Normative Gender Power Europe?
A critical examination of the European Commission’s construction of inequality and preferred foreign policy approach

Linn Larsson
Abstract

Gender equality is one of the fundamental values of the European Union (EU). The EU possesses the ambition as well as the legal obligation to promote equal rights beyond its borders. Hence, it is of most importance that the EU construct gender equality policies that foster positive change, certainly due to the EU’s normative ability to influence other actors. This paper is concerned with how problems of gender inequality is constructed by the European Commission and moreover which foreign policy approach that is proposed to combat inequality. While focusing on contexts where gender is present, this study applies feminist theoretical approaches to critically examine statements given by the European Commission. The ‘What’s the problem represented to be?’ approach allows the study to identify problem representations, underlying assumptions and effects. It is determined that elements from both liberal and radical feminism is evident in the European Commission’s problem representations and that the male/female dichotomy which the problematisations are based on might prevent equality between men and women. Mostly due to its focus on the differences between genders. The findings also show that the European Commission suggest to combat inequality using a multidimensional problem-solving approach where actions are executed at individual, national, international and supranational levels simultaneously. Additionally, much emphasis is put on solving issues at grass-root levels.

Key words:
European Union, Foreign Policy, Gender, Liberal Feminism, Radical Feminism
List of Abbreviations:

CFSP    Common Foreign and Security Policy
EC      European Council
EU      European Union
EEAS    European External Action Service
HR/VP   High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and
        Vice President of the European Commission
TFEU    The treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
WPR     What’s the problem represented to be?
**Table of Contents**

1. Introduction 5
   1.1. Approach and structure 7

2. Previous research 8
   2.1. EU foreign policy and feminist foreign policy 8
   2.2. The gender debate 10

3. Aim and research question 11
   3.1. Delimitations 12

4. Theoretical framework 12
   4.1. Feminist theory 13
   4.2. The WPR-approach: An analytical strategy to critical analysis 15
   4.3. Empirical material 17

5. The EU’s institutional setup 19
   5.1. The European Commission 19
   5.2. Gender mainstreaming 20

6. Analysis 21
   Q1: How do the European Commission problematize gender? 21
   Q2a: What gender presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the ‘problem’? 24
   Q2b: What assumptions regarding the EU’s role as an international/global actor underlies the EU foreign gender policy? 27
   Q5: What discursive and lived effects are produced by the identified problem representations? 30

7. Conclusion 32
   7.1. Essential findings 33
   7.2. Opportunities for future research 34

Bibliography 36
1. Introduction

Gender equality is one of the fundamental values of the European Union (EU). That gender equality is part of the Union’s DNA is enshrined in the treaties as well as in the extensive equality legislative framework implemented by the EU (Article 119 Treaty of Rome; Article 2 and 3 Treaty of the European Union). Even though the member states which constitute the EU finds itself on top equality ratings, plenty challenges remain as women and girls still face physiological, physical and sexual violence daily in the EU (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2017). Women are also to a high extent underrepresented in the public sphere and moreover too often prevented from breaking the ‘glass ceiling’ and being appointed to top positions. Equality between men and women would certainly entail benefits for the EU since equal societies are healthier, have higher economic growth and are more secure. Besides the obvious consequences on women’s health, gender-based violence alone cost the EU €256 million each year (Wallström, Lövin & Damberg, 2014). Hence, to secure women’s rights and give women increased access to the public sphere would not only be “right” from a gender equality perspective, but it would also be beneficial from an efficiency perspective.

Globally, the EU is known for using its ‘soft’ powers to influence the behavior of other political bodies, in comparison to ‘hard’ power which entails exerting economic leverage or using force as means of enforcement. Additionally, the EU has used this ability to spread equality values and is currently one of the most prominent gender actors on the global stage. This ambition, to promote gender equality beyond its borders, also has legal reason. The treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) established the Union’s commitment to gender mainstreaming which basically determined that the Union was obliged to incorporate gender into policy areas, including external affairs (Article 8 TFEU). Similarly, the EU’s determination to promote equality externally is visible in the Strategic Engagement for Equality where the European Commission established five gender priority areas; more female participation in the labor market; fighting poverty among women by reducing pay gaps; increased equality in decision-making; combatting gender-based violence and spreading gender equality and women’s rights beyond EUs border to third parties (European Commission, 2015).
But, the EU is not the only actor who shed light on gender gaps and aims to strengthen and empower women. Actions are also taken on state levels, where states are now incorporating feminist ideas into their foreign policies. In 2015, Sweden became the first state ever to claim to have a feminist foreign policy with the ambition to become the strongest promoter for gender equality and to achieve full employment of fundamental rights for all women and girls. A feminist foreign policy requires that a commitment to gender equality guides a state’s external action and moreover that it actively tries to diminish male domination in societies, organizations and institutions (Wallström, et al., 2014). Since Sweden’s bold commitment, a growing number of states have followed and incorporated feminist ideals into their foreign policies.

Although only a few states have gone as far as to announce to have a feminist foreign policy, an increasing number of states assign women to serve as foreign ministers. On September 21 and 22, 2018, the world’s first Women’s Foreign Ministers Meeting occurred in Montreal, Canada. Canada’s minister of foreign affairs Chrystia Freeland co-led the event together with the EU’s High Representative of Foreign Affairs and Vice President of the European Commission (HR/VP) Federica Mogherini. The summit was a historic occasion as it for the first time brought together more than half of the world’s women foreign ministers to discuss global challenges and to share experiences. The meeting, which supposedly was the first of many, aimed at strengthening democracy and global security by fostering further cooperation between the female participants. Discussed topics were democratic growth, conflict prevention and gender-based violence, amongst others (European Union External Action Service, 2018). The point here is that women foreign ministers have now created a space in which they can engage in political discussions and that foreign policy will most likely be affected when women start to work together as men always have. Moreover, when more women reach decision-making positions, issues important to women will receive more attention on the political agenda, which consequently means that feminist aspects will be transferring into foreign policy.
1.1. Approach and structure

As presented, there are incitements for the EU (and the world) to strive for gender equality and the Union possess the power, as well as the legal obligation and ambition to promote women’s rights. That gender is a hot topic on the global agenda is visible in a wide variety of contexts where actions to empower women are currently taking place on supranational, national and individual levels. While some states have clearly taken bold moves towards feminist foreign policies, others are appointing women to foreign ministers giving them a voice in high politics.

With this gendered development accompanies a necessity to ensure that the EU conducts a foreign policy that can foster gender equality. This especially due to the EU’s normative power to spread values across its borders. The following research question is asked: How is the problem of gender inequality constructed by the European Commission and which foreign policy approach is proposed to combat this inequality? To be able to answer the research question, a feminist theoretical framework will be applied in combination with the ‘What’s the problem represented to be?’ approach to analyze statements given by the European Commission.

This initial chapter described the problem area, as well as the theoretical approach and research strategy of this thesis. Chapter two will provide a discussion on the previous research that has contributed a great deal to this study. Subsequently, chapter three concerns this thesis theoretical framework, including a presentation of the strands of theory that have been applied throughout this research: liberal feminism and radical feminism. Additionally, chapter three presents the ‘What’s the problem represented to be?’ approach used to conduct this study, as well as the empirical material. In chapter four, the EU’s institutional setup is described together with its commitment to gender mainstreaming. Chapter five is completely dedicated to conducting the analysis which will be structured according to the operational questions presented in chapter three. Finally, the concluding chapter of this thesis will present the findings of the study together with suggestions for future research. The entirety of these chapters hopes to provide an understanding on how the European Commission construct problems related to gender equality and to offer an explanation on which approach to foreign policy that is advocated by the Commission to achieve gender equality.
2. Previous research

The previous chapter provided a brief presentation of how gender is currently discussed on the global agenda, as well as that the EU is committed to promoting gender equality internally within the member states and externally through foreign policy. This section aims to deepen this discussion by presenting literature which has contributed to this study. The initial section concerns literature on EU foreign policy and feminist foreign policy, where the main central standpoints are presented and discussed. Subsequently, a discussion takes place regarding the EU’s normative powers and its prospects of becoming a normative gender power.

2.1. EU foreign policy and feminist foreign policy

This essay uses Hazels description of foreign policy as being the Union’s ‘capacity to make and implement policies abroad which promote the domestic values, interests and policies’ (Hazel, 2002, p. 7). Foreign policy has historically been a concept closely related to state actors, therefore, it is hardly surprising that the EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) has caught attention amongst scholars. The EU’s CFSP has even been claimed to be the biggest contemporary integration project of the EU (Kühnhardt, 2008). Foreign affairs are a policy area where EU member states have been highly unwilling to transfer competence to EU institutions, hence, the direction of the CFSP is decided by the member states in the European Council (EC). Moreover, decisions in the CFSP requires unanimity and member states are thus entitled to block a proposal by vetoing it. In practice, this carries a constant need for consensus within the EC between the member states, which is rarely reached since clashing interests often carries disagreements. Consequently, the current EU foreign policy represents the bare minimum; simply the most basic things which all member states can agree upon. As numerous scholars have argued, a more successful CFSP would provide the EU with a stronger international voice which would be harder for other actors to ignore (Crowe, 2003; Peterson, 2004). Consequently, the shortcomings of EU’ CFSP is frequently discussed and commentators seem to agree that the constant need for consensus between the member states prevents the EU from reaching its full potential (Blockmans, 2017; Toje, 2008). However, the opinions diverge as when it comes to both the root of the problem of the CFSP, as well as the preferred way forward. In terms of the cause of the problem, two main opinions dominate the debate; states sovereignty and their refusal to pool power to EU institutions and the foreign policies institutional/constructional shortcomings (Babayan, 2010; Blockmans, 2017). Regarding solutions to the CFSP, the most popular suggestions are either to expand the scope of CFSP to be decided by Qualified Majority
Voting (QMV) (Bendiek, Kempin & Ondarza, 2018; Junker, 2018), or to provide more flexible integration options within the EU (Ciceo, 2014; Tekin & Wessles, 2008)

2019 marks the 10th year anniversary since the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty. The treaty aimed to strengthen the EU’s influence in world politics by creating the new and improved HR/VP. Thus, this new post merged two major decision making bodies of the EU, the European Council and the European Commission, into one role description. The post was an attempt from the EU to foster better communication between the institutions and the merge have been described as ‘[… the most explicit case of seeking to combine the supranational and intergovernmental in one institutional post’ (Corbett, Peterson & Kenealy, 2015, p. 54). The HR/VP also became head of the newly established European External Action Service (EEAS) which is intended to act as the EU’s diplomatic service and support for the HR/VP. The HR/VP have been appointed by two persons; Catharine Ashton between 2009-2014 and Federica Mogherini who assumed the post in 2014 and holds it currently. That two women has been in charge of a policy area that has been so historically dominated by men demonstrate a change of path within CFSP (Kronsell, 2016) Existing studies are primarily concerned with whether the new post contains the necessary ingredients to improve the overall functioning of the CFSP (Calance, 2105; Meinen, 2015; Reynaert, 2012; Vicere, 2016)

As mentioned in the introduction, an increasing number of women are also gaining power on state-level. Since member states preoccupations often shape EU foreign policy, a change will probably be detected when more women are present in these contexts. The ‘feminist foreign policy’ is an example of such development and a growing body of literature also discusses the newly established term. Scholarly contributions include attempts to define a feminist foreign policy as well as how they are best understood (Alwan & Weldon, 2017; Poblete, 2018). Additional research also focuses on which impact gender has on the process, causes and outcomes of foreign policy (Angevine & Whittier, 2017; Forester, 2017).
2.2. The gender debate

The EU has managed to become a relevant actor in geopolitics by pursuing an external approach built on comprehensiveness, values and multilateralism (Duke, 2017). This rather unusual approach to foreign policy relates to the second scholarly debate that has contributed to this study; Europe’s ability to spread values beyond its borders. The concept ‘normative power Europe’ dominates this field and scholars have determined that norms-setting is a key cornerstone of the EU’s identity, both as an external and international actor (Manners, 2000, 2002; McCormick, 2007). Although the idea of a supranational state which manages to influence third parties through soft powers only sounds promising, scholars have identified elements which cause concern. To transfer norms and values to third parties, it is crucial that equal norms permeate the EU both internally and externally. Consequently, the Union might encounter problem becoming a global gender actor if its legitimacy is questioned due to the violation of women’s rights that are occurring in the member states. For example, in 2016, ‘[a]lmost 25% of women in the EU have experienced physical and/ or sexual violence by a partner since the age of 15’ (European Commission, 2016). Moreover, it is problematic that member states tend to pursue their national interests, leaving the normative aspects the responsibility of the EU (Duke, 2017). The point being made here is that a prerequisite for the EU to be able to spread standards is that the member states follow by example.

Another aspect which entails problems as the EU tries to conduct a valued-base external approach is clashing interests. The questions then arise whether normative values should outrank others, such as economic, interests? The Swedish feminist foreign policy is worth mentioning here since it has encountered similar problems when the policy has been constrained by other national interests. For example, the Swedish arms export equals women in vulnerable situations and Sweden’s migration policy hinder women from uniting with their husbands, forcing them to stay in areas affected by conflict (Aggestam & Kronsell, 2018; Concord, 2017). To avoid such developments, HR/VP Mogherini emphasizes the importance of conducting a valued-based approach in external affairs which complements the general interests of the Union (Mogherini, 2015). Finally, the EU’s ability to spread values might be challenged by a changed world order. A growing number of actors on the global arena is illegal regimes which have extensively different core values than the EU and is thus not attracted by the Union’s way of life. Consequently, if there is no ‘demand’ for European (or western) values, the EU might encounter problem spreading equality beyond borders (Duke, 2017).
In addition to the extensive body of literature which discusses the EU as a normative power, there is now a growing body of literature focusing on the EU’s role as a normative gender power. Basically, since the EU has established gender as a part of its DNA, it is expected that equality norms should be spread to international communities (European Commission, 2015). However, studies conclude that the EU does not use its normative power to promote equality (David & Guerrina, 2013; Garcia & Masselot, 2015). Within this body of literature, scholarly contributions also analyse the implementation and effects of gender mainstreaming. Scholars seem to share the opinion that gender mainstreaming is characterized by a gap between theory and practice (Behning & Pascual, 2001; Walby, 2005). The fact that gender mainstreaming was supposed to reach across all policy areas have also been named to be one of the policies weaknesses. Thus, when gender became everyone’s business no one become fully responsible (Tiessen, 2007; True, 2015). Regarding the presence of gender mainstreaming in CFSP, there seem to be an overall understanding that gender mainstreaming is easier applied to some policy areas than others and that the CFSP categorize as a field where the concept has not managed to challenge the typical manly characteristics that are embedded in external politics (Kronsell, 2016). In a recent study, Guerrina and Wright (2016) searched for gendered aspects in the European External Action Service, unfortunately, the conclusion was reached that gender mainstreaming has not yet successfully managed to permeate EU foreign policy and thus the EU cannot be classified as a normative gender power.

3. **Aim and research question**

As illustrated, the EU’s foreign policy is a controversial subject in the academic world. Previous research has established that the EU’s opinions matter in world politics especially since the Union possesses the ability to spread values and norms beyond its borders. Consequently, it is of uttermost importance that the EU conducts a gender policy that can foster gender equality. Although scholars seem to agree that the EU has not fully managed to incorporate gender in all aspects of external affairs, the EU is obliged to promote gender equality in CFSP due to its commitment to gender mainstreaming. Moreover, previous research on gender and foreign policy have focused on whether gender mainstreaming is generally present in foreign policy as well as its effectiveness. This study aims to take a different approach by focusing on foreign policy contexts where it is already established that gender is present. In that sense, this study is less concerned with determining the presence and effectiveness of EU gender policy, than it is
with examining how gender inequality is formulated and constructed by the European Commission.

This thesis concerns the European Commission’s construction of gender inequality as well as the EU’s preferred approach to conducting gendered foreign affairs, hence, the following research question is asked: How is the problem of gender inequality constructed by the European Commission and which foreign policy approach is proposed to combat this inequality? To be able to collect the information needed to answer the research question, the analysis will be structured using four operational questions which have been developed with guidance from Carol Bacchi’s ‘What’s the problem represented to be’ approach. The operational questions will be presented and discussed in the subsequent chapter, together with an explanation of this thesis choice of theory and empirical material.

3.1. Delimitations

This thesis will be strictly limited to the viewpoint of the European Commission and only material which address equality and women’s rights will be included in the analysis. The findings of this study are thus strictly limited to a specific institution and context; thus, it cannot be used to generalize from or to draw conclusions of how inequality is problematized elsewhere.

4. Theoretical framework

This chapter aims to shed light on the methodology that has formed the basis of this research. Initially, emphasis will be given to liberal and radical feminism which has provided guidance throughout the research process. The succeeding part of this chapter contains a presentation of the Australian scholar Carrol Bacchi’s ‘What’s the problem represented to be?’ approach. An explanation of how the method is used in this study will follow as well as a discuss on the empirical material used in the analysis. Finally, the last section will reflect upon the validity and reliability of this paper.
4.1. Feminist theory

It has been argued that all scholars subjectively approach their area of study using lenses that ‘foreground some things, and background others’ (Peterson & Runyan, 1999). Accordingly, all research evolves around certain aspects which the scholar find meaningful to explain a certain phenomenon. For the studies conducted in this research, that lens is gender through feminist theories. Feminism can be defined as a collection of ideologies and movements that are committed to equal rights, responsibilities and possibilities, regarding gender. Moreover, feminism strongly opposes oppression and domination in all forms and the ideology is committed to building global solidarity, reaching equality between genders (Butler, 1993; Hawkesworth, 2013; Young, 1990). Historically, several movements of feminist ideology have developed and the approaches vary in terms of the basic role of women in societies, goals and strategies. Feminist theories also have different epistemological and ontological understandings (Andermahr, Lovel & Wolkowitz, 2000). The eternal problem of feminism is whether women shall strive to be equal to men or if they should put forward their differences to men (Reinharz & Davidmann, 1992). To study foreign policy through a gender lens is regarded as both necessary and fruitful. As Wendy Brown puts it, ‘[m]ore than any other kind of human activity, politics has borne an explicitly masculine identity. It has been more exclusively limited to men than any other realm of endeavor and has been more intensely, self-consciously masculine than most other social practices’ (Brown, 1988, p. 4) Hence, the choice to apply feminist theory to analyse aspects of foreign policy is considered legitimate.

This study applies two rather competing feminist approaches; liberal feminism and radical feminism. Liberal Feminism is probably the most ‘mainstream’ face of feminism and has been described as synonymies with feminism per se (Beasley, 1999). This approach to argue that women have historically been excluded from the public sphere for no legitimate reason. Basically, liberal feminism is based on the fundamental idea of ‘sameness’; that women possess equal traits as men and should therefore not be denied the opportunities that men have access to. Moreover, liberal feminists do not criticize the theoretical grounds on which states are based on, instead, the approach merely strives for a slight reform of society where obstacles which prevent women from fully participating in in the public sphere are removed (Freedman, 2001). Thus, since women are no different from men, there should be room for both genders in the already established system.
The mindset of liberal feminists differs a great deal from the second approach used in this research, radical feminism. Radical feminism arose from the radical women’s movement that was shaped in Europe, the US and Australia in the 1960s. In comparison to liberal feminism which carries a humanistic approach, radical feminism is purely feminist; designed by women, for women. With a focus on the differences between genders, this approach favors women and their attributes, claiming them to be superior to men. Gender differences are thus not understood as socially constructed (liberal feminism), but rather explained as being present from birth (Gemzöe, 2017). Due to the obvious difference between men and women, radical feminists do not settle for a simple reform but instead strive for a substantial revolutionary societal change (Beasley, 1999).

The liberal and radical feminist approaches were chosen this thesis for several reasons and the first aspect is a matter of origin. Most feminist approaches emerged out of either the first wave feminism (1850- about 1920) or the second wave of feminism (1960-1970). Liberal feminism is a result of the first wave, while radical feminism emerged out of the second wave, thus, the approaches represent the ideas of two different time periods (Gemzöe, 2017). The second reason is due to the approaches’ quite different view on gender, where liberal feminists argue that the genders are essentially similar, while radical feminist believes it to be a clear-cut difference between men and women.

*Gender* is a frequently used concept within all branches of feminist theory and it is also recurrently used throughout this thesis. Gender refers to the socially constructed distinction between masculinity and femininity, in comparison to sex which is the biological difference between men and women (Peterson & Runyan, 1999). Moreover, the gender concept also entails social attributes and opportunities which are connected to being female or male, as well as the relationships between genders. Besides relying to a high extent on concepts originating from feminist theories, one concept has also been borrowed from international relations with the objective to provide knowledge to this study’s focus on EU foreign policy. *Multilateralism* refers to when several states work together to reach a common goal, this in comparison to *unilateralism* which signifies when an actor carries out an action without the consent of other actors. The EU is multilateral in nature, as well as the UN, the International Criminal Court and NATO. No single system of multilateralism exists, instead, states and international organizations operate alongside each other (James & Nevzat, 2014).
4.2. The WPR- approach: An analytical strategy to critical analysis

To sort the empirical material, this study draws on Carol Bacchi’s ‘What’s the problem represented to be?’ (further on referred to as WPR) method, which is a specific approach to discourse and policy analysis (Bacchi, 2009). The WPR method was invented as a tool to study problematisations within policy proposals and it is used in a wide variety of disciplines. The approach has a very broad field of application and can thus be successfully applied to all policy areas as well as on all sorts of material, including statements made by politicians (Bergström & Ekström, 2018). The underlying assumption behind WPR is that documents containing policy proposals or specific pieces of legislation in general also contain embedded problem representations that effects how the policy is constructed and carried out. I. e there is a close correlation between the solution to a particular problem and the actual construction of the problem itself (Bacchi, 2012). These problem definitions are in the WPR approach referred to as ‘problem representations’ or ‘problematisations’. Consequently, the WPR approach will help this study shift focus from the solutions proposed by the EU to solve gender equality, to rather concentrate on how the problems are constructed by the European Commission.

The WPR method decides the epistemological assumptions of this thesis and the approach is based on constructivist premises. The approach assumes that the researcher is always a part of what he or she is studying, similarly, problematisations is never exogenous to or outside of social and political practice. The WPR approach moreover contains strong political focus, explaining that ‘problems’ are shaped simply by creating policy, which also labels the approach poststructuralist. This idea of a socially constructed world also fits well into the viewpoint of feminist research. WPR’s post-positivist understanding basically explains that governments are active in creating and producing ‘problems’ that need solving. This in contrast to positivists who rather assumes that governments react to problems that already exist (Bacchi, 2012). In a similar manner, the EU is a normative power which possesses the ability to spread values and ideas beyond borders and coupled with this privilege is also the ability to construct and formulate the problems that need solving. Due to the major influence that the EU possesses, the specified ‘problems’ in a certain policy area tends to stick and gain recognition. Hence, the EU’s problem representations matter and it is of uttermost importance that the EU shape equality policies which can contribute to positive change. Thus, the choice to study the EU’s problem representations rather than policies themselves is justified and the WPR approach is the best-suited method to identify problematisations.
The WPR approach originally consists of six interlinked questions:

**Question 1:** What’s the represented to be in a specific policy or policies?
**Question 2:** What deep-seated presuppositions or assumptions underlie the representation of the “problem”?
**Question 3:** How has this representation of the “problem” come about?
**Question 4:** What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences? Can the “problem” be conceptualized differently?
**Question 5:** What effects (discursive, subjectification, lived) are produced by this representation of the “problem”?
**Question 6:** How and where has this representation of the “problem” been produced, disseminated and defended? How has it been and/or how can it be disrupted and replaced?
**Question 7:** Apply this list of questions to your own problem representations (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 20).

Due to the flexible character of the method, Bacchi (2012) suggest scholars to alter the questions to provide as valuable information as possible and to suit the chosen empirical material. In a similar manner, this study was guided by the original WPR chart when developing four operational questions aimed to structure the analysis:

**Question 1:** How do the European Commission problematize gender?
**Question 2a:** What gender presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the ‘problem’?
**Question 2b:** What presupposition or assumptions regarding the EU’s role as an international/global actor underlies the EU foreign gender policy?
**Question 5:** What discursive and lived effects are produced by the identified problem representations?

In question 1 (Q1), the empirical material is scrutinized to detect dominate problem representations. Problem representations, or problematisations, are as previously mentioned point of departure, hence, the use of Q1 is self-evident in any study guided by the WPR approach (Bacchi, 2009). The aim is to scrutinize the material to establish what the European Commission believes to be most problematic about inequality. Subsequently, in question 2a (Q2a) the study will dig deeper into the problem representations identified in Q1, trying to pinpoint underlying assumptions or presumptions. Basically, the intention is to shed light on the understandings that must be in place for a specific problematisations to make sense (Bacchi, 2012). It is also within the scope of Q2a that most connections will be drawn to liberal and radical feminism.
As already established, gender inequality is not the only interest of this study. Since it also wishes to reflect upon the role of EU foreign policy in the gender context, question Q2b has been added to the analysis. Q2b relates to the EU foreign policy dimension of this study and it will use the same material and tools as Q1, Q2A and Q5. The intention with Q2b is to discover which role the European Commission aims to play to spreading equality and moreover which other actors on the international arena that are of importance to the Commission in this context. Finally, Q1 and Q2a Q2b, which are theoretical in character, will be complemented by Q5 to provide a more practical level of analysis. Combined, these analytical and reflective steps will consequently make visible both the problematisations and presuppositions that shape gender policies, as well as how they affect individuals.

4.3. Empirical material

Policy announcements or pieces of legislation might be the most obvious point of departure for researchers using the WPR approach, however, this study’s starting point will be statements made by the European Commission, which contain gender-related problem representations. The selection of the empirical material was made in the following way. First, all material was collected from the Press Release Database, which daily publishes press releases from the European Commission and is run by the communication department of the European Commission. Second, the material was downsized to only involve joint statements in which HR/VP Federica Mogherini took part in. The objective to only include statements where the HR/VP was present is twofold. First, the focus on Mogherini helped to limit the material to a manageable timeframe of 2014-2018. Mogherini has served as HR/VP since 2014 and 2018 marks the last full year that has passed. Second, since Mogherini is the High Representative of the Union’s foreign affairs, the selection secured a connection to foreign policy. At this point, 98 statements remained. Subsequently, due to the gender focus of this study, the titles of the statements were examined to detect words related to women and equality issues. After this process, the material was downsized to 13 statements; 7 which included the word women/woman, 3 which contained the word female and finally 3 statements which included statements addressing sexual violence. It became clear that the European Commission particularly address women’s issues on four yearly occasions; First, on the 6th of February which is the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation; second on the International Women’s Day on March 8th; thirdly on the 19th of June which is the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict and finally on the International Day for
the Elimination of Violence against women on 23rd of November. All thirteen collected statements were made from Brussels, either on the exact date of the international day or 1-2 days before, moreover, the length of the statements varied between 1 and 1 ½ page. The involved commissioners were listed on 12 of 13 statements, the exceptions were the 2017 and 2018 statement on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against women which was labeled as “joint statement” instead of providing exact names. The number of signatories on the statements differed between 3 and 16 commissioners which represent fields of EU foreign policy including the commissioners for European Neighborhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, International Cooperation and Development, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management and Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality.

To summarize, feminism will tremendously affect the course of this research. The gender lenses contribute to making EU foreign policy a comprehensible area of study while providing guidance regarding what is significant and what should be left out. The WPR approach allows the study to explore the thinking behind policies. Further on, the WPR approach has provided guidance in developing the operational questions which structure the analysis. Finally, the European Commission’s statements provide an entry point for identifying inequality problem formulations.

4.4. Validity and reliability
Since qualitative research is often perceived as subjective in character, it is necessary to reflect upon the validity and reliability of this research. Thus, behind every qualitative study, a scholar is responsible for making decisions on what is important to mention and what should be left out (Bryman, 2016). To ensure confirmability, this research aimed to avoid as many personal opinions as possible by allowing liberal and radical feminism to provide most of the assumptions. Direct quotes from the empirical material are also used throughout the analysis to increase transparency and strengthen reliability. Additionally, links to all empirical material is listed in the bibliography. Combined, these aspects increase the chances that another scholar who uses the same theoretical lenses, method and material would achieve similar results.
The WPR approach was chosen due to its ability to identify ideas which precede policies. Other qualitative methods such as interviews, focus groups or a traditional policy analysis were not considered useful when conducting this particular research project. Hence, the method is perceived as valid to provide the study with the necessary information required to answer the research questions. As previously established, a constructivist epistemology assumes all researchers to be integrated with the object of study, consequently, elements of subjectivity are inevitable. Similarly, scholars conducting the WPR approach are involved in the identifying of problematisations which could entail that a researcher from another generation, geographic location or with different academic background could present other findings (Bacchi, 2012).

Finally, the empirical material used in this study was chosen because of its ability to represent the European Commission’s point of view. The material was also chosen because of its authenticity, credibility and reliability (Bryman, 2016). Moreover, the Press Release Database from which the sources were retrieved is understood to be a reliable source. However, it ought to be remembered that the findings presented in this research is limited and do not represent the opinion of other EU institutions or the EU in general.

5. The EU’s institutional setup

This chapter of the thesis will provide an explanation of the EU’s institutional structure by briefly explaining the role of the European Commission and the EU’s legal commitment to gender equality. The reason for this chapter is twofold; first, an understanding of the EU institutions and the decision-making processes is of importance to anyone who aims to study CFSP. Second, this chapter strengthens the argument to analyse statements made by the European Commission.

5.1. The European Commission

The European Commission is the main legislative body of the EU. It has the sole competence of proposing and implementing policies. The Commission contains 28 commissioners, one from each member state whom all swear an oath of independence when appointed, which together create the Union’s largest institution. Moreover, the institution has an inter-institutional responsibility for the Union, as well as the competence to represents the general interests of the EU (Peterson, 2012). Another main task of the European Commission’s is to
verify the correct application of EU legislation, which also includes securing regulations regarding equality. The EU’s commitment to equality was first embedded in the Treaty of Rome in 1957 when the treaty established equal pay for equal work. Since its implementation, amendments of the treaties have followed, particularly the treaty of Amsterdam which further ensures equal opportunities as well as equal treatment for women and men. Additional charters, which is classified as primary law, has been implemented which further strengthen the rights of the EU citizens in general and women rights in particular (Article 23 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights 2012; Women’s Charter 2010). Initially, gender equality regulations within the Union where limited to the public sphere were the EU strictly focused on actions of economic characters, such as closing the gender pay gap on the labor market. Subsequently, policies followed which targeted the private sphere and the EU got more involved in issues such as violence against women and sexual harassment (Earles, 2014).

To sum, equality permeates EU legislation and it falls on the Commission to protect the legal culture that has been created to promote equality and women’s rights. This, combined with the institution’s responsibility to provide the Union’s direction, justifies the relevance, as well as the value, in scrutinizing gender related statements made by commissioners. One might argue here that the Commission does not have responsibility for most foreign policy and despite that the EC competence in the Foreign policy field has expanded, most decision making remains the competence of the European Council. However, as previously explained, the European Commission possesses the privilege of constructing and defining gender related ‘problems’ that need solving. These problem representations will consequently affect both the member states, third countries and other international actors. This, combined with the Commissions responsibility to represent the general interests of the Union, makes the studying of its statements justified.

5.2. Gender mainstreaming
As mentioned in the introduction, all EU policy fields are legally committed to gender mainstreaming. The concept was formally first featured at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing 1995 and subsequently became a tool to promote equality between genders at all levels. As already mentioned, gender mainstreaming is contained in article 8 TFEU and the Council of Europe defines the concept as ‘[t]he (re)organization, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes so that a gender equality perspective is
incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages, by the actor normally involved in policy-making’ (Council of Europe, 2004, p. 12). Practically, this entails that to reach equality between genders, all policies must be contemplated through a gendered perspective before being implemented. The EU further strengthen its strive to reach gender equality beyond its borders in Article 21 (1) of the Treaty on European Union, which states that the EU’s CFSP

“shall be guided by the principles which have inspired its own creation, development and enlargement, and which its seeks to advance in the wider world; democracy, the rule of law, the universality, and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for human dignity, the principles of equality, and solidarity, and respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law”.

Hence, the EU has legal obligations to promote gender equality both internally and externally.

6. Analysis

As previously established, this thesis is interested in how gendered related problems are formulated by the European Commission. The operational questions developed using WPR approach will structure the analysis, starting with identifying problem representations within the material (Q1), then pinpointing the underlying presuppositions (Q2a and Q2b) and subsequently exploring the effects produced by the problematisations (Q5).

Q1: How do the European Commission problematize gender?

As mentioned in the methodology chapter, the Commissions statements do not merely provide solutions to how problems should be solved, but they also define what the problems actually are. These definitions of the problems are in the WPR approach referred to as ‘problem representations’ or ‘problematisations’, which shape policy outcomes. In other words, societies are to a high extent governed through problem representations since they decide which actions are taken within a particular field. With this background information in mind, this initial section of the analysis will identify and describe dominant problem representations within the selected statements made by the European Commission.
Problem Representation 1: Violation of Human Rights

First, inequalities between genders and violation against women are problematized as a severe violation of human rights. Explanations of how women’s rights are being violated and the consequences that violations entail are present in all 13 statements. For example, in a joint statement on the International Day against Female Genital Mutilation (European Commission, 2016), the Commission stated that

“Every human being, every girl, every woman has the right to live a life free from violence and pain, free in all its aspects. Female Genital Mutilation inflicts harm and causes lifelong health risks and suffering. It is a violation of human rights, the rights of the child, and a threat to the universal values of dignity, physical integrity and non-discrimination. Nothing can justify it”.

Similarly, on 24th of November 2017 the Commission also stated that ‘[v]iolence against Women and Girls is one of the most widespread and devastating human rights violations across the globe’ (European Commission, 2017) and in another statement that ‘[a] life free from violence is an inalienable fundamental right: depriving women and girls from freedom, means depriving the world from freedom’ (European Commission, 2018). As illustrated, these quotes contain rather straightforward and strong language. Figures are also recurrent throughout the statements to present the violation of women’s rights that is currently taking place both within the EU and beyond its borders. It is, for example, described how 12 million girls are married under the age of 18 every year; that it is estimated that 35-70% of women experiences violence sometimes in their lives and that half of all murdered women are killed by an intimate partner, a relative or a family member (European Commission, 2017) (European Commission, 2015) (European Commission, 2018). Hence, by combining serious language with figures, the European Commission manages to signal the seriousness of the situation.

Within the ‘violation of human rights’ problem representation, the emphasis is to a high extent put on solidarity, where the Commission clearly states the need to support victims who have suffered physical and psychological damage. On the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict (European Commission, 2016), the Commission states that ‘[w]e stand in solidarity with all survivors, as well as with their families who had to suffer from any form of sexual violence in conflicts and ramifications’. Similarly, another statement points out
that ‘together we must challenge this and the stereotypes that undermine women’s voices and show that violence against women is unacceptable and will not be tolerated by anyone’ (European Commission, 2016).

Thus, the European Commission uses the statements to define and construct gender equality as a ‘violation of human rights’. But, as previously mentioned, the Commission also possess the power to propose solutions to the constructed problematisations. As the following quotes illustrate, the most prominent solution is to raise global awareness of women’s rights through education. ‘We need to continue to raise awareness on Female Genital Mutilation and to educate people, regardless of background, culture or gender on women’s rights’ (European Commission, 2016). Correspondingly, on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, ‘[t]o eliminate this gender-based violence once and for all, we need to improve education and legislation and change social norms’ (European Commission, 2017). The idea is that increased awareness would eventually also entail the change of discriminative norms which harms women.

**Problem Representation 2: An issue of Law and Order**

The second dominant problem representation identified in the material explains inequality and violence against women as an issue of law and order. On the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict (European Commission, 2018), the Commission stated that “[s]exual violence against women and girls, boys and men is a despicable crime, and even more so when it occurs in situations of conflict or as a tactic of war”. Words which are usually found in the law enforcement field such as justice, crime, victim, perpetrator and investigation are recurring throughout this formulation of the problem and the language quite offensively signal the global need for women’s redress.

A lot of emphases is also given to the need for proper legislative frameworks which will provide justice for victims. ‘Female genital mutilation is a crime in all EU Member States. We support partner countries outside Europe to take action to render Female Genital Mutilation unlawful too’ (European Commission, 2017), similarly, ‘[w]e expect all states to conduct effective investigation of those crimes, to bring perpetrators to justice and to ensure accountability for past crimes, also to prevent future atrocities’ (European Commission, 2018). That the Commission expresses the need for a more comprehensive legal system highly indicates that
the current system is failing. However, as illustrated, the Commission does not only criticize the EU’s legal framework but also points out that other states outside the EU must improve their legal systems. In fact, the statements describe the Union’s jurisdiction to be rather functioning in comparison to other state’s. For example, it is explained how many EU states have the legal right to prosecute ‘[…] a person who bring girls outside the EU to be mutilated’ (European Commission, 2018). This is particularly interesting since it entails that the EU has implemented laws that aim to repay the shortcomings of other states’ jurisdiction and moreover that the European Commission uses their normative power to influence actors beyond EU’s borders. Hence, the proposed solution within problem representation 2 is the implementation of more extensive equality-laws as well as to ensure that perpetrators are prosecuted and convicted for their crimes.

As Bacchi (Bacchi, 2009) describes, it is a challenging task to pinpoint problem representations within texts especially since they often include multiple policy proposals that are highly interlinked and dependent on each other. For example, the problem representations described preciously are intertwined and eventually might probably contribute to each other’s causes; widespread knowledge about women’s rights will probably result in lesser gender-related crimes, while a more functioning justice system will simultaneously ensure reduced violation of women’s rights.

Q2a: What gender presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the ‘problem’?
In the previous section, two dominant problem representations were identified in the selected statements: the ‘violation of human rights’ and the ‘law and order’ problem representation. This second part of the analysis relates to the second question (Q2) of the WPR approach, with the aim to dig deeper into the underlying assumptions make the specified problem representations make sense or cohere.

To uncover presuppositions, it can be helpful to identify dichotomies on which the problem representations are based. Dichotomies, which assumes an A/ not-A relationship, are frequently discussed by feminist scholars because they allow the researcher to reflect over divisions which have become natural (and therefore often unquestioned) in societies (Peterson & Runyan, 1999). Both problem representations rely to a high extent on the male/female dichotomy and
several aspects are problematic with this traditional and somewhat obsolete way to address men and women. First and foremost, it creates a distinct division between men and women since it is highly focused on their differences. As an example, the European Commission said that ‘[w]omen are often the first ones to seek solutions, to look for resilience in times of challenge and those with a vision for the future of their countries’ (European Commission, 2017). This quote does not only describe women as good mediators who think ahead, but it also suggests that men do not possess these qualities to such an extent. Similarly, in a statement given on the International Women’s day 2016 (European Commission, 2016), it was stated that ‘[w]omen, as key agents and drivers of sustainable development and sustainable peace, have a crucial role to play in a world so hard hit by conflict and inequality’ and moreover that ‘[t]he EU strongly supports women’s full and effective participation in conflict prevention and resolution and in peacebuilding processes in order to achieve long-term sustainable results […]’ (European Commission, 2016). As illustrated, the statements explored here discursively construct women as possessing other personal qualities than men and furthermore that these ‘womanly’ attributes are, in this case, desirable. This way of thinking of men and women as unambiguously different is particularly evident in radical feminism. Radical feminists have a unique interest for women’s qualities and strive to reevaluate them, similarly, the European Commission inquire for female qualities in their utterances (Beasley, 1999). It could be problematic if women are given increased access to the public sphere simply because they are women and not due to their individual qualities. This falls in line with the typical critique that liberal feminism often faces. Because despite that more women would be present in the public sphere, women’s subordinate position in society would not have been repealed. The appearance of women’s position might have been altered, but the patriarchal system remains (Gemzöe, 2017).

Another problematic aspect with the male/female dichotomy is that it works in a curious way where one’s features occur at the expense of the other. As Peterson and Ryan put it, ‘[a]’woman’ is defined by what is ‘not man’ and characteristics of feminine are those that are in-appropriate for or contradict masculinity’ (Peterson & Runyan, 1999, p. 36). For example, a man might enhance the characteristics that are usually labeled as “typically manly” and thus difference himself from women. He becomes extra-rational, acts tough and autonomous simply because otherwise he might be perceived as emotional, soft and dependent - attributes which are stereotypically feminine features. Similarly, women may exaggerate their female behaviors due to a fear of being perceived as “manly” (which happens at the expense of the feminine) or
because it is requested for them to provide women attributes to a family or a workplace. The male/female dichotomy thus construct stereotypes of what is typically viewed upon as masculine or feminine traits and individuals tend to adjust to those stereotypes, which might, in fact, increase the gap between men and women. This possibility to alter personal attributes suggests that the difference between men and women are not to be biologically determined, but rather socially constructed and open for alteration. An aspect which fits well into the framework of liberal feminism and can be put into comparison to radical feminists, who believe that men and women are comprehensively different from birth (Peterson & Runyan, 1999) (Gemzöe, 2017).

Another problematic aspect with the traditional male/female dichotomy is that it automatically contains a power hierarchy, where men are always superior to women. Within feminism, the concept is referred to as the ‘patriarchate’. The patriarchate is deeply rooted in traditional gender ideology and a common enemy for radical feminists. According to radical feminists, the concept describes how men manage to control women in all parts of society, using the social system as well as violence and threat about violence. What this entails in practice is that equality cannot be reached between genders until the signification of the dichotomy is altered or completely exchanged (Gemzöe, 2017).

In the ‘law and order’ problem representation, another dichotomy is identified; the victim/perpetrator. At first glance, the division might come across as completely natural, but in this context, it can be perceived as unfair or even harmful. Ideally, ‘victims’ entail individuals who have suffered crimes, while ‘perpetrators’ adhere to persons who have committed crimes. But, since almost all victims in this context are women, the perpetrators almost automatically become synonymous with men. This is a rather hard drawn distinction, but it makes sense in relation to the previously mentioned male/female dichotomy, where men and women are always understood as each other’s counter poles. This way of categorizing individuals plays a very significant role in how people think about themselves and the victim/perpetrator categorization might negatively affect both men and women in this context (Bacchi, 2009). For women, it could bring a feeling of uncertainty or weakness and it might even provoke fear for men in general. Likewise, it surely cannot be pleasant for all law-abiding men to constantly be coupled with criminals. Moreover, categorizations do not only contribute to how men and women feel about themselves, but it also determines to a high extent how they feel about each other. The
dichotomy creates a ‘we and them’ effect, where attributes are connected to a certain categorization (Bacchi, 2012).

Finally, the ‘law and order’ problem representation propose to use the legal system to achieve gender equality, an idea which fits well into the liberal feminist perspective. Liberal feminist aims to create a public sphere where women enjoy the same rights as men, thus, laws which ensure women’s rights and prevents discrimination are necessary to achieve a society where men and women are treated equally (Gemzöe, 2017).

**Q2b: What assumptions regarding the EU’s role as an international/ global actor underlies the EU foreign gender policy?**

In the first section of the analysis (Q1), two problem representations were identified in the European Commission’s statements: ‘violation of human rights’ and ‘law and order’. Thereafter, in Q2a, the light was shed to the underlying assumptions and presuppositions on which problem representation 1 and 2 were based upon. Now, the focus will slightly shift from the gender discussion that has so far dominated the course of the analysis, to a focus on EU foreign policy. Thus, this section makes use of the same method and material as the previous questions (as well as forthcoming Q5) but rather change the theoretical lens. The underlying objective is to add an extra dimension to the study, exploring the EU’s as well as other actor’s role in the strive for gender equality. Subsequent sections will scrutinize the statements to explore what the European Commission think about the EU’s role is in spreading equality values, how foreign policy best should be conducted to increase gender equality as well as how the Union aims to cooperate with other actors in the international arena to achieve change.

**Solutions at the grass-root level**

As already established, the EU is a global actor which aims to contribute to gender equality and improve women’s fundamental rights. This is not only articulated in the treaties but is also visible in the amount of spending’s that are invested in gender equality. To study how fundings are distributed is a useful step in the WPR approach, especially since it clarifies priorities; the highest amount of funding equal top priority (and biggest problem), while a smaller amount of funding implies a not so extensive problem (Bacchi, 2012). In the statements, it is clearly visible that most funding is targeted to create local societal change, primarily outside EU borders. This is particularly evident in the EU's €500 million investment into the Spotlight Initiative, which
is a shared initiative with the United Nations (UN) to combat violence against women globally (European Commission, 2018). The basic idea is that since all regions suffer from various forms of gender-related problems, the solutions need to be tailor-made to best fit the cause (UN, EU, 2017). That the Spotlight Initiative is mentioned in as many as 5 statements suggest high support to the initiative by the Commission. This need to target issues at grass-roots levels is further strengthened by how other expenditures are placed. For example, the EU has ‘[…] allocated about €8 million in projects preventing and combating violence against women and girls within the EU and €20 million in fighting against harmful practices abroad’ (European Commission, 2015). That most funding is located outside the Union demonstrate that the EU believes that most equality violations are occurring outside the EU’s borders and moreover that the preferred solution is to address the issues on local levels.

Levels of governance and approach

The entirety of the statements also signal that gender equality cannot be reached on the state level alone. Instead, the Commission strongly propose multilateralism between states and international organizations to increase equality between genders. In a statement on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women (European Commission, 2018), the Commission announced that ‘[g]lobal challenges require global solutions that can best be formulated and then implemented working closely together with our international partners and through effective multilateralism’. This reasoning implies that equality does not stop at national borders and that most success is reached when all available instruments are used simultaneously. Such suggestions correspond well with an announcement made by HR/VP Mogherini at the UN Security Council in 2015 (Mogherini, 2015), ‘[i]f the global order is to be truly multilateral, the EU should seek support from like-minded partners and wherever possible accord rights to individuals, rather than to nations and states’. That the EU promotes multilateralism to solve gender issues feels natural especially since the EU itself is a multilateral organization.

That the EU advocates multilateralism is also evident through its strong support to the UN. The EU’s commitment to UN projects is apparent in almost every statement, especially the previously mentioned Spotlight Initiative. Similarly, within the ‘law and order’ problem representations, the Commission repeatedly stress the importance of prosecuting individuals who have violated human rights in accordance with both national and international law. To
achieve this, the European Commission supports the International Criminal Court which is the principal judicial organ of the UN and thus also a multilateral institution (James & Nevzat, 2014) (European Commission, 2016). Finally, besides the clear support for grass-root level actions and the need for a multilateral cooperation, the European Commission continuously suggests a multidimensional problem-solving approach where actions are executed at individual, national, international and supranational levels simultaneously.

**EU as a Normative Gender Power**

The previous research chapter established that the EU is situated in a world order under construction. That actors are gaining influence on the international stage which not conform with EU’s values and ideas might obstruct the EU from successfully using foreign affairs to transfer equal rights beyond its borders. For example, as illustrated in Q1, the ‘law and order’ problematisation to a high extent rely on the implementation of more extensive equality laws, as well as the need to prosecute perpetrators. This might be particularly difficult for the EU to accomplish, certainly due to the growing number of undemocratic states that are gaining power on the international arena. The EU usually negotiates for a world order based upon the rule of law, but, since illegal regimes might not conform with this idea, it will probably be problematic for the EU to manage change. Certainly, not if exerting soft power only (Duke, 2017).

What ought to be remembered here is that the member states still hold most competence in foreign policy, thus, the Commission does not possess the ability to actually pursue most of the proposals put forward in the statements. Unfortunately, member states have the habit of pursuing economic interests, leaving the gender equality agenda the responsibility of the EU (Duke, 2017). The statements present an attempt from the European Commission to solve this issue, by reminding the member states of the advantages that follow gender equality. For example, on the International Women’s day 2018 (European Commission, 2018), ‘[i]nvesting in the potential of women and girls is an investment in our whole society and is the responsibility of men and boys as much as women and girls’. Similarly, eliminating violence against women is announced to be ‘[...] a precondition for the promotion, protection and fulfillment of human rights, gender equality, democracy and economic growth’ (European Commission, 2017). As illustrated here, the European Commission implies that striving for gender equality is not only ‘right’ from a gender perspective, but it also entails economic growth. Such signaling might be an attempt to prevent economic interests from hindering
equality since economic advantages supposedly follow equality. What is particularly interesting here, is that the European Commission uses its normative power not only to influence actors outside the Union but also the member states. Hence, if the European Commission manages to influence the heads of states who sit in the European Council, it will most likely affect the outcome of the CFSP.

To conclude, this third part of the analysis concerned Q2b and the aim was to provide the study with a second dimension which focused on EU foreign policy rather than gender. Thus, the material was searched for actors that the European Commission saw fit to contribute to solutions and increase equality. The statements demonstrate an overall external engagement which fits well into the ‘normative power Europe’ description founded on values. Further on, the underlying presumptions and assumptions to EU foreign gender policy are that issues should be dealt with at the grass-root level, approaching them through a multidimensional approach using multilateral cooperation. Additionally, the tactic seems to be to both lock outward and inward, suggesting actions both within and beyond EU borders.

**Q5: What discursive and lived effects are produced by the identified problem representations?**

This fourth and final part of the analysis concerns Q5 of the WPR approach and aims to take a more practical point of view, investigating the actual consequences of the specific problem representations established in Q1. The basic presumption of WPR that should be remembered in this part of the analysis is that problematisations impact unevenly on different groups of people. Therefore, light need to be shed on the actual effects of the identified problematisations to be able to distinguish which groups of people are affected and in what way (Bacchi, 2009). Thus, this section will acknowledge discursive and lived effects from the European Commission’s problematisations. The basic idea of discursive effects is that problematisations tend to limit what can be thought or said about a particular subject. moreover, one problematisation might silence another. Lived effects, on the other hand, refers to how problem representations impact on individuals bodied existence (Bacchi, 2012). Consequently, the following two sections will adhere to the concepts in turn.
**Discursive effects**

Starting with discursive effects, the male/female dichotomy identified in Q2a will once again be up for discussion. The European Commission continually uses the male/female dichotomy in the statements simply because it has become the self-evident way to address men and women. Consequently, the fact that gender (which is socially constructed rather than biologically determined) is continuously allowed to determine all aspects of social life remains unquestioned. Although the male/female categorization is socially constructed, the labeling has been institutionalized to such extent that societies begin to see them as natural. Moreover, by using labeling which focuses on the difference between men and women, the Commission structure how individuals think and act in the world (Peterson & Runyan, 1999). Although the male/female dichotomy currently permeates the entirety of the society, it does not entail that it cannot be altered if recognized. The fact remains that men and women share far more similarities than differences. But a prerequisite for such change is that society starts to acknowledge and question this traditional stereotyping dichotomy, something that might be easier said than done. Basically, when things are perceived in a certain way, it becomes hard to imagine another alternative or to think differently (Bacchi, 2012). Similarly, while the European Commission is pre-occupied with constructing gender equality problems, the societal need to reconstruct gender roles is silenced.

Moreover, the need to alter societal norms are silenced in the problem representations. Although norm-changing is mentioned briefly in the statements, little emphasis is given by the Commission to the ideological understandings which undermine women in comparison to men (European Commission, 2017). Gender ideologies contain beliefs about the distinct roles of men and women in society, as well as how social hierarchies are situated between them. Gender inequality is legitimate in traditional gender ideologies, where men are privileged to take part in the public sphere while women are not (Peterson & Runyan, 1999). Although the European Commission emphasizes equality, the traditional gender ideology might still be prominent in the institution’s statements. An example of such occurrence was identified in Q2a, where it was recognized that the European Commission requested more women in the public sphere due to their abilities to seek solutions and solve conflicts (European Commission, 2017). A radical feminist would argue that this indicates that the patriarchal system still holds and that female attributes are requested simply because the situation calls for it (Gemzöe, 2017). Hence, ideologies are peculiar since they tend to be shaped by individuals in power (Peterson &
Runyan, 1999). The point here is not that the European Commission prefers and intentionally uses a traditional gender ideology, but rather that it occurs unintentionally and that there exists a need for questioning and re-evaluation.

**Lived effects**

Problem representations directly affects people’s lives, since the problematisations decide which issues need solving. Moreover, problem representations also tend to harm some groups while encouraging others (Bacchi, 2012) The ‘law and order’ problematisation emphasize the need of more extensive jurisdiction to increase equality and secure women’s fundamental rights. If the EU manages to implement such laws within the Union and beyond its borders, fewer women would have to face a violation of their rights. An improved legal system would carry that an increased number of perpetrators were persecuted for their crimes. The comprehensive laws would also have a deterrent effect, hindering individuals from committing crimes towards women. However, there is no indication that the implementation of new laws will carry change on a substantial level. Instead, the ‘violation of human rights’ problematisation is perceived as more likely to bring substantial change, mostly due to its educational focus. As when it comes to harm, the victim/perpetrator dichotomy identified in Q2 could carry complications since it constitutes men and women like each other’s enemies.

7. Conclusion

This thesis was interested in examining how the European Commission construct equality problem representations and to explore the EU’s approach to successfully spread equality through foreign policy. To achieve this aim, the study identified and reflected upon problematisations in statements given by the European Commission. The underlying reason for studying problem representations was that societies are governed through the ways issues are problematized, rather than through the policies themselves. This in comparison to traditional policy analyses which tend to focus on the policies as such (Bacchi, 2012). As this hoped to gain an increased understanding of the European Commission’s view on equality, the thesis engaged with two opposing strands of feminism: liberal and radical feminism. Moreover, the WPR approach provided guidance when developing the operational questions that came to structure the analysis while also helping the study to critically engage in the material. The first section of this conclusion will summarize the findings of this research and answer the research
question. Subsequently, the final section of this thesis will provide suggestions for future research complementary to this study.

7.1. Essential findings

The European Commission’s problem formulations contained aspects of both branches of feminism where some part leaned towards liberal feminism while others share most similarities with the assumptions originating in radical feminist thinking. At first instance, the European Commission signals a view on equality which corresponds well to the ideas of liberal feminism. The statements present an overall focus on ‘sameness’ where women should be granted equal rights as men. However, the analysis discovered that the identified problem representations to a high extent were based on the male/female dichotomy, which focuses on the difference between men and women and moreover creates an undesired man vs. women effect. Ideas which corresponds well with radical feminism. It is almost as if the EU aspires to conduct a gender foreign policy driven by liberal feminist values, but fails to do so since the male/female dichotomy comprise traditional gender ideologies and hierarchies which hampers the problem representations from being truly liberal.

The findings of the analysis also suggest a danger with using labeling and categorizations which are charged with centuries of oppression towards women. In practice, the male/female dichotomy does not only stand in the way for equality but might even prevent it. While the EU continues to construct problems based on the traditional male/female division, men and women will not be free to develop their personal traits and psychological capacities without having to follow certain scripts. Neither sex nor gender can possibly be so important that it shall decide every aspect of social life. Therefore, the EU would benefit from challenging the “either-or” thinking that has traditionally permeated genders and instead constructs problematisations based on inclusive premises, which allows individuals to be their best selves without having to consider whether that ‘best self’ categorizes as man or female.

The analysis suggests that both problematisations will probably have positive effects on women, certainly due to raised awareness of women’s rights and a more extensive legal equality framework. However, the findings from this research indicate that substantial, normative change cannot be excepted through either of the identified problem representations. Most of all since it is based upon outdated dichotomies of men and women. Although the Commission has
good intentions; the impression is that the problem representations are not thought through. In Peterson and Runyan’s words: ‘[…] in a context of structural oppressions, intending to be helpful does not inevitably contribute to good outcomes, because actions taken may unintentionally reproduce structurally oppressive consequences’ (Peterson & Runyan, 1999, p. 45). Similarly, although the EU is eager to become a normative gender power, it has failed to construct problematisations which are thought through to such extent that neither men or women are harmed.

This study was also concerned with the EU’s approach to securing women’s rights and promoting gender equality beyond its borders. The findings suggest that the European Commission considers cooperation to be most useful foreign policy tool to increase equality between genders. The underlying assumption is that global challenges requires global solutions. The scope of cooperation reaches all the way from individual level to multilateralism to supranationalism; where professionals, states, international organizations and the EU work together to reach common goals. The main point here is that actions need to be taken at appropriate levels and moreover that some problems require actions on several levels of governance simultaneously. Furthermore, a lot of emphases was put on solving issues at the grass-root level.

Hence, the research question: How is the problem of gender inequality constructed by the European Commission and which foreign policy approach is proposed to combat this inequality? Has been answered.

7.2. Opportunities for future research

As with all independent research, this thesis had a limited focus. The material up for scrutiny in this thesis was thus limited to contexts where equality issues were the main topic of discussion. To broaden the scope of the study, future research would benefit from including additional foreign policy context’s in the analysis. By including documents such as action plans for foreign policy or negotiations with third parties, the possibility would be presented to explore if gender is a top priority also in unsuspected contexts and if the same problem representations are present. Maybe the EU is just window dressing? Another interesting point of departure would be to explore whether the European Commission’s problematisations has changed in recent years. Women are gaining power in the public sphere and in foreign policy,
which is most likely to affect problem representations. Finally, the HR/VP Mogherini would serve as an interesting angle for complementary studies. As mentioned previously, Mogherini has appointed a role which is typically held by men and she engage not only in EU foreign policy situations but also in contexts outside the scope of the EU, such as the Women’s Foreign Ministers Meeting. The findings of such a comparison would show if the problem representations changes when only women are present.
Bibliography


Bacchi, C., 2012. Introducing the 'Whats the Problem Represented to be?' approach. i: *Engaging with Carol Bacchi- Strategic Interventions and Exchanges*. Adelaide: The University of Adelaide, pp. 21-25.


Calance, A. B., 2105. The European Union's External Affairs Policy- The High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy- A favourble framework for creating a single voice for the European diplomatic system or just a new buereacratic structure?. *CES Working Papers*, 7(4).


Eurostat, 2018. Seats held by women in national parliaments and governments , u.o.: European Institute for Gender Equality.


Meinen, B., 2015. The High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy from 2009 to 2014. 01 06.

Mogherini, F., 2015. Remarks by the High Representative/ Vice President Federica Mogherini at the EU-ISS Annual Conference. Brussels: u.n.

Mogherini, F., 2015. Speech by High Representative/ Vice President Federica Mogherini at the UN Security Council: Cooperation between the UN and Regional or Sub-Regional Organisations. New York: u.n.


Poblete, S. L., 2018. How can a feminist approach to foreign policy be understood?.


**Empirical Material**


