

## Feminist Approach and Implication of Womenomics: Case Study of Germany's Angela Merkel

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### Abstract

*This paper examines women's role in international politics as well as feminist methods for analyzing international relations. This begins by exploring the struggles of women from the beginning to earn equality in this society and how feminist researchers have questioned traditional ideas of international politics. The field of Feminism theory became a part of International Relations during the 1980s, to study the impact of gender on politics. Cynthia Enloe questioned women and politics which has a huge impact on every individual, as it was a question no one ever asked before. Her work has been critical in identifying the gender components of peacebuilding and militarism. The study also explores the notion of Feminist Foreign Policy as it is a strategy that prioritizes gender equality and the empowerment of women. Meanwhile, the term Womenomics refers to the economic development that comes with investing in women. Feminist Foreign policies are introduced and countries accept and implement them in their country. Feminist International Theory challenges Realism as the main difference between them is individuals as a priority. Angela Merkel is a living example of a changing world and the beliefs of the people living in it. She became chancellor of Germany three times as it is hard for any woman to survive in male-dominated politics, but Angela Merkel survived and smoothed the path for so many women in the world. The paper concludes by analyzing the prospects and problems faced by women in international politics. It contends that the feminist perspective in international affairs may aid in the creation of a more just and peaceful world for all.*

**Keywords:** Angela Merkel, Feminist Foreign Policy, Feminist International Relations, Germany, Womenomics.

### Introduction

The theory of feminism was introduced in the field of academics when feminist movements were happening all around the world. Feminist theory became a part of all fields except International Relations, and after it became a part of it in the late 1980s'. during the period of the Cold War 1990s, feminist International

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Relations studied how gender affects global politics. Feminist International Relations (Feminist IR) has made a significant contribution by highlighting the adverse effects of conflict and violence on women. The scholars of Feminist IR have shown through their research that women are often not included in peacebuilding initiatives. Moreover, these scholars have argued that women have diverse roles in both peacebuilding and conflict, challenging the conventional perception of war as a male-dominated domain (Ali, 2023).

Cynthia Enloe asked about the presence of women in International Politics. Enloe's work makes an essential contribution by challenging standard notions of conflict and peace-building. She contends that these ideologies have frequently overlooked or marginalized women's experiences and viewpoints. Her work has contributed to filling this void by offering a feminist understanding of International Politics. The author conducted an extensive examination of how gender stereotypes and societal roles are employed to justify military conflicts and impact the lives of non-combatants. Her work on politics and women is important because it questions the long-held belief that women are unimportant in the field of International Relations (MacKenzie, 2017). She demonstrates how gender norms and preconceptions shape global politics, from the negotiations of trade treaties to the breakout of wars. And she also said that not only men are important actors in politics but women are equally important. She was among the first academics to investigate the link between militarism and gender. In 1989 she wrote a book "Bananas, Beaches, and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics" which is a seminal examination of the gender implications of the U.S. militarization in the Caribbean. In 2007, an authored work titled "Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women's Lives" was published, which examines how women's bodies and labor are utilized in support of militarism (Conway, 2023).

The system of the world especially the West emphasized men in international politics. Hobbes and Machiavelli were highly criticized by feminists as they give all importance to men, and how politics is strong because of the presence of men. In "Leviathan", Hobbes argues that men are superior to women and that the family should be structured with a father at the top and his wife and children below him (Sreedhar, 2022). According to "The Prince" by Machiavelli, women are more compassionate than men and tend to prioritize emotions over logic. Many perceive their work as patriarchal, favoring masculine strength and authority in political works. The world of politics is often viewed as having a bias towards traits typically associated with men, such as power and dominance. This perception can lead to a belief that the political arena is patriarchal in nature (Stephens, 2022).

A feminist foreign policy approach places gender equality and women's empowerment at the forefront of efforts to achieve peace and security. This approach recognizes the critical role that women can play in conflict prevention, resolution, and post-conflict reconstruction. By prioritizing gender equality in foreign policy, decision-makers can ensure that women's rights and needs are taken into account in all aspects of international affairs. This focus on women's empowerment not only benefits individual women but also creates more stable and prosperous societies. Feminist foreign policy also works for the welfare of these marginalized groups that had been ignored by men. Sweden is the first country in the world to accept, adopt, and implement feminist foreign policy in the country. Canada and Mexico also accepted feminist foreign policy in their country (Zilla, 2022).

With the end of the Cold War, the concept of security also changed. The focus shifted from traditional security to non-traditional security. As the focus was no longer on military strength but on humans. The theory of Feminist International Relations challenges the theory of Realism on many levels. Realists focus on power, especially military strength, on states, and the balancing of power. The priority of realism theory was never individuals and that's where the theory of Feminist International Relations challenges Realism. Feminist International Relations focuses on individuals and their well-being. Women have always been associated with peace. Angela Merkel was the first ever woman to be selected as a Chancellor in Germany. She was selected three times as a Chancellor in her country. The title of a Leader of a free world was given to her. During her tenure as a Chancellor, she never declared herself as a feminist, even in 2017 during an interview she said she is not a feminist as she worked for all individuals regardless of their gender, but feminists work for women and suffrage. In 2021, she accepted to be called a feminist as she said that all individuals are equal. Angela Merkel survived in an environment dominated by men. As the politics of Germany is dominated by men, Angela Merkel denied being called a feminist because she knew how she would be treated especially with hate from men. Even though she did work for women, she introduced some women-friendly laws, about maternity leave. She raised the status and number of women in politics. She also faced criticism from Feminists that she hadn't done a lot in reality she is capable of doing a lot of things for women. Feminists argue that abortion should be easy under a woman leader, but it didn't happen. Women have to go through a long process just to abort their unborn child. Feminist scholars say that they wanted to be heard and they thought it would be possible to be heard during the time of Angela Merkel, but the reality was the opposite. Among Germany's feminists,

some believe Angela Merkel did a lot for women and some believe she didn't (Dutta, 2021).

### **Research Questions**

1. How does the theory of feminism in International Relations assess with time and conditions?
2. What are the Challenges of the post-Cold War for the Feminist approach to International Relations?
3. How has Angela Merkel's leadership as a female chancellor impacted gender equality in Germany?

### **Aims and Objectives**

1. To examine the evolution and adaptation of feminist theory within International Relations over time and in response to changing global conditions.
2. To identify and analyze the challenges encountered by the feminist approach to International Relations in the post-Cold War era, considering the changing global political landscape and its impact on the evolution and application of feminist theories in this field.
3. To assess the impact of Angela Merkel's leadership as the female Chancellor on gender equality in Germany by examining policy changes, societal shifts, and the representation of women in key roles during her tenure.

### **Research Methodology**

This study is based on exploratory research. It is a qualitative research type that analyzes the feminist approach and gender equality in politics, with an emphasis on the case study of Angela Merkel. The sources of data that will be used are secondary like articles, reports, books, and journals.

### **Literature Review**

As *Dr. Lianboi Vaiphei*, 2019 stated in his article "Feminist Perspective And International Relations", The recognition of feminist theory within the field of International Relations has gained momentum in recent decades. While other areas of social science have made notable strides in feminist theory, the expansion of International Relations theory during the Cold War era has brought attention to the issue of gender in this field. Women have argued that political participation and representation at both the domestic and international levels have been limited

and that the field of International Relations has been dominated by male perspectives and ideologies.

According to *Patricia Reese* in his 2022 article titled “Overview Of Feminist Theory”, The global feminist movement aims to eradicate prejudices against the female gender and promote gender equality in all areas of life. Women have been advocating for equal rights since the 1800s, to free society from male domination and the belief that men are the only capable rulers. Unfortunately, discrimination against women continues to exist in education, the workplace, and their right to autonomy. Feminist beliefs vary depending on factors such as geographical region, socio-economic circumstances, and religion. However, the common thread that unites feminists is the belief that all individuals should be treated equally, regardless of their gender, ideology, skin color, caste, or race. It should be noted that feminism is a complex and multifaceted concept that varies from person to person and region to region, and therefore, cannot be defined by a single idea or definition.

In *Sarah Smith’s* 2018 article “Introducing Feminism In International Relations Theory” Feminist theory posits that International Relations and gender remain largely distinct fields with limited impact on one another. This has led feminists to identify International Relations as "Gender-Blind," due to the field's insufficient attention to gender-related issues. Specifically, women have raised concerns regarding their limited representation in decision-making positions within institutions. Citing a 2015 report by the World Bank, women comprise only 22.9% of policymakers.

*Jennifer Thomson’s* 2022 article “Feminist Foreign Policy in Europe”, To uphold women's rights and advance gender equality, Sweden introduced a Feminist foreign policy back in 2014. This policy has since been adopted by several other countries including Canada, Spain, Mexico, and France. Despite the growing popularity of this approach, Germany has yet to decide whether or not to implement it.

According to *Jamie Dettmer’s* 2021 article “What Did Merkel Achieve?”, As per the written content, Angela Merkel has emerged as a noteworthy figure in the realm of global politics, having served as Chancellor of Germany from 2005 until 2021. Despite operating in a predominantly male-dominated field, she has exhibited remarkable resilience and influence as a woman in politics. Her unwavering commitment to serving all individuals impartially, without any gender bias, is a praiseworthy trait that every politician should aim to emulate. Her actions have garnered both appreciation and criticism from different quarters.

## Theoretical Framework

The feminist term is a vast field, as its meaning varies for every individual. Some use this term in the sense of injustice and inequality faced by women in society while some also use it in terms of a political movement. Feminist movements aim to end inequality and injustice within society. Many believe that women are oppressed because of the opposite gender, but in reality, women are oppressed by racism, religion, society, and almost all aspects of society (McAfee, 2018). Throughout history the movement of feminism was named “Waves of Feminism” and it was introduced by Martha Lear in 1968. Since the mid-19th century, these feminist movements have begun in the West. The period of the first wave was from 1848 to 1920. The second wave was from 1963 to 1980 and the third wave of feminism was from the 1990s and onward. With every wave, the women demand according to the requirements of that time and how much injustice and oppression they are facing in society (Pruitt, 2022). There are many examples in the past where women fought for their rights and freedom. For example, *Mary Wollstonecraft* is known as one of the early pioneers, who talked about women’s rights. She wrote an essay “*A Vindication Of The Rights Of Women*” in 1794, in which she talked about society’s injustice towards women, and asked for rights as equal to men while not denying the basic duties of a woman in society (Tomaselli, 2008). Sojourner Truth is the first black woman in history to win her case against a white man. She published her work “*Ain’t I A Woman?*” in 1851, in which she talked about women’s issue and their repression from men and society (Bell, 2019).

During World War I, in the early twentieth century, there was an emergence of an academic field known as International Relations. Different scholars join hands together to understand the reasons behind the devastating war event and think of solutions to make this world peaceful. During the analysis of the causes of World War I, scholars noticed the minor contribution of women towards peacemaking (as their men were away fighting, women took jobs in the factories to keep the economy of the country running). In the Netherlands in 1915, there was an International Congress held by women, in which women presented ideas about how to make this postwar world more peaceful, discussed the causes of war, and how it could be prevented. But at that time male members of the International Relations field paid no attention to those ideas. But it took almost a century of struggle by women so that their voices could be heard. Many authors and scholars say that the theory of feminism came late into the field of International relations while feminist scholars and writers say that the International relations field accepted feminism after a long time (Tickner and True, 2018). In the 1960s and the 1970s, the time when the second wave of feminism was happening all around

the world, feminist theories became a part of international relations. At that time the Cold War ended and the field of International Relations was highly male-dominated (True J. , 2017). However, Feminist scholars in International Relations emphasize how global politics is shaped by the attitudes and decisions of men and women.

### **Feminist Approach in International Relations And The Post-Cold War Era:**

The theory of feminism became a part of International Politics after the end of the Cold War. Feminist theory faces challenges in its acceptance in a male-dominated world. The un-involvement of women in International Politics is deeply embedded in the traditions of the West which represent men as the only political leader. The roots of Western traditions that represent men as a leader are even found in the works of *Thomas Hobbes* and *Machiavelli* who signify men as the only political actor and citizen. Besides Hobbes and Machiavelli, there is another author *Rousseau* who was highly criticized by feminist scholars. In Rousseau's work "*Emile, Or On Education*" he talked about the reign of women, which according to him is based on kindness and gentleness. He even wrote that a man who runs the state by giving orders to women should run their house and order whatever she wants to do. Rousseau also stated that knowledge and education are only for men because they have to run states. Throughout history, the term masculinity has always been linked with power. According to the definition of power given by *Hans Morgenthau*, is the hegemony of man over man. *Cynthia Enloe* is a famous American feminist writer and political theorist. She is known for her book "*Bananas, Beaches, and Bases*" she contends that traditional practices in the international system have either undervalued or overlooked the issue of gender. In an interview, Cynthia Enloe asked "*Where are the Women?*" to emphasize the reality that women are frequently absent from international political narratives and analysis (Stark, 2013). The un-involvement of women in politics also signifies that International Politics is based on gender discrimination. Women's involvement is so low that they make even less than 5% in cabinet and the state as compared to men. Women are assigned low-level jobs like cleaning and cooking, and those who make less than 5% are very low in their pay as compared to men. The jobs and achievements of men are public and loud compared to women's jobs and achievements are always kept private (Narain, 2018).

### **Feminist Foreign Policy**

In the post-Cold War era, another term that emerged and became a part of feminist activities is "feminist foreign policy". The term foreign policy means how countries interact with each other. The main purpose of these foreign policies is

the protection of the state's national interests. While feminist foreign policy is concerned with marginalized communities and people and their well-being. Even if a woman is allowed to work in these male-dominated areas, there are lots of hurdles in her way that she couldn't work effectively. For example, in 1987 in the United States of America, women made up almost 4% to 5% of the area of executive positions and also in foreign service rank which is very low compared to the percentage of men present in these positions. Similarly, Jean Kirkpatrick the former Ambassador of the United States of America to the United Nations, was said to be a mouse in the house of a man and no matter how much struggle she did, she wasn't able to change the foreign policy of America. United Nations in 2000, said that nations should raise women's representation in Political decisions. After continuous feminist struggles, many countries have started accepting the role of women in politics. Such as, Sweden in 2014 became the first nation who adopt a foreign policy regarding the role of women in politics (Enoch, 2020). Later on, Canada also introduced a Feminist Foreign Policy in 2017, focusing on gender equality and protecting the rights of women. However, countries like Sweden and Mexico, adopt the Feminist Foreign Policy but they are failing in fulfilling their promises.

### **Feminism Challenge to Realism**

The end of the Cold War brought changes in International Politics. Due to interdependency among states, the international system is not dependent on the realist perspective of war and security, but it has evolved with the addition of human rights and non-traditional security elements. Feminist scholars believe that Realist scholars highly valued the states and gave nations and their national interests more importance than necessary and ignored the other factors (Ruiz, 2006). Feminist scholar *Tickner* criticizes the concept of realist power, saying it completely represents masculinity. Also, feminist theorists, especially in the field of International Relations, said there is a difference between the terms Power with and Power over, explaining that there are ways through which power could be collaborative and not always focused on dominating others (Pallapothu, 2020). Feminist scholars argue it would be wrong to see military strength as state protection from neighboring states instead it should be seen as a symbol of patriarchy. Feminists also argue that rather than spending a large amount of budget on weapons states should focus on spending it on climate change, women, and even children (Dutta, 2021).

### **Case Study of Germany and The Role of Angela Merkel**

The end of the Cold War in the 1990s brought changes in the field of International Relations. One of the most important signs of progress was the introduction of the



Feminist Theory in International Relations. In 1988 “*Millennium*” the British Journal published an article titled “*Women and International Relations*” and it changed the way people think about International Relations. Similarly, in 1993, another journal named “*Alternative*” followed the Millennium Journal and it published an article “*Feminist Write International Relations*” (Hansen, 2001). Many women become leaders after the continuous struggle of feminist movements. Chile in Latin America, Michelle Bachelet was elected as president. In Liberia, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf also became the president. Angela Merkel was elected as Chancellor of Germany not only one time but three times.

Kristina Lunz of Germany said that feminists are always against violence, as they try to smash it. She gave the example of terrorism as she believed that 90% of terrorist attacks are always done by men. In the European Parliament, there is a contributor of Germany Green named “Viola Von Cramon”, she said that women should be given the center position in the negotiation of Feminist Foreign Policy (Soric, 2021). In 2021, three major parties Green Part, SPD (Centre – Left Social Democratic Party), and FDP (Pro-Business Free Democratic Party) signed a contract for the new government of Germany. In this agreement, it was stated that it would work in the favor of Feminist Foreign Policy. Before the Feminist Foreign Policy was introduced in the country, the government of Germany was shaped by the Political ideas of men, and ideas by women were given no importance (Achraimer, 2022). German government follows the Sweden method of Feminist Foreign Policy, and the formula is “*3R plus D*”. These 3Rs are representation, resources, and rights of women with the additional element of diversity.

- **Representation:** it refers to gender equality in politics, especially for women and marginalized groups. They were given rights regarding decision-making.
- **Resources:** The government of Germany focused on resources for the protection of women. Any discrimination or violation of rights of marginalized groups or women.
- **Rights:** it focuses on the rights of all individuals and especially women. But with rights, they also emphasize justice.
- **Diversity:** The government focuses on the intersectional feminist approach.

Germany aimed that by adopting the rule of 3R plus D they would be able to make the environment based on gender equality (Serafine Dinkel, 2022).

## **Angela Merkel**

Angela Merkel (1954) is a former politician of Germany. From 2005 to 2021, she served as the Chancellor of Germany. In Germany, she was the first female to be selected as a Chancellor, and during that time of her life, she was titled “*De Facto*” (it means those practices that occur in reality) of the European Union. She is known as one of the most powerful women in the world and from 2016 onward she is regarded as a “*leader of the free world*” (AFP, 2016).

### **Angela Merkel And the World of Men**

From the beginning of her political career, she has faced male dominance in every aspect of politics. But Merkel was never a quitter, she knows how to fight. Silvio Berlusconi, an Italian Prime Minister made Angela Merkel wait in front of cameras while he was busy attending a more important call. Moreover, Vladimir Putin, President of Russia brought his unleashed dog pet in a 2007 meeting with Merkel knowing that she is afraid of dogs. This is not the end, as President of the United States George W. Bush without the consent of Merkel a shoulder massage. Angela Merkel made herself strong in the environment of patriarchy and she is praised by every woman around the world for her bravery in the male world (Semenova and Evdokimova, 2021).

### **Is Angela Merkel A Feminist or Not?**

Merkel denied being called a Feminist as she believed that she had worked for all individuals in Germany and not only for women. Until recently, Angela Merkel denied calling herself a Feminist. In an interview with Die Zeit in 2017, she refused to be labeled as a feminist. She says that feminists are out there fighting for the suffrage that women have faced all their lives. Merkel denied receiving to be appreciated as a feminist and believed all she had ever done was for the nation and its people. Merkel even said that in all of her work and conferences, she addressed all people of Germany, not a single gender, and also, she was a Chancellor of all citizens of Germany and not only of women. In 2021, Angela Merkel declared that “men and women are equal” thus she accepted and called herself a feminist (Petzinger, 2021). Merkel supported women-friendly laws, for example, she increased the number of kindergartens and paid paternal leave, and at the end of her career, she focused on increasing the status of women (Petzinger, 2021). For a long time, Germany was only ruled by men as there was no space for women in politics. However, according to the European Gender-Equality Index in 2019, Germany is the twelfth number among all European states. The selection of Angela Merkel as a Chancellor opened many paths for young women to go into politics such as Annegret Kramp Karrenbauer and Ursula Von Der Leyen. The

number of political women was increasing in Germany. But there is an increase in public demands regarding equality among genders, especially by females and marginalized people. Even though she wasn't directly supporting feminist rights and called herself non-feminist still she was supporting them from behind. She even introduced a quota for women and made it necessary for parties to accept women to make the politics of the country gender-blind (Lang, 2021).

### **Criticism Faced by Angela Merkel**

In Berlin, there is a “*Gunda Werner Institute for Feminism And Gender Democracy*” its head is *Ines Kappert*. She said that Angela Merkel's late acceptance of being a feminist woman is “*a slap in the face for other females*”. She also said that Merkel had sixteen years of tenure as a Chancellor in the country to listen to feminist views and do something positive for them, yet she stayed silent on these issues. She also criticized Merkel, that the country has the highest pay gap because of different genders, as in 2019 Germany stood 19<sup>th</sup> number according to the European Union (Frankfurt, 2021). Domscheit-Berg is a German woman who belongs to the same area as Merkel belong to. She said that it had been thirty years since the Berlin Wall fell, but, unfortunately, I didn't get reproductive rights as I used to have in East Germany. In East Germany, women had abortion rights and pregnancy test was free. But in the present time, women still have the right to abort their child up to twelve weeks, but they had to go through a long process of consulting and then wait three days for abortion. Also advertising abortion is a criminal act in Germany even during the time of Angela Merkel (Petzinger, 2021).

### **Main Findings**

The leadership of Angela Merkel has benefitted gender equality in Germany. She has put in place a variety of initiatives that benefit women in the workplace, for example boosting maternity leave and improving access to childcare facilities so it would be easy for women to enter the workforce. She has also appointed more female cabinet members than any previous German chancellor. The German economy has the potential to benefit from the concept of Womenomics. Investing in women has been proven in studies to increase economic growth. According to a McKinsey Global Institute report published in 2017, if women engaged in the labor market at the same rate as men, global GDP might grow to \$28 trillion by 2025 (Madgavkar, 2016). A significant issue affecting women in the German economy is the notable disparity in salary between genders, compounded by the restricted access to leadership positions for female professionals.

## Conclusion

For centuries women have survived violence, discrimination, injustice, and inequality at the hands of males. As the world is ruled by men and they are the only important individuals in the world. But this reality is changing with time and circumstances. Women are making their acceptance in this dominating world of men. It is brave enough to take daring steps against men and prove to the world that they are equal to men in every sphere of life. The role of Angela Merkel is inspiring for many young women around the world who would have never thought about politics and women. She became what many women were unable to think of centuries ago. She survived in male dominating society, by being herself and strong. Even though she denied the title of feminism for herself and accepted it years later. So, to make her mark in politics she sometimes accepted orders from others, and sometimes she gave her orders. If feminists (not all but few are) are criticizing her for not being able to listen to women's views and ideas, she did what the time demanded at that time. And it is a rule of the world that with fame there is always criticism. She paved the path for many young women around the world in the sphere of politics.

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