

Finding Feminism in Nuclear Policy: Event Series Summary

To launch CFFP UK's recent report 'Finding Feminism in Nuclear Policy' and to celebrate International Women's Day, CFFP UK hosted a series of three digital roundtables in March 2022 convening civil society experts and policymakers to discuss:

- *What kind of world do we want to live in and how do we get there?*
- *Whose voices are taken seriously and whose are sidelined?*
- *What systems must be shifted to ensure more equitable balances of power?*

Out of these conversations, several interesting themes emerged.

1.

The capitalist pressure to be hyper-productive and hyper-visible, especially in times of crisis, is problematic.

2.

Incorporating feminist and intersectional lenses on nuclear policy work is essential to countering the hegemonic masculinity and militarism that dominates.

3.

We need to foster greater collaboration between humanitarian, development, and strategic approaches to nuclear disarmament advocacy.

4.

Acknowledgement that we are first humans and then professionals makes greater space for compassion and emotional wellbeing.

These events were planned before the war in Ukraine and took place approximately one week after the war began. Thus, much of the conversation focused on this war, wider conflict situations, and related concerns about nuclear weapons.

Theme #1: The capitalist pressure to be hyper-productive and hyper-visible, especially in times of crisis, is problematic.

Perhaps the strongest theme to arise from this event series was discomfort with experts using crises as 'opportunities' to bolster personal branding and to push particular agendas. Many disarmament advocates, policy activists, and journalists were acknowledged as providing invaluable nuance into the unfolding war and using their platforms to educate, raise awareness, and centre Ukrainian voices. There was an awareness, however, that some experts were using the situation to centre themselves and their expertise, including those with no regional knowledge or experience of Eastern Europe. Participants reflected on two reasons for this dynamic. The first is the current way news is spread and shared, through social media and 24-hour news cycles. This perpetuates a need for quick-fire responses to complex and multilayered issues and often results in reinforcing status quo narratives that don't sufficiently question the structures of patriarchy, capitalism, and white supremacy that fuel conflicts. Secondly, the capitalist pressure to be productive and always 'on', particularly as crises are unfolding, results in a discounting of slower, more nuanced, contextualised, and thoughtful analysis.

Theme #2: Incorporating feminist and intersectional lenses on nuclear policy work is essential to countering the hegemonic masculinity and militarism that dominates.

Attendees expressed frustration that despite making progress, the nuclear policy sector is still largely oriented around the needs of middle class white men and things like care responsibilities, which still fall predominately on the shoulders of women, are difficult to manage with a career in this sector. Indigenous knowledge, as well as knowledge from Low and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs), is too often discounted due to the way that current structures and hierarchies in nuclear policy make it difficult for any new perspectives to be taken seriously.

Attendees agreed that to counter this siloing of knowledge, feminist solutions to nuclear issues and wider conflict would expand thinking to become more holistic, imaginative, and multilayered and would lead to social and structural change.

Theme #3: We need to foster greater collaboration between humanitarian, development, and strategic approaches to nuclear disarmament advocacy.

Often nuclear policy commentary focuses primarily on strategic analyses and would benefit from greater collaborations across humanitarian and development sectors as well. Attendees shared support for different ways to produce knowledge beyond the standard approaches, which can include multi-disciplinary mediums like poetry and art. Attendees also emphasised the need to reflect on the human impact of nuclear weapons. Strategic-level discourse often serves to obscure the real-life impact nuclear weapons and nuclear policy has on the everyday person.

Theme #4: Acknowledgement that we are first humans and then professionals makes greater space for compassion and emotional wellbeing.

In a continuation of the previous theme, attendees also noted that abstract rhetoric, free from emotion, still remains the norm in nuclear policy even decades after feminists and activists first drew attention to this problem. Attendees noted they are often expected to participate in dialogue about nuclear weapons as 'rational' experts first, and 'feeling' people second. This often leaves little room to include emotionally-based responses to crises and paints over the human impact of nuclear weapons from these conversations. Attendees noted that compassion and empathy are not assets, not detriments, to shaping better nuclear policy.

Want to learn more about feminist approaches to nuclear policy? See:

[Feminism, Power, and Nuclear Weapons: An Eye on the P5](#)

[Finding Feminism in Foreign Policy](#)

[A Gender Lens on Nuclear Disarmament](#)

[Feminist Foreign Policy and Deterrence](#)

[A Feminist Analysis of Nuclear Weapons: Part 1 - Hegemonic Masculinity](#)

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