementing antidiscrimination laws and policies aimed at safeguarding and advancing human rights. However, despite these efforts, gender stereotypes continue to persist, resulting in a range of obstacles that hinder the attainment of gender equality as well as the empowerment of women and girls. Gender perceptions in Georgia often place men in a dominant position in many areas of social, economic, and political life, and there are persistent inequalities between women and men. There is a significant gender gap in labor force participation, with the gender wage gap reaching 35%, and women's entrepreneurship opportunities are limited (UN Women, 2023). Georgia still lacks shelters and services for victims of violence. Another problem is that there are no solid coordination mechanisms between the state agency and local self-governments. Furthermore, public servants need to acquire additional knowledge and experience in gender sensitivity, budgeting, and program planning (Letodiani, 2021). Female-headed households are marginalized social groups among the internally displaced and conflict-affected populations, and women from other excluded groups often experience poverty or are at high risk of it. Since 1992-1993, Georgia has been engaged in a war over the region of Abkhazia, leading to the registration of numerous NGOs with a focus on humanitarian aid for internally displaced persons. NGOs addressing women's issues since the 1990s have played a significant role in advocating for and implementing various policies related to women's human rights, health, and humanitarian concerns. Furthermore, these NGOs have organized training sessions, courses, seminars, lectures, and other events to raise awareness on a wide range of issues and to influence public opinion (Jacobsson & Saxonberg, 2016, p. 3). The prevailing perception of post-Soviet civil society has centered around the presence of established NGOs. Social movements have been seen as "professionalized organizations" primarily focused on securing grants and funding rather than mobilizing society (Jacobsson & Saxonberg, 2016). There is a general belief that civil society, including women's organizations, has become entrenched in a "funding game" and that processes of institutionalization and professionalization have led to the creation of "hierarchical, centralized and corporate entities" primarily concerned with their own survival (Jacobsson & Saxonberg, 2016, p.6).

Furthermore, these organizations have been perceived as being compelled to align with the agendas of their donor organizations rather than prioritizing their own goals or the needs of the local population (Jacobsson & Saxonberg, 2016, p. 7). The fall of the Soviet Union led to the emergence of NGOs focusing on women's rights. However, the women's movement in Georgia has not been effectively established (Vadatchkoria, 2018). Donor organizations made attempts to initiate the women's movement in Georgia. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) first aimed to create a Coalition of Women's NGOs in 2000, followed by the United Nations Development Fund of Women (UNIFEM) in 2003 (Vadatchkoria, 2018). Both attempts were unsuccessful, as they followed a top-to-bottom approach, whereas women's movements typically start at the grassroots level with a bottom-up perspective (Vadatchkoria, 2018). In addition, institutionalized women's NGOs have commitments to the state and donors, as well as their structures and agreements (Women's Movement in Georgia, 2024). The presence of the above-mentioned factors has prevented institutionalized women's NGOs from mobilizing a large number of people and engaging in

traditional contentious politics. This conflict with institutionalized NGOs led to the formation of non-formal groups that protested existing structures by not formalizing their activism. As a result, Georgian activism can be divided into two parts: formalized, institutionalized women's NGOs and non-formalized, unregistered women's groups. The institutionalized NGOs include the "Women's Information Center (WIC)" and "Women's Gaze." The WIC is one of the pioneering organizations working on gender issues and advancing women's rights (Vadatchkoria, 2018). The organization focuses on aiding, advocating, and raising awareness and actively participates in lobbying for gender issues in legislative and executive bodies (WIC, 2024). The WIC was a co-founder of the Coalition of Women's NGOs in Georgia in 2000 and officially registered as an independent organization in 2003 (WIC, 2024). The organization is represented in several regions of Georgia and manages web projects such as the Gender Information Portal in the Southern Caucasus, No Trafficking, and the "Youth line" of the European network. "Women's Gaze" is a leftist feminist movement oriented towards creating autonomous politics for women (Women Platform, 2024). The organization was established in 2014 to address women's social, political, and economic issues. Georgia's feminist movement is currently engaged in a complex struggle against ultra-nationalist and far-right groups who are actively propagating anti-gender media discourses. These discourses are being utilized as a tool to redirect public focus away from critical socio-economic conditions. The far-right groups are strategically leveraging antifeminist rhetoric to consolidate their political power and influence. This multifaceted battle underscores the intricate dynamics at play within Georgia's sociopolitical landscape (Martirosyan, 2023).

Gender Dynamics in Georgian IDPs

The conflicts in Georgia in the early 1990s and 2008 have resulted in 265,109 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the country. Among the IDPs, 70% (228,000) receive an allowance. Besides the IDP population, there is a group of people affected by the conflict who live near the occupied regions but do not have the status of IDPs. Many women among the IDPs and conflict-affected population live in poverty, lacking access to livelihoods and facing poor living conditions. According to the Public Defender's Office (UNDP, 2021), 288,520 people are registered as IDPs, with 53% being women. Furthermore, in 2014, there were 23,455 women living along the Administrative Boundary Lines (ABLs) with Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia (UN Women, 2021). IDP women and women living near the Administrative Boundary Line (ABL) and in Abkhazia or the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia face various socioeconomic problems and are at risk of gender-based violence (GBV). According to the 2016 survey 'Population's Life Experiences in Georgia', IDP and conflict-affected women experience different forms of sexual and gender-based violence. UN Security Council resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security, adopted in 2000, has become an important tool for conceptualization and policymaking regarding the role of women in conflict transformation and achieving sustainable peace. Georgia has been developing and implementing National Action Plans (NAPs) on Women, Peace, and Security since 2011. In 2019, before the twentieth anniversary of UN Security Council resolution 1325, the Government of Georgia pledged to implement 10 commitments between April 2019 and October 2020 to advance the country's Women, Peace, and Security agenda (UN Women, 2021).

The gender norms and expectations of Georgian IDP men and women have remained consistent despite the trauma of displacement, although practices have changed. While gender

roles may shift during displacement, the dominant gender ideology among men and some women does not undergo profound or lasting change (Kabachnik et al., 2013, p. 774). Men often struggle to accept the changing gender roles and the increasing economic responsibilities of women. Some men perceive the empowerment of women as a threat to their own sense of power. In Georgia, many men feel ashamed for not being able to fulfill their traditional role as breadwinners, as women often appear more adaptable to changing circumstances (Kabachnik et al., 2013, p. 775). This situation also increased the IDP women's ability to problem-solve and support-seeking coping strategies to be included in promoting sustainable careers and social networks (Seguin et al., 2017). The participation of displaced women has not been able to extend into the political sphere because, almost universally, the few displaced women currently in positions of power at both the national and local levels are former communist elites with little interest in advancing women's rights (Buck et al., 2000).

Women's Participation in Conflict Resolution

The promotion of Georgian women's involvement in public and political life has been ensured via different legislative acts to create institutional mechanisms, National Action Plans, and working groups. In 2010, the Gender Equality Advisory Council was established by the Georgian Parliament followed by acceptance of the National Action Plan for Gender Equality (Nadaraia, 2013). However, these efforts were not sufficient enough to guarantee equal opportunities and equal treatment for women and men. The latest trends show that 52% of the Georgian registered voters are women, while the reality of participation in the adoption of political decisions and in policymaking does not match these statistics. According to the Global Gender Equality Index (2021), Georgia is in 99th place in terms of women's representation in parliament by making 20.7% of parliamentarians, which is almost 10% higher than in 2010 (National Democratic Institute, 2021). This progress has been reached due to gender quotas in the legislature adopted to "take active steps towards increasing women's representation in political life and the decision-making process" in 2020 (International IDEA, 2022). Similar growth can be seen in the executive. In 2022, 20% of Georgian ministerial positions were occupied by women, increasing by 15% compared to 2010 (Dvornichenko, 2022). Despite the endeavors of the state and international actors to guarantee gender equality on the legal level, women in Georgia are nowhere near exercising the same economic and political opportunities as men.

The analysis of the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, 2020-2025 (Burger, 2020) shows that the engagement of women on the decision-making level in the security sector and peace negotiations is quite low, while the representation of women in peace negotiations has been reduced. The study also elaborates on the conditions of IDPs and conflict-affected women in the prevention and settlement of conflicts by showing their uninterest in participating in the meetings of the municipalities or in the village assemblies. This leads to overlooking the specific needs of women and girls affected by the conflict by the local decision-makers. By looking at the women's positions in political participation in Georgia, some of the reasons can be seen as obstacles to the further development of women's involvement. According to a study conducted in 2017, the electoral system, political parties, the government, and civil society still carry a stereotypical and prejudicial attitude toward women, which contributes to the limited involvement of women in the political life of Georgia (Dolidze, 2017). There is a perception of politics as well as self-perception of women in society, which prevents

many of them from being involved in political affairs. Political parties in Georgia have a structural problem, especially at lower levels, due to its centralized and elitist nature, which discourages women from actively contributing to the electoral process as well (Jajanidze et al., 2021). The stereotypes in Georgia play an important role by emphasizing politics as a “dirty job” and inappropriate for women, requiring physical and moral confrontation in the political arena. The rough political struggle for power in Georgia caused the perception of an unfavorable environment for women as well as questioning competencies to manage “surviving” the political turmoil. The societal perspective has been targeted to be changed through mandatory gender quotas to support women to enter political careers (UNDP, 2022). This strategy is a reassuring move of the state to give women better access to the services and resources to join and win in politics.

National Security Concept of Georgia

The development of the National Security Concept (NSC) of Georgia was initiated in 1996, followed by the publication of "Developing a Regional Security Concept of the Caucasus" in the same year (Tsikhistavi-Khutsishvili, 2014). In 1997, according to the decision of the President of Georgia, Eduard Shevardnadze, the process of elaboration of the National Security Concept was launched. The significance of the document was exceeding beyond military aspects by including ecological security, healthcare and state security, informational security, energy security, public management and national security, educational system, etc. (Tsikhistavi-Khutsishvili, 2014). In 2015, the Parliament of Georgia approved the National Security Concept of Georgia to reflect the vision of the country's secure development. After the 2008 war, there was a need to adopt the new concept considering the serious deficiencies of national security policy planning and inter-agency coordination in Georgia. The document was ratified for the second time in 2011 and is still effective (Bilanishvili, 2019).

NSC is a document outlining national values and interests, threats to national security, and the visions of the future progress of the country (Parliament of Georgia, 2015). The document aims to cover the country's security issues, including threats and challenges to national security, while considering national values and interests (National Security Concept of Georgia, 2011). The essential characteristic of the concept is the involvement of the government, parliament, political parties, non-governmental organizations, and civil society representatives in the drafting period of the process. Taking into account the 2008 war between Russia and Georgia, the occupation of the Georgian territories, and the unstable situation in the South Caucasus region, including the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia, the security environment of Georgia is constantly threatened. Therefore, the first notion in the document is ensuring the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the country by using all available lawful and peaceful means. The National Security Concept includes regional security, energy security, environmental security, and demographic security to maintain the future of the country as well as the social and economic growth of the society.

While analysing the risks and threats to national security, the document illustrates not only the current Russian occupation of the Georgia territories but also an imminent risk of military aggression from Russia. The concern is not limited to the illegal activities of Russian forces in the occupied territories, including recruiting and training of terrorists, severe human rights violations by the proxy regimes, artificial change in demographic balance as well as the threat to the ethnic and cultural identity of the Abkhaz (National Security Concept of Georgia, 2011).

Furthermore, Russian refusal to fulfill the Ceasefire Agreement of August 2008 indicates a new Russian invasion of Georgian territories, especially after Russian military intervention in Ukraine. The threat to national security expands with the danger of war in Georgia, resulting in more IDPs, and the risk of war in the regions, resulting in refugees. The current priorities of Georgia's national security policy, as indicated in the document, are to end the occupation and maintain its security environment. In addition to occupational forces in Georgia territories, the instability in the North Caucasus and Azerbaijan-Armenia conflict in neighboring areas challenge the creation of a peaceful and cooperative environment and worsen the chances of a safe setting for Georgia.

NSC underlines freedom, democracy, and the rule of law as national values which include gender equality in the framework of security, not as a separate matter. In order to achieve these objectives, democratic governance must be prioritized with the participation of women not only in politics but also in the legislative, executive, and judicial branches. Hence, the list of national interests separately mentioned that securing stable long-term economic growth can be achieved through equal engagement of citizens in a democratic political system. This inclusiveness promotes the importance of one of the main foreign policy objectives of Georgia by indicating the accession to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and integration into the European Union (EU) to ensure the security and foster defense capabilities of the country. One of the substantial strengths of the NSC is to expand the understanding of the security concept from the military into economic, social, and environmental frameworks. The threats and risks are not limited to the aggression of armed forces and diplomatic pressure but also economic collapse, interdependence, energy vulnerability, and modes of domestic governance. Secondly, it explores the rights of minorities by stressing the protection of minority rights as key elements in the pursuit of a democratic, rule-of-law governed society, which shows the government's commitment to strengthening the country's democratic reform regardless of which party comes into power. There is also a soft approach towards Abkhazia and South Ossetia conflicts by mentioning the possibility of broad autonomy in the negotiation of a settlement and restoring Georgia's territorial integrity at the same time. NSC frames an action plan on the occupied territories with people-to-people contact through the engagement policy. Moreover, the national strategy does not recognize establishing relations with the de facto governments of the two regions to demonstrate its intentions in the negotiations.

On the other hand, the NSC has severe shortcomings in the realization and implementation of priority issues, such as the balanced approach towards Russia and the West. The treatment of Russia described in security policy is quite general and purposeless. Furthermore, the stance towards the West willingly or unwillingly alienates Russia and increases the security risk, especially after the Ukrainian invasion. Additionally, the concept itself does not include gender as an important factor in security issues, even though the problems of the conflict, democracy, and human rights matters, including IDPs, illustrate gender equality issues. Adding gender equality into this document could affect the perception of risks and threats towards Georgia. For instance, maintaining gender security in the context of the Russian threat, refugee and IDP crisis, and migration issues change the state politics in these fields. The comprehensiveness of the NSC cannot surpass standard notions that came with globalization while ignoring the importance of women's involvement and participation in security and politics.

When the features of FFP are added to the NSC of Georgia, four main characteristics of the policy could improve the concept by addressing the weaknesses of the NSC. The careful approach towards Russia would be continued in the political sphere while economic and military steps would be taken to reduce the risks. FFP encourages the diversification of cooperation, especially in the economic field. The reality of the Russian threat can only be decreased if Georgia has the leverage for negotiations. Therefore, lessening the economic dependency on Russia as well as expanding the military partnership would be effective steps while maintaining cooperative relations with Russia. However, the FFP would promote and prioritize cooperation with neighboring countries more than the West to balance the power disparity and increase regional security. Including FFP in the NSC would positively affect the EU membership of Georgia, contributing to the 12 steps of EU integration plans (Transparency International, 2022). Furthermore, after presenting its applications for EU membership on March 3, 2022, the European Commission provided an opinion on Georgia's application for membership of the EU on June 23, 2022, indicating that the candidate status can only be granted after the key priorities have been met the regular enlargement package of the EU (European Commission, 2022). Among the key criteria, the EU emphasizes achieving gender equality, strengthening women in politics and business, providing opportunities for quality education, and promoting a fair society. Additionally, the representation factor in FFP would increase the involvement of IDPs in political life, while a stricter migration policy based on the reality characteristics of FFP would limit the problems and expenditure spent on non-citizens of Georgia.

Background of South Ossetia and Abkhazia Conflicts

Georgia is a multi-ethnic region hosting many different ethnic groups while more politically significant ethnicities such as Georgians, Abkhazians, South Ossetians, etc. (Amirejibi & Gabunia, 2021). Unfortunately, this diversity sourced two violent ethnic conflicts during the last three decades. There are different causes of the South Ossetia and Abkhazia conflicts, which began in 1990 and 1992, respectively (Chankvetadze & Murusidze, 2021). One of the narratives illustrates that after Georgia declared its independence in 1991, an aggressive separatist movement supported by the Russian Federation caused the disruption of stability in the newly independent country. Another reason is usually linked to the ethnonationalist aspirations of political leaders in Georgian, Abkhazian, and South Ossetian societies. Shortly, armed confrontation with the direct involvement of Russian military forces erupted, resulting in the forced movement of Georgians in these regions. The second military operation occurred in 2008, which led to the unrecognized independence of occupied regions and the deployment of new military forces and infrastructure in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia (Fischer, 2016). After 2008, the separatist narrative mostly altered to Russian intervention and policy, considering the inability of the representatives of so-called republics to act independently. While South Ossetians have more incentive to integrate Russia for unification with North Ossetia, de-facto authorities of Abkhazia desire more autonomy and resist the Kremlin's demands.

During the first war, both sides had more than 4000 casualties each, while 18000 people were wounded, including civilians (The War Report, 2018). The ethnic cleansing of Georgians in the 1990s and 2008 War caused the explosion of 80% of the residents of these territories from their homes. 261,000 individuals out of almost 500,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) have been resided in the different parts of the country (UNHCR, 2009). According to Human Rights

Watch, grave human rights violations of both parties have been recorded during the conflict, including extrajudicial executions, torture, rape, looting, destruction of houses and apartments as well as their unlawful occupation, often at gunpoint, and forced deportations (The War Report, 2018). The conflict negotiation process has been carried out with co-chairing of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the European Union (EU), and the United Nations (UN) since 2008 under the name of Geneva International Discussions (GID) (UNRGID, 2010). Following 8 days of war, UN and OSCE missions in Abkhazia and South Ossetia have been appointed. GID is not only a platform for security-related issues but also humanitarian needs of the conflict-affected population, especially Internally Displaced Persons' return (IDPs), language at schools, freedom of movement and mobility, missing persons, environmental and cultural heritage (Office of the State Minister of Reconciliation and Civic Equality, 2022). The perception of both conflicts by Georgians, Abkhazians, and South Ossetians was framed in different ways and altered before and after the 2008 war. While Georgians interpret Russia existing in conflict zones as an invasion, Sukhumi and Tskhinvali portray this as a guarantee of their safety. In Georgian discourse, the approach towards Abkhazians and South Ossetians became softer, referring to them as brotherly people while criticizing the Russia-backed "puppet leaders" in both "republics" (Chankvetadze & Murusidze, 2021).

South Ossetia

South Ossetia is situated in the Northern part of Georgia at the border with North Ossetia Autonomous Republic in Russia, which was separated from one another in 1922 (Buzaladze, 2020). According to the statistics, in the 1980s, the area was populated by 66.2% Ossetians and 29% Georgians (Hewitt, 2013). While they are linguistically different from Georgians, Ossetians are Orthodox Christians and obtained their ethno-federal structure during the Soviet Union. Till the 1980s, the relationship between Georgians and South Ossetians was free of violence. However, the situation changed after Georgia gained its independence and South Ossetia requested to be granted Autonomous Republic status, upgrading from Autonomous Oblast. The refusal of the request resulted in South Ossetia declaring itself as a separate republic and uniting with North Ossetia. The secession attempts of South Ossetia increased the tension, causing the Georgian Government to revoke the status of Autonomous Oblast and send troops to these areas facing South Ossetian and Russian opposition. In 1992, the Sochi Agreement was signed to state ceasefire with the deployment of OSCE and Russia-led peacekeepers (Wolff, 2008). The escalation of the conflict in 2004 due to the abolition of the Ergneti market, in which Georgians and South Ossetians used to trade with each other, triggered more distrust between parties and resulted in another war in 2008, which caused the Georgian troops to leave the Tskhinvali region. The ceasefire between Georgia and Russia was brokered by the French president after over 15,000 Georgians were displaced from South Ossetia to Georgia proper (UNHCR, 2009).

Abkhazia

Abkhazia, which is a territory situated in the Northwest part of Georgia, sharing a border with Russia situated in Northwest part of Georgia, sharing a border with Russia, constitutes orthodox Abkhaz ethnicity with distinctive ethnic origin and language (Buzaladze, 2020). Even though the historical past of the region goes back to the middle of the first millennium

BC, the paper will focus on the events of recent histories where the conflict ignited between current actors (Potier, 2001). During the Soviet period, the population consisted of a Georgian majority of 45.7%, surpassing 17.8% of Abkhazians (Buzaladze, 2020), while Abkhazians benefitted from the privileges of autonomous republic status granted by the Soviet Union. With the collapse of the USSR, the nationalist movement increased the tension between Georgians and Abkhazians resulting in war in 1992 after abolishing the autonomy status of Abkhazia by newly independent Georgia (Potier, 2001). This was followed by the signing of the Lykhny Declaration requesting unification with Russia, which resulted in anti-Abkhaz protests throughout the country and open violence taking over the Gali region in August 1992 to cut the land connection between Russia and Abkhazia. However, with the help of Russian military forces and Chechen fighters, Abkhazia regained the previously lost territories and declared its independence (Wolff, 2008).

In 1994, the ceasefire was made through the Moscow Agreement bringing peacekeeping forces of Russia-dominated CIS (Cohen, 2008). The hostilities continued throughout the years, resulting in casualties and refugees till the Saakashvili period in Georgia. After the new government was established by Mikhail Saakashvili, Georgia claimed to avoid the use of force and initiated diplomacy and political talks to resolve the issue. Unfortunately, in 2008, the Russo-Georgian war spread to Abkhazia, resulting in the removal of all Georgian troops from Abkhazia and the recognition of Abkhazian independence by Russia (Harding & Tran, 2008). After this step by Russia, the resolution process became more challenging due to disagreement on the status and mandates for the missions of the UN and the OSCE causing the disappearance of non-Russian International presence both in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The regions are hosting Russian military bases even after the Six Point Peace Plan, which contains the condition that Russian forces withdraw behind their positions before the war in 2008. The current format of the negotiations is the Geneva International Discussions where Russia persists in being a mediator alongside the co-chairs of OSCE, UN, and EU (Fischer, 2016).

Discussion: Feminist Foreign Policy Approach in Conflict Resolution in Georgia

FFP states that inclusive peace processes are the most sustainable to encourage the involvement of women in peace efforts. The reason behind this strategy, which is based on the rights and representation concepts of the 4Rs in structural tiers of FFP, is due to the increased opportunities for more possibilities in finding solutions, as well as to win better support. FFP also suggests the importance of considering the needs and perspectives of men, women, boys, and girls to succeed in peace initiatives, as indicated in the fourth tier of the theory called realities (Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 2014). According to recent research on Everyday Peace Indicators (EPI) in conflict-affected communities of Georgia (Murusidze and Chankvetadze, 2022), in order to realize how people understand peace in their daily lives, two matters must be explained. Firstly, the perceptions of everyday peace in conflict-affected societies in the Georgian, Abkhaz, and South Ossetian contexts should be analyzed, and secondly, key factors influencing everyday peace in conflict-affected societies must be identified. The research illustrates that everyday peace contains phenomena such as security, mobility, and health care, which need to be improved further; consequently, public perception of peace and overall quality of life can be enhanced. The interpretation of everyday peace by the population of conflict-affected territories contributes to the development of policies of peace and reconciliation.

One of the problems in peace and security is related to the inability to travel of Sukhumi

residents abroad without a Russian passport since they have to accept Russian citizenship, which is not always possible and causes feelings of isolation. On the other hand, according to the recent plan of the Council of EU, Russian travel documents issues in Ukraine and Georgia, including for residents of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, will not be accepted in the Schengen area (Gabritchidze, 2022). This isolation policy by the EU targets to discourage Georgia's breakaway regions from the Kremlin's domination while supporting the territorial integrity of Georgia and the security of EU members (Gabritchidze, 2022). Russian influence in the "borderization" issue, especially inside some regions dividing into two, has been seen as another threat to peace and security policy. According to the interview with the representative of the Office of State Minister for Reconciliation and Civic Equality, some people in these areas have been arrested and imprisoned by Russian troops due to illegitimate accusations. In the Gori region, people experience possible provocations from Russian servicemen that could ignite an armed conflict again. The security and peace perception in the context of Russian policy also includes the presence of Russian military bases inside Georgia, which causes a lack of faith in stability in the area.

As one of the main characteristics of FFP, women's perceptions of peace are essential for initiating peace-building strategies. However, the lack of women's participation in political decision-making is one of the obstacles in Abkhazia and South Ossetian conflicts. In the case of Georgia, the reasons behind the unequal representation of female politicians in politics are firstly related to a male-centric society where the men don't acknowledge the significance of women's equal participation in solving community or national-level problems. At the same time, there is a factor of cultural demotivation of women to be involved in politics since it is not appropriate for them. This approach is also observed in the interviews conducted with academic researchers who researched social studies on gender, highlighting the traditional role of Georgian women and the unreadiness of Georgian societies to make this change. On the other hand, independent experts support women's involvement in peacebuilding while not fully implementing the FFP considering the institutional structure in the government cannot adopt the 4Rs in the short term. However, there is the possibility to apply some characteristics of FFP to Georgian states which would increase the trust of the conflict-affected societies to the government.

While observing the situation in Georgia from the framework of FFP, it has been concluded that the policy implemented for reconciliation and integration is quite close to FFP characteristics. The engagement policy of the Georgian Government targeted to establish a link between the population of the occupied territories and the rest of the country carried out by the Office of the State Minister for Reconciliation and Civic Equality. The institution emphasizes the 8 main objectives in their initiation of the policy of peace, which states the direct dialogue, confidence-building, and reconciliation—between the Abkhazian and Ossetian communities through economic and social projects. These schemes aim to cooperate in business, education, and healthcare fields to demonstrate the state's priorities in providing the welfare of the population of the occupied areas. Hence, positive feedback has been received due to the successful implementation of the projects throughout the last 3 years. As indicated in the NSC of Georgia as well as in GID, Georgia only considers diplomacy and negotiations as resolutions of the conflicts. Therefore, these strategies implemented by the State should be continually to achieve its goal of rebuilding the trust and desire for cooperation between ethnicities torn by war and violence over 30 years.

In the framework of FFP, gender equality and all women's and girls' full enjoyment of human rights have been prioritized through the introduction of an Ambassador for Human Rights, Democracy, and the Rule of Law, an Ambassador for Gender Equality, and an Ambassador for Combating Trafficking in Persons (Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 2014). The activities of these institutions can be only effective when the enforcement of responsibilities is carried out by the will of the state as well as supported by the policies of other institutions. However, the implementation of human rights activities cannot be followed by only one country since the above-mentioned institutions work in the context of bilateral and multilateral levels. The human rights concept in the context of Georgian ethnic conflicts has been expanded into IDPs and people who suffer from "borderization" and illegal detention due to restriction of the movement to the occupied territories in addition to gender equality. According to the results of the report *Everyday Peace Indicators in conflict-affected communities in Georgia (2022)*, restrictions of movement within the country cause challenges in the economic well-being of the residents. For instance, the municipalities of Zugdidi (Georgian-controlled town) and Gali (Abkhazia region) are quite interdependent in terms of trade and family connections. By crossing the Administration Boundary Line (ABL) both parties contribute the income of one another through purchasing basic household items. Some also sell various items and supply local markets in Zugdidi. This movement also includes the access of Georgians to other occupied parts of Abkhazia and the importance of uninterrupted communication across the ABL. The interview with the state representative indicated that in addition to the restricted movement, there is also illegal detention of the Georgians who cross to the occupied territories, resulting in financial penalty or imprisonment by the illegal regime in Abkhazia. Illegal detention has been reported many times with severe human rights violations in these areas due to the lack of international monitoring mechanisms to observe and enforce the proper human rights requirements.

One of the serious problems in this context is the return of IDPs which currently only be a discussion of visiting rather than a full-scale return, since it seems more realistic and doable in unresolved, protracted conflict reality. The interviews conducted with IDP women in Tserovani IDP Settlement show the willingness of people to return to their homes. IDPs' issues are not limited to movement but also economic issues, housing, and mental and psychological health. Another violation is the illegal settlement of people in the houses of IDPs after the forced movement of Georgians from Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The interviewers indicate that they are aware of the people who currently reside in their previous houses, however, there are no legal actions have been taken by any international organizations to prevent the violation of property rights. The results also illustrate the readiness of Georgian IDP women to communicate with South Ossetians to open people-to-people channels. These statements by women demonstrate their open-mindedness and cooperative natures after emphasizing how they would not want to lose their children or wish the children of South Ossetian mothers to suffer the harsh consequences of conflict. On the other hand, the de-facto government of South Ossetia declares the activities of civil society organizations illegal, which makes it even harder for peacebuilders to connect people across dividing lines. This is one of the crucial factors which could hinder the involvement of IDPs in the peacebuilding process.

Acknowledging the role of communication between the conflict-divided societies, IDPs' involvement in the political process, as well as confidence-building activities, is the only approach to resolving conflicts peacefully. The current projects on confidence building have been primarily carried out with young people to shape their minds with more positive

attitudes towards one another for the future of the negotiation process. According to the interviews conducted with IDP women, there is a willingness for active engagement of IDP communities in the negotiation process. However, this strategy hasn't been implemented by Georgia's political representatives since the political negotiation was carried out between Georgia and Russia. While FFP encourages communication and understanding without discrimination and prejudice toward one another. In the Georgian context, even though people's attitudes toward have changed positively between 2018 and 2021 toward ethnic diversity (Council of Europe, 2022), ethno-nationalistic tendencies are quite among ethnic Georgians and ethnic minorities of Georgia (Amirejibi & Gabunia, 2021). According to a CRRC survey (Amirejibi & Gabunia, 2021), half of the respondents believe that Georgian citizens should be Orthodox Christians, while 30% defend that the right to citizenship should only be given to ethnic Georgians. However, almost 70% of the respondents believe the Georgians need to be more tolerant and understanding toward ethnic minorities since these are the reasons for wars since the Declaration of Independence. For instance, the narratives of Abkhaz and Georgians and the narratives of South Ossetians and Georgians describe different arguments in favor of themselves, which reflect a range of needs and concerns (Chankvetadze & Murusidze, 2021).

The solutions offered by both sides have different negative implications for the other group (Conciliation Resources, 2015). The statement of accepting diversity affirms that "peace is when we are tolerant with each other, consider and respect each other's opinions". This lack of understanding and communication illustrates itself in twofold notions, which are political and ethical affiliation. While the Georgian government implements some projects to establish a bridge between the population of the occupied territories and the rest of the Georgian people in the context of confidence-building to address ethnic diversity, political aspects of the discrimination cannot be applied since the Georgian government has no political ties or influence in the occupied regions (Gerrits & Bader, 2016). Additionally, international donors have implemented many projects in Georgia's breakaway regions (Council of Europe, 2021). However, they do not have the same influence and power as Russia, and they lack the trust of the communities of South Ossetia and Abkhazia (Cardinali, 2021). At the same time, there is resistance from de-facto governments to let people participate in such projects by claiming that they "mislead the citizens of the Republic of Abkhazia" and promote the goals of the Georgian Government (Kotova, 2022).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Feminist Foreign Policy is an opportunity to unify the political framework in the context of gender-related policies. It has been implemented by eight countries and has been included in the external action plans of many different countries to pursue its features on women, peace, and security. Even though the elements of FFP have not been decided and vary from country to country, the main goal is to transform the practice of foreign policy for the benefit of women by adjusting the country's diplomacy, economy, trade, security, and even migration policies. The key point of FFP lies in the inclusion of women for the right reasons by emphasizing meaningful involvement instead of unnecessary participation of the female population. Their presence in shaping peace and peacebuilding activities should not support the stereotyped gender roles but convene dialogue, provide empathy, and act as neutral peace negotiators (Contreras, 2020). The debate on whether women should be involved due to their alleged

“empathy superpowers” or because their voice is equally valuable has been exposed that not all participation is meaningful. Therefore, the states that adopt FFP should prioritize the strategies based on their interests instead of looking progressive and achieving less.

The current Georgian foreign policy supports some of the features of FFP without mentioning the gendered approach as a foreign policy strategy. However, in the framework of conflict resolution, the traditional approach is still dominant and has no contribution to the peaceful resolution of conflicts of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The conflict analysis of FFP involves the causes of structural forms of violence, approaches to solving or preventing violence amongst divergent positions as well as the people that are left behind in decision-making processes. As explained in previous paragraphs, threats to peace and security in Georgia consist of the involvement of an outside power (Russia) and a domestic challenge (ethnicities of Abkhazia and South Ossetia). Furthermore, the involvement of IDPs in the peace negotiation process and maintenance of democracy and human rights require a more flexible and “smart policy” (Joachim, 2022). These characteristics of FFP must be illustrated in the National Security Concept of Georgia as a guideline for all the policy decisions of the country. The current security threats for Georgia are listed in the Concept without mentioning the risks of an unbalanced attitude toward women and the consequences of gender inequality in different fields, such as political, economic, and social spheres. While the NSC expands the understanding of security just like the FFP, the FFP could offer more policy directions and transform some of the risks into opportunities.

In the case of Georgia and the conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, FFP can be an efficient tool since women are eager to be part of the political and social process. The increasing number of women's involvement proves the capabilities and positive developments in the different political institutions. Hence, their participation in the peace and security of the country can bring a new perspective to the negotiation stage. Maintaining two main features of FFP, i.e., rights and representation, is the first step in implementing FFP. State statistics and adopted national and international documents already demonstrate the willingness of Georgia to support wider women's participation. The significant part of FFP is to consider the culture and social status of each country and refuse to apply the same action plan for the implementation of FFP. Therefore, Georgia can draw its own path in the adoption of this foreign policy approach with consideration of the historical background, mindset, and readiness of the population and favorable environment for Georgian Feminist Foreign Policy. Additionally, the Georgian model in the integration of the population of occupied territories could be an example for other countries in the South Caucasus. The projects of Georgia in the field of support for small and medium businesses, education, and healthcare for the people of the occupied territories could be adopted in the South Caucasus. Even though the policies do not indicate the characteristics of FFP, the implementation of FFP in Georgia has already been carried out without naming the policy name.

Declarations

Acknowledgments: I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Ewa Trojnar, for her invaluable guidance, mentorship, and unwavering support throughout my research. Her insights and expertise have been pivotal in shaping this study. I am profoundly thankful to the research team of the PMC Research Center in Tbilisi, Georgia, for giving me the opportunity to undertake this internship and supporting my research endeavors. Their dedication to providing access to their own studies on the Georgian political arena was

instrumental in framing my understanding of the subject. I am also deeply appreciative of their assistance in facilitating connections with local political experts and activists, whose perspectives greatly enriched my work. A special thanks to Nana Chkareuli for her critical role in arranging my visit to the Tserovani IDP Settlement. Her efforts enabled me to conduct meaningful interviews with internally displaced women, whose voices and experiences form an integral part of this research. I am sincerely grateful to all who contributed their time, expertise, and support. This work would not have been possible without your collective contributions.

Competing interests: The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding: This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Ethics approval and consent to participate: Not applicable.

Publisher's note: Scholarly Insights remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Orcid ID

Gunel Madadli  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9648-8175>

References

- Abramishvili, S. (2021). Women's suffrage: Georgian movement and its leaders. Retrieved October 12, 2024, from <https://euneighbourseast.eu/young-european-ambassadors/blog/womens-suffrage-georgian-movement-and-its-leaders/>
- Acar, F. (Ed.). (2021). *Gender and identity construction: Women of Central Asia, the Caucasus and Turkey* (Vol. 68). Brill.
- Adebahr, C., & Mittelhammer, B. (2020). Defining feminist foreign policy. In *A feminist foreign policy to deal with Iran?: Assessing the EU's options* (pp. 5–10). Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.
- Aliyeva, Y. (2020). Exploring two generations of women activists in Azerbaijan: Between feminism and post-Soviet locality. In Ziemer, U. (Ed.), *Women's everyday lives in war and peace in the South Caucasus* (pp. 115–132). Springer Nature.
- Amirejibi, R., & Gabunia, K. (2021). *Georgia's minorities: Breaking down barriers to integration*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.
- Barkaia, M., & Waterston, A. (Eds.). (2017). *Gender in Georgia: Feminist perspectives on culture, nation, and history in the South Caucasus*. Berghahn Books.
- Beraia, A., & Kutranidze, M. (2017). Feminist dialogue. Sapari, Women's Fund in Georgia. Retrieved October 12, 2024, from <http://sapari.ge/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/dialogi-cigni.pdf>
- Bilanishvili, G. (2019). National security policy – Problems and challenges. Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies. Retrieved October 12, 2024, from <https://gfsis.org.ge/files/library/pdf/English-2681.pdf>

- Brahnam, S. D., Margavio, T. M., Hignite, M. A., Barrier, T. B., & Chin, J. M. (2005). A gender-based categorization for conflict resolution. *Journal of Management Development*, 24(3), 197–208.
- Buck, T., Morton, A., Nan, S. A., & Zurikashvili, F. (2000). *Aftermath: Effects of conflict on internally displaced women in Georgia*. Washington, DC: Center for Development Information and Evaluation, USAID.
- Burger, D. (Ed.). (2020). *National action plan on women, peace and security, 2020-2025*. Retrieved July 12, 2024, from http://www.dirco.gov.za/departement/women_peace_security_2020025/sa_national_action_plan_women_peace_security_2020-2025.pdf
- Buzaladze, G. (2020). The spectrum of Georgia's policy options towards Abkhazia and South Ossetia. *E-International Relations*, 2, 1–12.
- Cardinali, M. (2021). Revitalizing the EU's non-recognition and engagement policy towards Abkhazia. Agency for Peacebuilding. Retrieved October 12, 2024, from <https://www.peaceagency.org/revitalising-the-eus-non-recognition-and-engagement-policy-towards-abkhazia/>
- Center for American Progress. (2011). The Georgia conflicts: What you need to know. Retrieved October 12, 2024, from https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/issues/2011/02/pdf/georgia_conflicts.pdf
- Chankvetadze, N., & Murusidze, K. (2021). Re-examining the radicalizing narratives of Georgia's conflicts. *Carnegie Europe*.
- Cheterian, V. (2013). The August 2008 war in Georgia: from ethnic conflict to border wars. In *War and Revolution in the Caucasus* (pp. 63-78). Routledge.
- Cheung, J., Gürsel, D., Kirchner, M., & Scheyer, V. (2021). Practicing feminist foreign policy in the everyday: A toolkit. The Heinrich Böll Foundation. Retrieved October 12, 2024, from https://eu.boell.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/211112_WILPF_FFP_Toolkit.pdf
- Chusmir, L., & Mills, J. (1989). Gender differences in conflict resolution styles of managers: At work and at home. *Sex Roles*, 20(3), 149–163.
- Cohen, J. (2008). Introduction to the Georgia–Abkhazia case study. Conciliation Resources. Retrieved November 3, 2024, from https://rc-services-assets.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/accord%2019_15Introduction%20to%20the%20Georgia-Abkhazia%20case%20study_2008_ENG.pdf
- Conciliation Resources. (2015). The realm of the possible: Finding ways forward in the Georgian–Abkhaz context. Retrieved October 18, 2024, from <https://abkhazworld.com/aw/reports-and-key-texts/1459-finding-ways-forward-in-the-georgian-abkhaz-context-people-in-the-gal-i-region>
- Contreras, B. (2020). Women's participation in peace processes – Is it enough? Kofi Annan Foundation. Retrieved October 18, 2024, from <https://www.kofiannanfoundation.org/peace-and-trust/womens-participation-in-peace-processes-is-it-enough/>
- Council of Europe. (2021). Consolidated report on the conflict in Georgia. Retrieved October 18, 2024, from <https://rm.coe.int/consolidated-report-on-the-conflict-in-georgia-april-september-2021/1680a457d9>

- Council of Europe. (2022). New study of attitudes to diversity in Georgia. Retrieved October 18, 2024, from <https://www.coe.int/en/web/tbilisi/-/new-study-of-attitudes-to-diversity-in-georgia-people-increasingly-positive-about-minorities-but-awareness-of-laws-and-redress-mechanisms-remains-unch>
- Council on Foreign Relations. (2020). Women's participation in peace processes. Retrieved October 18, 2024, from <https://www.cfr.org/womens-participation-in-peace-processes/>
- Dolidze, N. (2017). Women in Georgian politics. Tbilisi: Georgian Young Lawyers' Association. Retrieved October 18, 2024, from <https://www.gyla.ge/files/news/2008/Women%20in%20Georgian%20Politics.pdf>
- Dvornichenko, D. (2022). Breaking barriers to women's participation in politics in Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. The German Marshall Fund of the United States. Retrieved October 18, 2024, from <https://www.gmfus.org/news/breaking-barriers-womens-participation-politics-georgia-moldova-and-ukraine>
- European Commission. (2022). Commission opinion on Georgia's application for membership of the European Union. Retrieved October 18, 2024, from https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/opinion-georgias-application-membership-european-union_en
- Fischer, S. (2016). *Not frozen! The unresolved conflicts over Transnistria, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh in light of the crisis over Ukraine*. Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP).
- Gabritchidze, N. (2022). EU to ban use of Russian passports issued in Abkhazia, South Ossetia. *EurasiaNet*. Retrieved October 18, 2024, from <https://eurasianet.org/eu-to-ban-use-of-russian-passports-issued-in-abkhazia-south-ossetia>
- Gerrits, A. W., & Bader, M. (2016). Russian patronage over Abkhazia and South Ossetia: implications for conflict resolution. *East European Politics*, 32(3), 297-313.
- Gizelis, T. (2018). Systematic study of gender, conflict, and peace. *Peace Economics, Peace Science and Public Policy*, 24(4), 1-12.
- Global Gender Equality Index. (2021). Retrieved October 18, 2024, from <https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2021/>
- Gorgadze, N., & Tabatadze, N. (2021). Gender sensitivity in Georgian school textbooks. *Journal of Multicultural Education*, 17(1), 57-69.
- Harding, L., & Tran, M. (2008). Georgia under all-out attack in breakaway Abkhazia. *The Guardian*. Retrieved November 10, 2023, from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/aug/10/georgia.russia3>
- Hedström, J., & Senarathna, T. (Eds.). (2015). *Women in conflict and peace*. International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance. Retrieved November 10, 2023, from <https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/women-in-conflict-and-peace.pdf>
- Hewitt, B. G. (2013). *Discordant Neighbours: A Reassessment of the Georgian-Abkhazian and Georgian-South Ossetian Conflicts: A Reassessment of the Georgian-Abkhazian and Georgian-South Ossetian Conflicts* (Vol. 3). Brill.
- Hooks, B. (1984). *Feminist theory: From margin to center*. South End Press.
- International IDEA. (2022). Gender quotas database. Retrieved November 10, 2023, from <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas/country-view/109/35>

- Jacobsson, K., & Saxonberg, S. (2016). Introduction: The development of social movements in Central and Eastern Europe. In *Beyond NGO-ization* (pp. 1–26). Routledge.
- Jajanidze, G., Ghibradze, M., Kobakhidze, R., Tkemaladze, T., & Shengelia, V. (2021). *Georgian women and politics*. Europe Georgia Institute. Retrieved October 22, 2023, from <https://egi.ge/en/georgian-women-and-politics/>
- Joachim, J. (2022). What difference does a feminist foreign policy make? *Clingendael Spectator*. Retrieved November 10, 2023, from <https://spectator.clingendael.org/en/publication/what-difference-does-feminist-foreign-policy-make>
- Kabachnik, P., Grabowska, M., Regulska, J., Mitchneck, B., & Mayorova, O. (2013). Traumatic masculinities: The gendered geographies of Georgian IDPs from Abkhazia. *Gender, Place & Culture*, 20(6), 773–793.
- Kangas, A., Haider, H., & Fraser, E. (2014). *Gender: Topic guide* (Revised edition). Birmingham: GSDRC, University of Birmingham.
- Kaser, K. (2021). *Femininities and masculinities in the digital age: Realia and utopia in the Balkans and South Caucasus*. Springer Nature.
- Kotova, M. (2022). *OC Media*. Retrieved November 12, 2024, from <https://oc-media.org/abkhazia-bans-eu-un-confidence-building-programme/>
- Letodiani, T. (2021). Gender equality policy in Georgia and challenges. *Przegląd Politologiczny*, 3, 105–118.
- Lindborg, N. (2017). The essential role of women in peacebuilding. *United States Institute of Peace*. Retrieved September 28, 2023, from <https://www.usip.org/publications/2017/11/essential-role-women-peacebuilding>
- MacFarlane, N. (2012). Georgia: National security concept versus national security. *Chatham House*. Retrieved September 28, 2023, from http://css.ge/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/neil_security_eng.pdf
- Martirosyan, L. (2023). Eastern Europe: Struggles in a changing landscape. *Open Democracy*. Retrieved September 28, 2023, from <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/5050/feminist-movement-europe-eurasia-ukraine-armenia-poland-georgia/>
- Murusidze, K. and Chankvetadze, N. (2022), Everyday peace indicators in conflict-affected communities. *PMC Research Center*. Retrieved January 20, 2025, from https://www.pmcresearch.org/policypapers_file/fcda62ffa40248fd5.pdf
- Nadaraia, L. (2013). Participation of women in public and political life. *European Institute for Political Studies*. Retrieved September 28, 2023, from <https://rm.coe.int/1680599096>
- National Democratic Institute. (2021). Combatting violence against women in Georgian politics. Retrieved September 28, 2023, from <https://www.ndi.org/our-stories/combating-violence-against-women-georgian-politics>
- National Security Concept of Georgia. (2011). *Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Georgia*. Retrieved September 28, 2023, from <https://mod.gov.ge/uploads/2018/pdf/NSC-ENG.pdf>
- National Security Council. (2010). Georgia: State strategy on occupied territories: Engagement through cooperation. Retrieved September 28, 2023, from <https://reliefweb.int/report/georgia/georgia-state-strategy-occupied-territories-engagement-through-cooperation>

- Office of the State Minister of Reconciliation and Civic Equality. (2022). Geneva international discussions. Retrieved September 28, 2023, from <https://smr.gov.ge/en/page/26/geneva-international-discussions>
- Parliament of Georgia. (2015). Law on planning and coordination of the national security policy. Retrieved September 28, 2023, from <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/2764463?publication=10>
- Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. (2004). Conflict prevention and resolution: The role of women. Retrieved September 28, 2023, from <http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-EN.asp?fileid=17233>
- Potier, T. (2001). Conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia: A legal appraisal. Martinus Nijhoff Publishers.
- Seguin, M., Lewis, R., Razmadze, M., Amirejibi, T., & Roberts, B. (2017). Coping strategies of internally displaced women in Georgia: A qualitative study. *Social Science & Medicine*, 194, 34–41.
- Steen, A., & Shinkai, K. (2020). Understanding individual and gender differences in conflict resolution: A critical leadership skill. *International Journal of Women's Dermatology*, 6, 50–53.
- Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs. (2014). *Handbook Sweden's feminist foreign policy*. Retrieved November 10, 2023, from https://www.swedenabroad.se/globalassets/ambassader/zimbabwe-harare/documents/handbook_swedens-feminist-foreign-policy.pdf
- The Constitution of Georgia. (1995). *Legislative Herald of Georgia*. Retrieved September 1, 2022, from <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/30346?publication=36>
- The War Report. (2018). Georgia-Abkhazia: The predominance of irreconcilable positions. *The Geneva Academy*. Retrieved from <https://www.geneva-academy.ch/joomlatools-files/docman-files/Georgia-Abkhazia%20The%20Predominance%20of%20Irreconcilable%20Positions.pdf>
- Thompson, L., Ahmed, A., & Khokhar, T. (2021). Defining feminist foreign policy. *International Center for Research on Women*. Retrieved December 3, 2024, from <https://www.icrw.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Defining-Feminist-Foreign-Policy-2021-Update.pdf>
- Towns, A. (2019). Global patterns and debates in the granting of women's suffrage. In *The Palgrave handbook of women's political rights* (pp. 3–19). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Transparency International. (2022). 12 steps towards EU candidacy. Retrieved December 3, 2024, from https://www.transparency.ge/sites/default/files/action_plan_for_getting_the_eu_candidacy_status_eng.pdf
- Tsikhistavi-Khutsishvili, N. (Ed.). (2014). Conflict resolution and peacebuilding historical archive of Georgia. *International Center on Conflict and Negotiation (ICCN)*. Retrieved December 3, 2024, from http://iccn.ge/index.php?article_id=287&clang=1
- UN Women. (2012). Gender and post-conflict governance: Understanding the challenges. Retrieved December 3, 2024, from <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2012/10/WPSsourcebook-05C-GenderPostConflictGovernance-en.pdf>

- UN Women. (2019). Strengthening women's meaningful participation in peacebuilding and gender mainstreaming in the security sector in Georgia. Retrieved December 3, 2024, from <https://georgia.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2019/08/strengthening-womens-meaningful-participation-in-peacebuilding>
- UN Women. (2021). Country gender equality profile of Georgia. Retrieved December 3, 2024, from <https://georgia.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-04/Country%20Gender%20Equality%20ENG%20%20UPDATED.pdf>
- UN Women. (2022a). Feminist foreign policies: An introduction. Retrieved December 3, 2024, from https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-09/Brief-Feminist-foreign-policies-en_0.pdf
- UN Women. (2022b). Conflict prevention and resolution. Retrieved December 3, 2024, from <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security/conflict-prevention-and-resolution>
- UN Women. (2023). Retrieved from *Georgia | UN Women – Europe and Central Asia*.
- UNDP. (2021). Gender equality in Georgia: Barriers and recommendations. Volume 1. Retrieved December 3, 2024, from https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/ge/UNDP_GE_DG_Gender_Equality_in_Georgia_VOL1_ENG.pdf
- UNDP. (2022). Electoral gender quotas promote equality in politics, reveal gaps in legislation and party rules. Retrieved December 3, 2024, from <https://www.undp.org/georgia/press-releases/electoral-gender-quotas>
- UNHCR. (2009). Protection of internally displaced persons in Georgia: A gap analysis. Retrieved December 3, 2024, from <https://www.unhcr.org/4ad827f59.pdf>
- Vadatchkoria, N. (2018). Women's movement in contemporary Georgia and the role of Facebook in developments of the movement. Lund University, Sweden.
- Walsh, S. (2020). Feminism in Azerbaijan: Gender, community, and nation-building. In Ziemer, U. (Ed.), *Women's everyday lives in war and peace in the South Caucasus* (pp. 133–150). Springer Nature.
- Wolff, S. (2008). *Georgia: Abkhazia and South Ossetia*. Princeton University.
- Women Platform. (2024). Retrieved December 3, 2024, from <https://womenplatform.net/organization/womens-gaze/>
- Women's Information Center. (2024). Retrieved December 3, 2024, from <http://www.wicge.org/home.php?cat=1&sub=1&mode=1&lang=en>
- Women's Movement. (2024). *Facebook page*. Retrieved December 3, 2024, from <https://www.facebook.com/GeorgianWomensMovement/>