



***Finding  
Feminism  
in Nuclear  
Policy***

**October 2021**

**CFFP** THE CENTRE FOR  
FEMINIST  
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*Finding Feminism in Nuclear Policy*

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# ***Table of Contents***

<b><i>Case Study Expert Bios</i></b>	<b><i>04</i></b>
<b><i>Introduction</i></b>	<b><i>07</i></b>
<b><i>Timelines</i></b>	<b><i>12</i></b>
<b><i>A Historical Account of Feminist Anti-Nuclear Interventions</i></b>	<b><i>19</i></b>
<b><i>Feminist Profiles</i></b>	<b><i>30</i></b>
<b><i>South Africa and Mexico: Case Studies</i></b>	<b><i>34</i></b>
<b><i>Recommendations</i></b>	<b><i>47</i></b>
<b><i>Concluding Remarks</i></b>	<b><i>54</i></b>
<b><i>Bibliography</i></b>	<b><i>55</i></b>

# Bios:

## Case Study Experts

### **Bernedette Muthien**

Bernedette Muthien has held executive and senior management positions in academia, civil society, and the public sector in South Africa and abroad for over twenty years. She is an accomplished facilitator, researcher, and poet. She has served on South Africa's Constitutional Commission for Cultural, Religious, and Linguistic Rights, where she was responsible for Parliamentary Liaison, Research and Policy Development, and Public Education. She was also Deputy Director General: Social Transformation and Economic Empowerment in the Presidency, where she served in the high-level Economic Cluster. She has over 200 publications and conference presentations, which have been translated into sixteen languages. She was the first Fulbright-Amy Biehl fellow at Stanford University and holds postgraduate degrees in Political Science from the University of Cape Town (Dean's Merit List) and Stellenbosch University (Andrew W Mellon Fellow). Bernadette was on the Executive Council of the International Peace Research Association, was the Co-Founder of the African Peace Research and Education Association and is currently the Convenor of the Global Political Economy Commission. She serves on various international advisory boards, including the international journals Human Security Studies and Journal of Human Security and the International Institute on Peace Education.

For this report, Bernedette interviewed:

- David Fig, Independent Consultant and Author of Uranium Road (2006, updated 2021)
- Keren Ben Zeev, Deputy Director, Heinrich Boell Stiftung South Africa
- Makoma Lekalakala, Earthlife Africa
- Noel Stott, University of Cape Town, previously Institute for Security Studies (now VERTIC)
- Liz McDaid, Organisation Undoing Tax Abuse, formerly South African Faith Communities Environment Institute

### **María Antonieta Socorro Jáquez Huacuja (Tonie Jaquez)**

María Antonieta Socorro Jáquez Huacuja (Tonie Jaquez) has been a member of the Mexican Foreign Service since 1994 and has worked as Political Coordinator at the Mission of Mexico to the UN since November 2016, where she focuses on peacebuilding, sustaining peace, and disarmament issues. She was Acting Director-General for the UN at the MFA of Mexico,

served as Deputy Director-General for Disarmament and the General Assembly at the Directorate General for U.N., and as a representative of Mexico to the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL). She worked at the Permanent Mission of Mexico to the UN in Geneva and represented her country at the Conference on Disarmament (2009-2012), the First Committee of the General Assembly, and in multiple intergovernmental meetings and negotiations on disarmament and non-proliferation issues, WMD, conventional weapons, SALW, landmines, cluster munitions, LAWS, and other multilateral issues. She has also represented Mexico at the WHO, the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, UNAIDS and other mechanisms for humanitarian portfolios. She served at the political sections at the Mexican Embassy in Austria and the Mexican Embassy in Sweden (2002-2008). She was Press and Cultural Attaché at the Consulate General of Mexico in Toronto (1998-2001) and Chief of Staff to the Director-General for the UN at the MFA (1995-1998).

### **Ambassador Alicia Buenrostro Massieu**

Ambassador Alicia Buenrostro Massieu is Mexico's Ambassador to Austria, Slovakia, and Slovenia and Resident Representative to the IAEA and the United Nations Office in Vienna. She has been a career diplomat since 1990, serving as Consul General of Mexico in Hong Kong and Macao SAR, Head of Chancery of the Embassy of Mexico in Spain, Press Counsellor at the Embassy of Mexico in the United States and First Secretary for political and academic affairs at the Embassy of Mexico in London. At the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Buenrostro Massieu's assignments included Adviser to the Deputy Foreign Minister for Multilateral Affairs, Deputy Director-General of the Department for Africa and the Middle East and Chief of the Department for Europe. In 2018, Ambassador Buenrostro Massieu acted as Chairperson of the 61st Commission on Narcotic Drugs of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. She was President of the 63rd IAEA General Conference. Ambassador Buenrostro Massieu has a bachelor's degree in International Relations from the Ibero-American University in Mexico City, a master's degree in Political Economy from the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), as well as certificates in European Integration from the Autonomous Technology Institute of Mexico and on media affairs from Georgetown University, Washington, D.C. Ambassador Buenrostro Massieu is also the co-author of the Chapter "Bilateral Diplomacy" of the Oxford Handbook of Modern Diplomacy (2013).

### **Clara Franco Yáñez**

Clara Franco Yáñez is a Doctoral Researcher at the University of Hamburg and the GIGA Doctoral Programme. She is an advocate for health-related, gender and human rights. She worked as an International Affairs consultant to Dr José Antonio Hernández Pacheco, medical specialist at Mexico's National Institute of Perinatology. Yáñez was formerly a Parliamentary Advisor in International Affairs to the Human Rights Commission at the National Congress in Mexico (Lower Chamber – Cámara de Diputados). She has also worked as a Research Collaborator at the Network for International Policies and Cooperation in Education and

Training in Geneva, where she was responsible for a research project on Massive Open Online Courses and their impact in developing regions. Yáñez has worked for the Human Rights Treaties Division, UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and consulted the World Health Organization.

# 01

## ***Introduction***

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**For decades, nuclear weapons treaties, policies, and practices have been developed and negotiated in deeply patriarchal and elitist spaces, reinforcing unequal social and political power structures around the world.**

At a minimum, this has resulted in the exclusion of women and historically marginalised individuals and communities from policymaking, a concentration of power and voice in UMICs [1], and an insistence that deterrence is the most effective way to keep peace. Feminist activists have long challenged existing and arising inequalities and sought new, more effective ways to pursue peace. Most recently, these efforts have led to the development of Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP).

FFP originated out of Sweden, which first developed and applied this framework to their foreign policy in 2014. It initially focused on the three 'R's': the **rights** of women and girls, effectively **resourcing** gender equality initiatives, and increasing the **representation** of women and girls in leadership. Several governments, including Canada, Spain, and Mexico, have since followed in Sweden's footsteps and have made similar commitments: either implementing stand-alone feminist policies, making a commitment to eventually adopt FFP, or fully implementing an FFP framework.

Implemented by states, FFP focuses on mainstreaming gender equality policies across specific areas of foreign policy. Feminist civil society, however, takes an all-encompassing approach to the explicit inclusion of feminism in foreign policy, understanding its potential to be greater than how governments have implemented it so far. CFFP defines FFP as both a framework and a lens; it offers an alternate and intersectional rethinking of security from the viewpoint of the most marginalised and considers how gender, race, class, and sexuality, among others, operate as hierarchies of power and overlap to produce multiple forms of discrimination. In other words, it pays close attention to unequal power dynamics and seeks to rebalance them. The experiences of historically marginalised communities are elevated to the forefront and their needs are prioritised in political processes and policy. FFP prioritises intersectional equality for all, enshrines the human rights of women and other politically marginalised groups, and committedly pursues human security and feminist peace. The fundamental goal of FFP is systemic change, and it challenges the destructive forces of patriarchy, capitalism, racism, and militarism. In this way, FFP is not just applicable to foreign policy but must also be implemented domestically to ensure coherence across societies and around the world (CFFP, 2021) [2].

## **Feminist Foreign Policy and Nuclear Policy**

Only a handful of nations currently possess nuclear weapons. The Treaty on the Non-



Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) granted custodianship to only five states that had successfully tested their nuclear capabilities prior to January 1967: China, Russia, France, the UK, and the USA. Once the treaty was fully implemented in 1970, all other states were banned from developing or using nuclear weapons (NPT, 1970). While 191 states signed the treaty, several dissenting states still developed their own nuclear weapons. India and Pakistan refused to sign the NPT and developed their own arsenal (Mahmood, 1995). In 2003, North Korea withdrew from the NPT and continues to test its weaponry to this day (Arms Control Association, 2020a). Israel has never signed nor ratified the treaty, and many experts suspect they have developed nuclear weapons (Arms Control Association, 2020b). South Africa initially didn't sign the NPT and went on to develop their own nuclear weapons, only to voluntarily give them up in 1989 and then sign the treaty in 1991 (ICAN, 2021).

This system has created extraordinary power imbalances between states, particularly as the NPT-sanctioned nuclear possessor nations also sit as the permanent five (P5) members of the United Nations Security Council. This results in a complicated global system built around nuclear-haves and nuclear-have-nots. It means nuclear weapons symbolise much more than military apparatus and primarily function as symbols of power, strength, reason, and masculinity. Understanding these dynamics through a feminist lens, which is attentive to power inequalities, is particularly useful. It means questioning the extent that marginalised voices have been included and taken seriously in policymaking, which, in this case, include those of non-possessor nations, Indigenous communities whose land was tested on, and women who have been historically excluded from political and security spaces. The impact of nuclear policy on the everyday lived experiences of local populations becomes the focus of policy objectives rather than the highly abstracted and deeply politicised 'benefits' of nuclear weapons. While there is a long history of feminist advocacy for nuclear elimination, such feminist are regularly sidestepped by governments. However, particularly when nuclear-possessing states like the UK and France engage with or implement FFP frameworks, such perspectives must be taken seriously. Instead of contextualising this knowledge and engaging only with states at the top of the nuclear hierarchy, we must instead centre the voices and experiences of those who have typically been ignored and silenced.

## **Report Aim**

This report explores the influence of feminist activism on nuclear policy and how the themes and concerns identified by FFP frameworks are being addressed in nuclear policymaking. Specifically, as newer – arguably feminist – initiatives like the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) initiate large-scale change, this report seeks to explore the question: how has feminist activism shaped nuclear policy? This report aims to share knowledge, expertise, and historically marginalised perspectives to better enable FFP

advocates to identify successful paths to policy influence and change. First, this report provides a historical account of feminist activism, research, literature, and analyses concerning nuclear policy. Next, it focuses on the case studies of South Africa and Mexico to centre LMIC perspectives and indicate the steps, lessons, and pathways to achieving nuclear disarmament. Finally, it concludes with recommended next steps for nuclear possessing states to interrogate the purpose and impact of nuclear policy. Ultimately, this report is designed to equip its readers with the knowledge and skills to effectively examine nuclear policy's power dynamics, purpose, and impact. It invites us all to envision new and alternative policy solutions and work together for global nuclear elimination.

## Report Methodology

Feminist methodologies are inherently and deeply political and ideal for scrutinising gender, race, and other social identities which function as hierarchies of power (Tickner, 2006). They centre a normative commitment to challenge mainstream and seemingly 'objective' claims, situate knowledge from the perspective of marginalised people's lives, and facilitate social change to reconfigure oppressive hierarchies of power (Reinharz, 1992: 241; Tickner, 2006: 22). The authors of this report ascribe to these methodological commitments, drawing particularly on feminist standpoint theory. Feminist standpoint theory acknowledges the variety of experiences and knowledge (their 'standpoints') of different individuals and groups and considers how these experiences are shaped by their intersecting social identities (Weldon, 2006: 64). This report grounds its investigation and analysis in the experiences and knowledge of those who are marginalised, which offers particular analytic leverage as power often operates to obscure rather than reveal (Weldon, 2006: 65).

### *Case study selection*

This report focuses on two country case studies: South Africa and Mexico, two LMICs that have engaged with the Nuclear Ban Treaty and have dynamic histories of feminist activism. South Africa's position as a former nuclear possessor turned voluntary non-possessor is a particularly interesting context in which to explore how feminist activism has influenced its decision-making to disarm and sign the Nuclear Ban Treaty. Despite having never possessed nuclear weapons, Mexico signed the TPNW in 2017 and launched its FFP framework in January 2020.

This report focuses on two LMIC nations and elevates perspectives and histories usually ignored in mainstream nuclear policy discussions. However, doing so is important as it reveals the underlying bias of international norms surrounding legitimisation processes, authority, and political structures. Instead, what is portrayed as natural, objective, or justified is challenged,

and the coercive power that functions to maintain power hierarchies is revealed (Enloe, 1996).


### *Interviews*

After conducting a stakeholder mapping exercise, CFFP approached four key stakeholders with lived experiences in South Africa and Mexico. The interviewee process was conducted over a few months. This allowed interviewees to prepare their responses, speak to peers, and share their knowledge in line with their current professional commitments. Interviews were conducted digitally on Zoom. Questions were semi-structured to facilitate an open conversation where interviewees were equals in the flow of the conversation. All interviews were conducted according to CFFP Research Guidelines, including attention to researcher reflexivity and power dynamics between interviewer and interviewee, care, and collectivity.

### **End Notes**

1. Throughout this report, we use the term UMIC refer to Upper and Middle Income Countries and the term LMIC to refer to Low and Middle Income Countries. For the current 2022 fiscal year, LICs (Low Income Countries) are defined as those with a gross national income (GNI) per capita of \$1,045 or less in 2020. LMICs (Low and Middle Income Countries) are those with a GNI per capita between \$1,046 and \$4,095; UMICs are those with a GNI per capita between \$4,096 and \$12,695. HICs (High Income Countries) are those with a GNI per capita of \$12,696 or more (World Bank, 2021).
2. See The CFFP Glossary for more detail.

# Chronology: World Events

- 
- 1945** ● The United States detonated two nuclear weapons over the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on 6 and 9 August 1945, respectively.
- 1946** ● First UN General Assembly held and the first resolution adopted called for “the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons and of all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction.”
- 1961** ● The General Assembly adopts resolution 1653 (XVI) which included a declaration on the prohibition of the use of nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapons.
- 1962** ● Non-possessor states now permitted to speak on nuclear issues at the UN General Assembly.
- 1963** ● Partial Test Ban Treaty bans nuclear tests in the atmosphere, in outer space and under water.
- 1996** ● The World Health Organization asks the International Court of Justice if the use of nuclear weapons is legal. The answer was yes because no treaty prohibits their use, but no under humanitarian law.
- 2010** ● Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons express deep concern at the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons and reaffirms the need for all States at all times to comply with applicable international law, including international humanitarian law.
- 2012** ● Sixteen states deliver a joint statement on the humanitarian dimension of nuclear disarmament, emphasising it is in the interest of the very survival of humanity that nuclear weapons are never used again under any circumstances.
- 2013** ● The General Assembly establishes an open-ended working group to develop multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations for the achievement and maintenance of a world without nuclear weapons. They determine a number of approaches e.g. a step-by-step approach of mutually reinforcing and progressive steps or building blocks; a comprehensive approach for a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons with a specified framework of time, including a nuclear weapons convention; and a legally binding framework committing all States to a world without nuclear weapons backed by defined timelines and benchmarks.

**2013 - 2014**

A series of three conferences in Norway, Mexico and Austria on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons concludes that it was unlikely any state could cope with the humanitarian impact of a nuclear weapon detonation.

**2015**

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a historic global agreement to eradicate extreme poverty, fight inequality and injustice and leave no one behind. Agreed by world leaders at the UN, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals are universal with all signatories expected to contribute to them internationally and deliver them domestically. This includes ensuring women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life (5.5), and encouraging and promoting effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships Data, monitoring and accountability (17.17).

**2017**


UN conference held to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) was adopted by the Conference

**2021**

TPNW enters into force.

# Chronology:

## Mexico

- 
- 1963** ● President of Mexico Adolfo López Mateos invites the Presidents of Bolivia (Victor Paz Estenssoro), Brazil (Joao Goulart), Chile (Jore Alessandri) and Ecuador (Carlos Julio Arosemena) to make a joint “announcement forthwith that their Governments are prepared to sign a multilateral Latin American agreement whereby the countries would undertake not to manufacture, receive, store or test nuclear weapons or nuclear launching devices.”
- 1964** ● Preliminary Meeting on the Denuclearization of Latin America (REUPRAL) reaffirms the purposes of the denuclearization in Latin America as “the absence of nuclear weapons” and created the Preliminary Commission for the Denuclearization of Latin America (COPREDAL), who would prepare a draft multilateral treaty for the denuclearization of Latin America.
- 1965** ● COPREDAL creates three working groups to define the geographic boundary for the treaty, determine how possessor states would respect the legality of denuclearisation, and study the methods of verification, inspection and control.
- 1967** ● COPREDAL unanimously approves the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America (the Tlatelolco Treaty).
- 1969** ● Mexico ratifies the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1969 and the Additional Protocol in 2004.
- 1979** ● Mexico attends the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material.
- 1984** ● The Act on Nuclear Activities states that the government, through the Ministry of Energy, is responsible for establishing the framework for the use and development of nuclear energy and technology, in accordance with the national energy policy.
- 1989** ● First commercial nuclear power reactor begins operating.
- 2012** ● Mexico assigns a specific desk for and a delegation for disarmament in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This team of mainly women, produced the 2014 UN Conference.
- 2014** ● Mexico chairs the Second Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, and Juan Gómez Robledo, concludes that a diplomatic process must be launched for the prohibition of nuclear weapons. ICAN was the civil-society partner for this conference.

**2015**

**Policymakers must consider gender, youth and disabilities in the planning, implementation and monitoring of their policies and programmes.**

**2017**

**Nuclear ban core group presents resolutions to the UN General Assembly stating the immorality and humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons. The Minister for Foreign Affairs in Mexico and the Director General for the UN were women. Luis Videgaray Caso, the then-secretary of foreign affairs of Mexico, signs the treaty when it opened for signature, stating Mexico had signed the treaty because “the existence of nuclear weapons poses a threat to the whole of humanity”.**

**2018**

**Mexico becomes a contracting party to the IAEA Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management.**

**2019**

**In a statement to the United Nations, Mexico encourages all states that have not yet ratified the treaty “to speed up their respective processes”.**

**2021**

**Mexico becomes the first country in Latin America to adopt a Feminist Foreign Policy.**

# Chronology:

# South Africa

1948

Election of the Nationalist Party marks the beginning of legalised racism and segregation known as Apartheid

South Africa becomes interested in atomic energy, and the mining, trade and energy industry.

1957

Under the "Atoms for Peace" program, South Africa signs a 50-year nuclear collaboration agreement with the United States, buying its first nuclear reactor and an accompanying supply of highly enriched uranium fuel.

1969

South Africa abandons the critical assembly at Pelindaba and the heavy water reactor project because it's draining resources from the uranium enrichment program.

1973

South Africa formally begins its nuclear weapons program with scientists instructed to develop gun-type, implosion, and thermonuclear weapon designs, authorised by Prime Minister John Vorster. Dr. Waldo Stumpf, former head of the state-controlled Atomic Energy Corporation.

1977

Officially the purpose of the nuclear explosion program changes from peaceful to military purposes, due to a "growing feeling of isolation and helplessness, perceptions of major military threat, and desires for regional prestige" according to U.S. Special National Intelligence. South Africa's leaders were driven to develop weapons of mass destruction by border insecurity, strong distrust of neighboring countries, doubts about the true intentions of Western powers, and the country's increasing isolation from the international community because of apartheid and nuclear weapons aspirations.

1982

South Africa develops and builds its first nuclear explosive device. The nuclear arsenal subsequently increases at the rate of one device approximately every 18 months.

1988

Roelof Frederik "Pik" Botha, South African foreign minister, announces that his nation had "the capability to make one [a nuclear weapon]" should it want to do so. The South African government then send a letter to IAEA Director General Hans Blix expressing a willingness to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons if certain conditions were met, primarily that South Africa be allowed to market its uranium subject to IAEA safeguards.

A cease-fire between South Africa, Cuba, and Angola, and the withdrawal of South African troops from Angola, leads to a tripartite agreement between these nations, the withdrawal of 50,000 Cuban troops from Angola, and the independence of Namibia. The improved security of South Africa's borders proved pivotal to the country's decision to dismantle the nuclear weapons program.



1989

In possession of 6 bombs, the government under President de Klerk, officially ends the nuclear program, as domestic unrest grows.

1991

South Africa joins the NPT as a non-nuclear weapon state.

1993

The South African Parliament passes the Non-Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction Act, which committed South Africa to abstain from the development of nuclear weapons.

South African President F. W. de Klerk announces publicly that South Africa had pursued a nuclear weapons program from 1974 through 1990 as a deterrent to counter a perceived Soviet threat.

1994

Nelson Mandela is elected as South Africa's first black president and Apartheid ends.

South Africa's Council for Nuclear Safety is set up to safeguard citizens and property against nuclear hazards and announces an agreement between South Africa and the United States to exchange information about nuclear safety.

The IAEA confirms that all of South Africa's nuclear weapons had been dismantled.

1995

NPT Review and Extension Conference where South African diplomats play a critical role in building consensus among member states to adopt a set of "Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament" and to extending the NPT indefinitely.

1996

NPT Review and Extension Conference where South African diplomats play a critical role in building consensus among South Africa is admitted into the UN Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, and signs the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty.

South Africa begins its Defence Review process, engaging with various sectors from the military to civil society to redefine post-Apartheid defence and security policy. Through extensive consultation with civil society, it ultimately defined the country's security in terms of human security and development, explicitly stating poverty as its greatest security threat, rather than military aggression from neighbouring countries.

Bernedette Muthien founds The Coalition for Defense Alternatives to lobby against rearmament, basing the defense and security policy on human security.

South Africa joins other African nations in declaring Africa a nuclear-weapons-free zone through the Treaty of Pelindaba.

Establish the African Commission on Nuclear Energy, based in Pretoria, to ensure states comply with the Treaty.

states to adopt a set of "Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament" and to extending the NPT indefinitely.

- 
- 1997** ● South Africa's new Constitution comes into effect.
- 1995** ● NPT Review and Extension Conference where South African diplomats play a critical role in building consensus among member states to adopt a set of "Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament" and to extending the NPT indefinitely.
- 2004** ● South African investigators reveal that the Krisch Engineering Firm had provided nuclear equipment to Pakistan from 1986 to 1995, and along with Tradefin Engineering, had also provided equipment used in gas centrifuges for uranium enrichment to Libya's nuclear weapons program from 1999 until 2003. South Africa successfully prosecute some members of the smuggling ring, while others cooperate with authorities to avoid or reduce criminal penalties.
- 2007** ● Four armed intruders break into the Pelindaba nuclear facility near Pretoria, where supplies of weapons-grade uranium are stored.
- 2014 - 2017** ● Russia's state-owned nuclear corporation announce that it had signed a nuclear procurement agreement with South Africa. This came as a shock to many citizens, since the deal did not pass through proper parliamentary channels and there had been no space for participation from the public on the deal. SAFCEI and Earthlife Africa Johannesburg believe that there was a deliberate manipulation of government decision-making processes and take the matter to court. After a campaign inside the courtroom and in the public arena, with public meetings and workshops, protests and marches, the Western Cape High Court found that the nuclear deal and the various associated energy procurement processes, were both illegal and unconstitutional.
- 2017** ● South Africa signs the TPNW.
- 2019** ● South Africa passes the Gender Planning and Budgeting framework which states that one third of programmes must benefit women.

# 02

***A Historical Account  
of Feminist  
Anti-Nuclear  
Interventions***

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**“The dominant voice of militarized masculinity and decontextualized rationality speaks so loudly in our culture that it will remain difficult for any other voices to be heard until that voice loses some of its power to define what we hear and how we name the world.”**

**Carol Cohn (1987: 24)**

During the 2019 TEDx talk on *Banning the Bomb, Smashing the Patriarchy*, feminist activist Ray Acheson acknowledges that, as the story goes, nuclear weapons exist to keep ‘us’ safe and secure. But who does ‘us’ refer to? Some “mythical international community that speaks of peace and well-being for all”? (Biswas, 2014: 3) Who defines and constructs the practices of global security? By which means? How are women and men affected differently by the nuclear arms race? Most significantly, what are the human costs of nuclear weapons? These are the kinds of questions that feminists have been contending with for decades, yet their contributions to global nuclear politics have been met with considerable resistance (Cohn and Enloe, 2003: 1193). It is largely due to feminist activism, advocacy, and research on nuclear issues that we are now witnessing a paradigmatic shift in international peace and security dialogues relating to disarmament.

Informed by 20th century feminist theories of peace, anti-war, and anti-militarism, feminists have been able to explore how nuclear weapons, as well as the institutions and political systems that maintain their value, are instrumental in establishing a colonial and patriarchal hierarchy of state power - a consideration often left unremarked by non-feminists (Cohn and Ruddick, 2003: 43). Feminist tools are critical in challenging these power hierarchies. They enable us to interrogate and dismantle violent structures of the militarised male cosmology that legitimises the nuclear age and present an alternative security system that puts human safety at its core (Cockburn, 2013). However, feminist approaches to analysing and protesting nuclear weapons cannot be considered homogenous in their intentions or enactment. Feminist approaches are situated in diverse and complex positions within the global nuclear order. As Carol Cohn and Sara Ruddick (2003: 8) stated at the 2003 *Consortium on Gender, Security, and Human Rights*, “[n]one of us speaks from nowhere; there is no phenomenon – including nuclear attack or proliferation – that can be seen independently of the situation of the seers”. Instead, the multiple and diverse feminisms that have appeared throughout history in response to nuclear weapons offer diverse, global perspectives. This chapter seeks to provide a chronological (albeit brief) history of these feminist interventions in nuclear policy, including both feminist research and activism, to highlight the value of feminist praxis in establishing a nuclear-free world.

## The Beginnings of Feminist Anti-Nuclear Activism

In 1986 the Reykjavík Summit was held between the presidents of the United States, Ronald Reagan, and the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev. This led to the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, claimed by Gorbachev as "the first step down the road leading to a nuclear-free world" (Perlman, 1987). This would not be the case had it not been for the efforts of international peace movements, including the various forms of women's activism that challenged the specific ways in which women are adversely affected by nuclear issues [1]. Since the dawn of the nuclear age, women have been organising, campaigning, and resisting the proliferation and legitimisation of nuclear weapons, including their gendered impacts, which are complex and far-reaching. While not every women's anti-nuclear network or campaign was explicitly feminist, nor was every feminist endeavour constituted solely by women, the boundaries between 'women' and 'feminist' remain fluid and fluctuating (Eschle, 2020: 251). Importantly, both forms of activism highlight the centrality of gender in nuclear issues.

Women's anti-nuclear activism in Japan began with the *hibakusha* (survivors of the atomic bomb), who had experienced first-hand the effects of radiation, both physiologically and socially. Nine months after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, women gave birth to babies with congenital disabilities. Consequently, they were deemed incapable of mothering by their communities, resulting in their ostracisation (Alexis-Martin, 2015). After the atomic bomb testing in Bikini Atoll in 1954 that resulted in the contamination of the Japanese fishing boat Lucky Dragon, Japanese women began collecting ban-the-bomb signatures out of concern over what to feed their families (Hutner, 2018). As members of the National Coordinating Council of Regional Women's Associations (Chifuren) and the Housewives' Association (Shufuren), women, mostly housewives, successfully secured 170,000 signatures protesting the use of nuclear weapons. This posed a direct feminist challenge to Japanese gendered norms that relegated women to the domestic sphere and marginalised them from public life (Higuchi, 2008: 341-342).

From the 1960s onwards, Oceanian women peace activists led advocacy campaigns protesting the nuclear testing programmes experimented in their regions that began a decade prior. The work of women's community and church groups was instrumental in educating Oceanian peoples about the harm inflicted on both the health and wellbeing of the people, as well the degradation of the ocean and island ecosystems as a result of nuclear weapons (Teaiwa, 1992, 1994; de Ishtar, 1998; Siwatibau and Williams, 1981). The efforts of the Oceanian women activists - working in networks such as Women Campaigning for an Independent and Nuclear-Free Pacific - helped shape Oceanic states' policy on nuclear weapons and influenced subsequent United Nations-related activities, foreign policy agendas, and the general regional rejection of the nuclear presence in their islands (Ogashiwa, 1991; George, 2009b). The

anti-nuclear campaigning of Belau (Palau) women within the women's NGO Otil a Beluad and their resistance against US military commandeering of their land secured them a Nobel Peace Prize nomination in 1988.

Feminist anti-nuclear activism in India began in the mid-1980s, though it developed in a drastically different context (Das, 2010). Women were concerned with the threat of nuclear war and Hindutva ideology [2], which underpinned the right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government and inspired its militaristic policies that threatened human security and directly impacted women. This feminist activism uncovered the gendered foundations of Indian nuclearisation that enabled continued Hindu masculinist violence against women. Women from various social and economic backgrounds formed several networks, such as the Movement in India for Nuclear Disarmament (MIND) and the Coalition for Nuclear Disarmament and Peace (CNDP). The height of Indian women's anti-nuclear resistance came after India declared itself a nuclear weapons state in 1998 with the establishment of the Women's Initiative for Peace in South Asia (WIPSA). These diverse forms of women's activism were powerful forms of resistance against the Indian state and countered hegemonic representation of Indian women as vulnerable 'Third World' women (Das, 2007) [3].

Propelled by the women's movements of the previous decades, many women anti-nuclear activists in the 1980s established peace camps across the world as a feminist challenge to traditional 'feminine' modes of political campaigning (Eschle, 2020: 251; Gusterson, 1996: 193-197, 213; Wittner, 2000). These peace camps are well-documented and referenced in accounts of feminist disarmament activism. Perhaps the most notable example, *Greenham Common Peace Camp* in England, was established in 1981. It is due, in part, to the women involved that the British government agreed to return the land to the people of Berkshire once the military base was decommissioned (Stead, 2013). Modelled on Greenham Common, thirty peace camps were set up across three continents by 1983, including *Seneca* in New York, *Puget Sound* in Washington, and *Pine Gap* near Alice Springs in Australia (Lederman, 1989: 244). While it is true that many feminists question the biologically determinist rationale of some of the peace camps that viewed women as essentially more capable of peace-making than men, they formed important feminist spaces where power relations, symbolic systems and gendered identities were constantly renegotiated, leaving fertile ground for feminist scholars to sow (Eschle, 2020: 64).

### **The World of Nuclear Weapons: A Masculinist Space**

In 1985, Helen Caldicott referenced the state of Missile Envy at play between nuclear weapons states, reflecting the feminist critique of the Freudian male ego driving the Cold War (see Cohn, 1987). This 'missile envy' encapsulated the essence of the male-dominated nuclear

industry, intent on proliferating patriarchal symbols of force and power that would simultaneously subjugate women - as well as indigenous peoples and the environment (Eschle, 2013: 716; Spretnak, 1983: 55).

During 1984-85 in the United States, Carol Cohn was one of a select group of women permitted into the world of “defense intellectuals”, where she witnessed first-hand the ‘rational’ processes enabling the legitimization of nuclear weapons under the safe guise of deterrence theory (Cohn, 1987: 127-128). As Cohn remarks in her revered (1987) article, she became aware of a specialised language used to discuss nuclear strategy. This language was interwoven in an extensive symbolic system that was highly gendered and infused with conceptual dichotomies such as masculine/feminine, rational/emotional, hard/soft, and active/passive. At first reluctant to interpret nuclear strategy with an explanation of phallic worship or ‘missile envy’, Cohn realised that the “technostrategic language” (as she named it) of the “defense intellectuals” was filled not only with sexual euphemisms but with imagery of male birth and religion, in stark contradiction to the “hyper-rationality” of their world (ibid, 143). For example, discussion of “vertical erector launchers” and “deep penetration”; the naming of the first atomic bomb test as ‘Trinity’; the Los Alamos bomb referred to as ‘Oppenheimer’s baby’; the craters left by French bombs in the Mururoa Atoll being given women’s names (Cohn, 1987). Beyond the implications of these misogynistic descriptors, this language serves a different purpose that Cohn and many others have critiqued: the abstraction of nuclear discourse that allows policymakers and strategists to detach from the very real consequences of their actions. In this way, the nuclear arms race seems little more than a competition for manhood where men reduce destructive explosive devices to “clean bombs” and unspeakable human suffering to “collateral damage” (ibid: 131).

Perhaps the most significant realisation that Cohn (1987: 145) made during her time with the ‘defense intellectuals’ was the ease with which she assimilated their language as her own, even taking pleasure in being part of the ‘boys’ club’. She noted, “the experience of mastering the words infuses your relation to the material...[l]earning the language gives a sense of...cognitive mastery”. Cohn’s work has proven foundational for subsequent feminist analysis of nuclear strategic thinking, as well as in considering the militarisation of the mind and the implications of thinking about isolated phenomena without considering their social and material context (ibid, 157).

In Cynthia Enloe’s (1990) *Bananas, Beaches & Bases*, now considered a pillar text of feminist IR theory, she poses the poignant question, “where are the women?” and demonstrates the vital role of women in international politics is made invisible. This publication emerged as part of a transformative research project on feminist and other critical approaches to International Relations (IR), which argued that gender must be acknowledged to pursue a systematic study

of power (Steans, 1998: 5). As V Spike Peterson explains, “‘real world’ events are not adequately addressed by [masculinist] accounts that render women and gender relations invisible.” (Spike Petersen, 1992: 197; Sjoberg, 2009, 185). These approaches were accompanied by the feminist technoscience project. Feminist philosophers and scientists – such as Sandra Harding and Evelyn Fox Keller – realised that mainstream science and knowledge production was inherently biased and had a tendency towards protecting the ideology of the dominant group, which was “exclusive of women, or counter to them and replete with sexist...agendas” (Harding, 2004: 5). Feminist and other critical approaches challenged the male-dominated cosmology informing IR and security practices (Tickner, 1988: 429).

These critiques enable us to understand how political realism underpins global politics, an ideological system premised upon a masculinist model of human nature that depends on gendered dualisms. In each dualism, the ‘masculine’ option is superior; with this in mind, “nuclear strategy has a distinctly masculine ring to it” (Tickner, 1988: 429; Sjoberg, 2009). Nuclear weapons states rely on gendered imagery to legitimise themselves as the rational, competent, advanced (masculine) Self, superior to the irrational, emotional, primitive (feminine) Other aka non-possessor states (Cohn and Ruddick, 2003: 18). This discourse places power in the hands of a select few who can feminise and marginalise those states who do not comply with the ‘masculine’ standard. As an alternative, the feminist reformulation of IR and security discourse views power as mutually enabling and co-operation and regeneration as essential means to preventing conflict (Tickner, 1988). Thinking about military, economic, and international security in these interdependent ways suggests the need for new methods of conflict resolution. For example, the integration of the concept of human vulnerability, which has been largely dismissed in favour of realist discourse prizing invulnerability, impregnability, and invincibility (Duncanson and Eschle, 2008: 553; Tickner, 1988: 435; Ruddick, 1989). Vulnerability is gendered at the symbolic level and difficult to weave into the centre of nuclear discourse; the association of vulnerability with femininity means that the mention of it threatens rationalist, hegemonic masculinity (Cohn, 2014: 54). For this very reason, the notion of human vulnerability – developed most prominently by Sara Ruddick (1989) – plays a crucial role in contemporary disarmament discourse.

Nuclear weapons are embedded in notions of masculinity, and to abolish them would be to dismantle an entire system dependent upon gendered structures. In a capitalist patriarchal society that relies on hierarchies of power that are dominated by men, “[if] disarmament is emasculation, how could any real man even consider it?” (Cohn, 1987: 133). Yet gender is not the only structural and social issue at play in the world of nuclear weapons. Here, feminist scholars from LMICs have brought to attention the colonialist and imperialist tendencies



inherent not only in nuclear discourse and strategising but also in scholarship on nuclear issues. This work demonstrates how masculinity and colonial power retain hegemony in global nuclear politics and suggests potential ways to address these issues.

## **Nuclear Colonisation**

When looking at the history of nuclear explosions and testing and uranium mining, we are confronted with the uncomfortable truths of colonialism and imperialism enacted on indigenous bodies, perpetuated by the governments and institutions of the nuclear world powers (Endres, 2009: 40). Over fifty years, the US conducted 1054 nuclear tests in the Marshall Islands and on indigenous land in Alaska, Nevada, Colorado, Mississippi, and New Mexico as part of the US Nuclear Weapons Testing Programme (Endres, 2018: 253). In 1960, France began its nuclear weapons testing in formerly colonised land, including Algeria and French Polynesia. The UK used indigenous Australian land for its nuclear testing programme between 1952 and 1963. Nuclear (or radiation) colonialism refers to this system of exploitation and destruction of Indigenous populations, land, and cultural heritage, all of which have suffered disproportionately (ibid). Feminist and post-colonial arguments have long criticised the very creation of nuclear weapons as an example of colonisation at work; as such, a post-colonial and feminist framework can reveal not only how indigenous women are disproportionately affected by nuclear weapons but also how non-nuclear weapons states and ‘Third World’ countries are feminised, othered, and subjected to increasingly orientalist rhetoric (Cohn and Ruddick, 2003: 18).

While feminist anti-nuclear scholarship and activism has sought to challenge patriarchal systems of oppression, in some cases, it has failed to take into account the specific experiences of those located outside of ‘First World’ boundaries. Post-colonial scholarship can help us understand how and by which means nuclear weapons states have been able to maintain their position of power in global politics. Black and ‘Third World’ feminists have championed the need for an intersectional, decolonial approach within feminism and have laid the foundations for subsequent post-colonial feminist analysis (e.g., Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016; Crenshaw, 1989; Lugones, 2007). In one of the first texts to consider colonial implications in feminist scholarship, Mohanty (1988) adds to the feminist critique of IR by arguing that ‘discursive’ colonisation works to ensure that a monolithic and universalising construction of ‘Third World Woman’ prevails in western scholarship. There is a presumed commonality amongst ‘Third World Women’ and their varying struggles against oppressive structures within their respective locations, at the same time robbing them of their social and political agency. This discursive colonisation serves as a valuable framework for analysing nuclear discourse, particularly where we see mention of ‘rogue’ and ‘lesser’ states which carry feminised and racialised implications. Moreover, referring to ‘Third World’ in nuclear strategising implies

discursive colonisation through which nuclear-possessing states can legitimise their colonial power by shaping language to marginalise non-possessor states (Urwin, 2016).

During protests against the nuclear testing in the Marshall Islands and French Polynesia, women were active in launching feminist critiques of security and colonial rule (Teaiwa and Slatter, 2013). Teresia Teaiwa (1994: 96), the i-Kiribati and African American scholar, notes as she demonstrates how the bikini symbolises the colonialist domination of the female body as much as of the Pacific Islands, “the decolonization of s/pacific bodies is intimately woven into island women’s bodies”. Teaiwa highlights that the presence of nuclear weapons in Oceania only constitutes one chapter within the complex history of its colonisation (ibid). As a result, Pacific women’s activist efforts were bound up in notions of colonisation and race, as well as gender. Furthermore, nuclear colonisation calls into question the environmental devastation caused by nuclear weapons. This is evidenced in the displacement of Marshall Islanders after their islands became inhospitable due to nuclear contamination (Kim, 2020). Indigenous bodies are disproportionately impacted by nuclear issues given their “intense relationship with the land” (Teaiwa in Emde, 2020), adding a further layer to Pacific women’s critique of nuclear forces. Given this political shift, Anaïs Maurer and Rebecca Hogue suggest that it is more apt to refer to ‘nuclear imperialisms’, to “emphasize the simultaneous and overlapping modes of nuclear oppression that involve multiple empires, technologies, and ideological framings that exist and extend beyond geographic, temporal, and national boundaries and borders” (Maurer and Hogue, 2020: 27).

Post-colonial feminist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s thoughtful article *Can The Subaltern Speak?* (1988) contemplates the idea of the “subaltern”, an oppressed figure who experiences multiple intersecting forms of imperialist and nationalist discrimination. Embodied by women in the ‘Third World’, the subaltern is rendered voiceless because those with power refuse to acknowledge her experience nor listen to her rendition of it; ultimately, the subaltern cannot speak (Biswas, 2014: 171). Spivak’s work has influenced subsequent post-colonial and feminist analyses of nuclear issues that are particularly concerned with questions of positionality, eager not to reproduce the silencing of certain voices in research and policymaking. Nuclear policy rhetoric remains heavily centred around the P5, marginalising non-possessor states, especially those states still suffering from nuclear fallout. Amplifying the voices of disarmament activists and scholars in LMICs is crucial in reshaping nuclear politics as a feminist and decolonised space.

## **21st Century Feminist Action For a Nuclear-Free World**

The 21st century commenced with the watershed passage of the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, launching the development of the Women, Peace and

Security (WPS) agenda. UNSCR 1325, considered by many as the founding document of the WPS agenda, was the first to consider the gendered dimensions of conflict and advocate for women's full participation and representation in peacebuilding processes (George and Shephard, 2016: 297). It is “the most significant and wide-reaching global framework for advancing gender equality in military affairs, conflict resolution and security governance” (Basu et al. 2020: 1). As a result of its adoption - as well as the subsequent nine resolutions on women, peace and security - issues of gender are demanding greater recognition by foreign ministries and departments of defence (Cohn et al., 2005: 9). UNSCR 1325 was driven mainly by the campaigning and lobbying of feminist activists and women’s civil society organisations who pushed for the centering of gender equality in conversations of peace, security and justice.

Yet, there remains a substantial chasm between the revolutionary vision of these feminist activists advocating for UNSCR 1325 and the current state of its implementation across the globe, particularly in areas where it is most needed (UN Women, 2015: 6). The most pertinent barrier to achieving this vision is a lack of implementation of priorities, for example, disarmament (Kaptan, 2020, 8). Contrary to what is suggested by the lack of post-Cold War research on nuclear politics within gender and security studies, the ongoing work of feminist anti-nuclear activists and organisations remains essential (Eschle, 2013: 713). One such organisation is the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), founded in 1915, which has played a significant role in leading the calls for disarmament. WILPF is built on a vision of feminist peace intent on disrupting the global system of patriarchy, militarism, and neoliberalism that leads inevitably to conflict. Central to this feminist vision is eradicating nuclear weapons, and further branches of WILPF have been set up across the globe to campaign for this goal. As former Director of WILPF’s UN office in New York, Felicity Ruby has been a leading feminist voice in disarmament, exemplified by her creation of *Reaching Critical Will* in 1999, the specialist disarmament analysis and advocacy programme within WILPF. By taking an integrated approach to disarmament that looks at global politics holistically and from an intersectional perspective, *Reaching Critical Will* has been instrumental in encouraging governments, international organisations, and other civil society partners to consider gender issues in nuclear policymaking.

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Nuclear weapons have not yet been used in warfare in the 21st century. Yet, they maintain their status as the ultimate expressions of colonial and patriarchal power in an increasingly dangerous world. The correlation between toxic displays of masculinity and nuclear weapons possession hinders disarmament and global security co-operation (Nordstrom and Hill, 2007: 168). This certainly seems to be true in the case of the UK, where the recently (government) published Integrated Review of Security, Defense, Development and Foreign Policy (2021) relies on gendered and colonialist language to not only legitimise the maintenance of its nuclear arsenal but the increasing of it despite commitments to reduce. This directly undermines the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Feminist interventions in nuclear policy are fundamental in achieving human and environmental security. We must now look at nuclear-free states for guidance on how a feminist vision of disarmament can be transformed in policy and practice.

## End Notes

1. According to a U.S. National Academy of Sciences study of 2006, the threat to women of

radiation-induced cancer is 50% higher than that for men. For studies on the importance of gender in radiation nuclear disasters, see (Makhijani, 2008; Olson, 2012; 2014).

2. The conceptualisation of a Hindu nation and a Hindu nationalism for India (Das, 2007).
3. Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1988) explains that a generalised image of the 'Third World Woman' prevails in Western scholarship, serving to perpetuate harmful stereotypes that convey a universal representation of all women.

# ***Feminist Profiles:***

## ***South Africa***

**Who should we be listening to and learning from?**



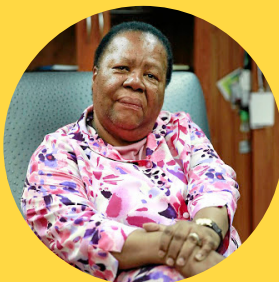
### ***Gertrude Shope***

Born in Johannesburg in 1925, Shope was a teacher before joining the ANC and boycotting Bantu Education. She trained women in crafts and rehabilitating young people and then became the chairperson of the Central Western Jabavu Branch of the Federation of South African Women. She was exiled in 1966 and travelled extensively as representatives of the ANC, becoming head of the ANC's Women's Section, starting the "Voice of Women" publication, and leading members to the End of the Decade Conference in Nairobi in 1985. In 1991 Shope was elected president of the ANC's Women's League and worked together with Albertina Sisulu in convening the ANC's Internal Leadership Corps Task Force. In 1994 Shope became a member of parliament in the Government of National Unity. Photo credit: MyANC Facebook.



### ***Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma***

As an active underground member of South African Students Organisation, Dr Dlamini-Zuma was exiled and finished her science studies in the UK. She married previous ANC party president, Jacob Zuma, and was part of the Gender Advisory Committee during the democracy negotiations in 1992. She was appointed Minister of Health under President Nelson Mandela's new government. Later she was Minister of International Relations and Cooperation (1999-2009), Minister of Home Affairs (2009-2012) and then became Chair of the African Union Commission, pushing for gender representation. Dr Dlamini-Zuma ran for Presidential office in 2017 and is now Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs. Photo credit: The South African.



### ***Dr Naledi Pandor***

A politician, educator and academic, Dr Pandor is the current Minister of International Relations and Cooperation. As Minister of Education (2004-2009) she overhauled the nation's education system and as Minister of Science and technology (2009-2012) she was the driving force behind South Africa being selected as the location for the Square Kilometre Array, the intergovernmental radio telescope. Photo credit: TimesLIVE



### ***Dr Margaret Mkhosi***

Dr Mkhosi is the Director of the Centre for Nuclear Safety and Security at South Africa's National Nuclear Regulator, providing technical and scientific support in nuclear safety and security and supporting nuclear regulatory decision-making. Dr Mkhosi is a member of the IAEA's Technical and Scientific Organization Forum, which she uses to help African countries provide an enabling environment for women to build their expertise in nuclear science. She was the president of Women in Nuclear South Africa and the Founder and Chair of the Women & Youth Support Organization, focusing on career development and advancement for women and youth. She received the Ada Irene Pressman Award in 2019 in recognition of her outstanding contribution to nuclear safety and security and how she has helped develop women in the nuclear and radiation industry. Photo credit: ESI Africa.



### ***Makoma Lekalakala and Liz McDaid***

Whilst leading Earthlife, Lekalakala received a tip-off that the South African government had signed a secret deal with Russia to build a new power plant. She partnered with Liz McDaid (an anti-nuclear activist and head of South African Faith Communities Environment Institute) and other women-led organisations (e.g., Vainola Makan from Right to Know; Vuyi from Women on Farms; KhoeSan (Indigenous) communities; and Equal Education) and individuals (e.g., media consultant Natasha Adonis). They believed that their experiences with community struggle made their voices important in national issues as they could see the relationship between the cost of electricity and a nuclear deal: an international agreement was now actually a bread-and-butter issue. They started a vigil outside Parliament every Wednesday for more than two years, initially focusing on the environmental and economic impact but then becoming a protest against unlawful decision making. In 2015, The Cape High Court ruled that all nuclear agreements made were unlawful and should be set aside, and in 2018 the two women were awarded the Goldman Environmental Prize for their work. Photo credit: Goldman Prize.

# ***Feminist Profiles:***

# ***Mexico***

**Who should we be listening to and learning from?**



### ***Martha Delgado Peralta***

Serving as Minister of the Environment of Mexico City, Delgado Peralta helped develop environmental policies such as the Green Plan of Mexico City, the Climate Action Program, and a bike-sharing program. She is now the Undersecretary for Multilateral Affairs and Human Rights at the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs. She was one of the decision-makers behind Mexico becoming the first state in Latin America to adopt a Feminist Foreign Policy. She also leads the UN Generation Equality Forum and is president of the First Assembly of the UN Human Settlements Programme until 2023. Photo credit: El Manana.



### ***Perla Carvalho***

Carvalho is Mexico's Special Adviser for Security, Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Issues. She was Secretary-General of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean and served as Ambassador to Uruguay. While serving as Alternate Representative at the Conference on Disarmament (1989-1996), Ambassador Carvalho was instrumental in negotiating the Comprehensive Ban Treaty. Photo credit: OAS.



### ***Andrea García Guerra***

García Guerra was responsible for negotiating on behalf of Mexico at the Chemical Weapons Convention. She also authored a book, 'El Tratado De Tlatelolco Memoria De Su Cuarenta Aniversario', to commemorate the 40th anniversary of The Treaty of Tlatelolco. Published in 2008, it chronicles the 2007 seminary held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It focuses on the contribution of the Treaty in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, the question of the illegality and the efforts of OPANAL. Photo credit: Nola



## **Zadalinda Gonzalez y Reynero**



Gonzalez y Reynero entered the Mexican Foreign Service in 1973 and was involved in the negotiations for the Partial Test Ban at the Chemical Weapons Convention. She was Director of the UN and represented the Embassy of Mexico in Austria, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic, where she was responsible for Political and Women's Affairs. She served as an advisor to the Director of the UN Institute for Research and Development of Women. In the multilateral sphere, she has participated in the International Atomic Energy Agency, the International Organization for Industrial Development, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, and the International Law Commission. In 2012, she was awarded The Great Silver Plate Cross of the National Order of Juan Mora Fernández by Costa Rica to strengthen international ties. Photo credit: DGCS UNAM.

## **Madres Veracruzanas**



When construction began on a nuclear power plant in Laguna Verde, Veracruz, most locals were unconcerned. That all changed when accidents at Three Mile Island and Chernobyl demonstrated the deadly impact. Protest groups such as the Madres Veracruzanas joined environmental groups in a fight to close down the facility. These grassroots, women-led organisations mobilised resources and questioned political processes for decades as anti-nuclear civil society coalitions. Photo credit: Goldman Prize. Photo credit: Madres Veracruzanas Facebook.

# 03

## ***South Africa and Mexico: Case Studies***

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To explore examples of nuclear policymaking in the LMICs, we interviewed country-specific experts (see Case Study Expert Bios). Our interviewees' honesty, transparency, and generosity in sharing their experiences are incredibly helpful in drawing out key challenges and accompanying recommendations in need of consideration to bring new perspectives on nuclear policy. We have recorded their responses as in-text citations.

## **Case Study I: South Africa**

**“As a country that voluntarily dismantled its nuclear weapons programme, South Africa is of the firm view that there are no safe hands for weapons of mass destruction [...] We are making a clarion call to all member states of the UN to sign and ratify the ban treaty in order to rid the world and humanity of these lethal weapons of mass destruction.”**

**Jacob Zuma, during the signing ceremony of the TPNW -September 2017**

### **South Africa's Nuclear History**

South Africa occupies a unique place in the global history of nuclear weapons as one of the only states to date that has willingly given up its nuclear arsenal [1]. It provides an interesting case study from which lessons can be drawn. South Africa's nuclear arsenal was first publicly (and retrospectively) confirmed by President F.W. de Klerk in a special joint session of the South African parliament on 24 March 1993 (de Villiers, Jardine and Reiss, 1993). Before their official dismantling began in 1989, the Apartheid government had six confirmed nuclear weapons, one under construction, and enough uranium to fuel a further six (Keller, 1993; Birch and Smith, 2015). According to de Klerk, South Africa's nuclear programme was developed in the 1970s in response to the USSR's expansionist policies and resourcing of African liberation movements with weapons and training to take control over countries in southern Africa (NTI, 2015; Miller, 2017). The USSR also financed the deployment of Cuban troops to Angola in October 1975, which sharply escalated the conflict's significance in the Cold War and was interpreted as a threat by Prime Ministers John Voster and P.W. Botha. At the time, South Africa was also becoming increasingly isolationist due to Apartheid, and there were fears that the international community wouldn't assist them in the event of Russian aggression or invasion. The escalation of nuclear weapons was intended to invoke involvement from the USA and other Western countries in the hope that they would step in

to ultimately prevent the escalation of any conflict situation (Friedman, 2017). Ultimately, as the security environment changed, the rationale for nuclear possession did as well. Coupled with the transition out of Apartheid and de Klerk's known discomfort with nuclear weapons, the government dismantled the existing weapons and the programme (Friedman, 2017).

Such an explanation suggests that South Africa was simply adjusting to a perceived decrease in the threat to its national security. There are, however, alternative explanations that take into account the racial implications of this rationale for disarmament. The official end of the nuclear weapons programme was announced in 1988, but the Apartheid South African government entered negotiations with the future African National Congress (ANC) government in 1987 (Reed, 1998). It has been suggested that the reason the Apartheid government began its disarmament process was rooted in white supremacy and racism and meant to ensure that Black South Africans and the ANC would not have access to nuclear weapons given fears that they would be wielded 'irresponsibly' and use them to force a democracy (Babbage, 2004). To prevent this from happening, the Apartheid government dismantled the nuclear weapons programme.

Offering a rationale to nuclear dismantling without taking into account the racist context of the Apartheid only tells half the story. Fears that the ANC would use nuclear weapons aren't in alignment with the anti-nuclear platform of ANC and other liberators. During their expulsion from South Africa, the ANC became aware of the secret nuclear weapons program of the apartheid government. This issue soon became one of the pillars of its global struggle to end Apartheid and its nuclear weapons program (van Wyk, 2020). This is despite evidence that the South African liberation movement had always opposed nuclear weapons: The ANC, the leading anti-Apartheid political movement and the social democratic party had policies that clearly stated that nuclear weapons caused national insecurity and that global elimination was necessary (CFFP Interview with Bernedette Muthien, 2021). White supremacy has shaped and obscured different aspects of South Africa's history and offering a sanitised explanation of disarmament without taking this into account perpetuates such narratives.

In 1991, South Africa joined the NPT as a non-nuclear-weapon state, and in 1996, officially became a nuclear-weapons-free zone by signing the Treaty of Pelindaba with forty-six other African nations (ICAN, n.d.). It also began a Defence Review process, engaging with various sectors from the military to civil society to redefine post-Apartheid defence and security policy. Extensive consultation with civil society ultimately defined the country's human security and development security, which explicitly identifies poverty as the greatest security threat, rather than military aggression from neighbouring countries (CFFP Interview with Bernedette Muthien, 2021). In 2017, South Africa signed the TPNW and continued to be transparent about apartheid-era nuclear policies, such as releasing a 1975 document highlighting a South African and Israeli nuclear alliance (Harris, Hatang and Liberman, 2004).

## South Africa and Feminism

To understand how South African feminists influenced nuclear policy, it is first necessary to look at its wider feminist history and complexities. There has long been a substantial rural women's movement in South Africa focused on land rights and equality, which challenges repression from patriarchal tribal leaders. More than sixty percent of employed women in Sub-Saharan Africa work in agriculture and are dependent on land for their livelihoods (UN WomenWatch, 2012). Yet, statutory and customary laws are designed so that land ownership remains predominantly with men as they often hold proof of ownership. With limited access to capital to purchase land, women also had little awareness of the Land Reform Gender Policy of 1997, which aimed to enshrine gender equity in the country's land reform (Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, 2021). The Tribal Courts Bill, initially tabled in 2008, was met with intense criticism due to its failure to consult sufficiently with the everyday rural person, instead basing its assumptions on the opinions of traditional leaders (Weeks, 2017). The Tribal Courts Bill was most recently revised in 2017, forcing rural South Africans to be subjected to courts ruled by traditional chiefs instead of conventional government courts. For women in cases of domestic violence, abuse, or land violations, these patriarchal tribal courts often exacerbate the gender inequalities that already exist (Dixon, 2012). Though it does state the need to eliminate discrimination of all kinds, it lacks the demand for equal membership and representation of women in these courts (Weeks, 2017).

In response to these concerns, women's rights activists were quick to organise. The Rural Women's Assembly coordinated different national rural women's movements, assemblies, grassroots organisations, and mixed peasant unions, federations, and movements across eight countries in the Southern African Development Community. They gathered rural women into regional and international lobbying groups that still campaign today at major multilateral events like UN Climate Change Conferences (SA Rural Women Facebook Group, 2021).

This cross-nation network of women's rights organising likewise was seen in the liberation movement as well. The Bantu Women's League, established by Charlotte Maxeke in 1918, was a branch of the ANC that resisted discriminatory practices like government pass laws for women, which tried to enforce internal passports designed to limit movement. Women were finally accepted as ANC members in 1943, and the ANC Women's League began in 1948 under President Madie Hall-Xuma and then Ida Mntwana. Members played a leading role in the 1952 Defiance Campaign [2]. By organising the 1955 Congress of the People (where the Freedom Charter was to be adopted), they could lobby for their demands to be included in the charter.

When the ANC was declared illegal in 1960 by Governor-General Charles Robberts Swart

and banned for the next thirty years, many women members (or wives of male members) were exiled from South Africa or remained in the country but were restricted from organising (Britannica, 2020). Grassroots resistance began under the leadership of Gertrude Shope, who led the ANC Women's Section to link regions and created international cohesion. Groups like the Federation of Transvaal Women and the United Women's Congress were formed. The 1990 liberation from Apartheid and the return of many ANC members to South Africa inspired the ANC Women's League to bring together these various women's organisations. The resulting National Women's Coalition began to create a women's charter to represent all South African women. It was presented to the newly elected President Nelson Mandela in 1994 and incorporated into the new democratic constitution and Bill of Rights. At the first National Conference of the ANC Women's League in South Africa in 1991, Gertrude Shope was elected president, followed by successor Winnie Madikizela-Mandela (SA History Online, n.d.).

The persistence, adaptability, and organising prowess of women's rights organisers continue today with a commitment to increasing women's participation in government and policymaking. With forty-six percent women in the national assembly, South Africa ranks second in Africa and twelfth in the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) global ranking of women's representation in parliament (Africa Barometer, 2021). Today, the ANC Women's League aims to mobilise, organise, and unite South African Women to participate in the struggle for the liberation of all oppressed groups. They are focused on dismantling the patriarchy, spearheading the emancipation of women within the ANC, promoting women's participation in every sector of public life and office, and campaigning for a culture in which women's rights are inherently understood as human rights (ANC Women's League Constitution, 2008). However, there has been some criticism that they take a subordinate position, supporting the ANC's patriarchal and traditional views and publicly backing ANC figures accused of sexual harassment (Ntuli, 2018). Indeed, the President of the ANCWL, Bathabile Dlamini, stated that "the ANC has failed the women of South Africa", and "the ANC has indeed regressed on the issue of women" (SABC News, 2017). However, highlighting disunity amongst women is often used as a patriarchal tool to sustain men's dominance. The ANC Women's League's history primarily showcases how collaborative South African women's rights organising is and the extent to which this organising has had a direct influence over post-Apartheid legislation.

Today, South Africa's Constitution emphasises gender equality and other intersectional rights [3], including the freedom of expression being declined to those who advocate hate "based on race, ethnicity, gender or religion, and that constitutes incitement to cause harm" (Constitution of the Republic South Africa, 1996; Chapter 2, 16.2). The government also created its Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, located strategically

within the Office of the President. Many different types of feminists have gone on work in the Government, including lesbian feminists, radical feminists (inspired by models like the 1970s Rape Crisis Movement in the US) (Greensite, 2009), and the very traditional faith-based feminists of the ANC Women's League, all of whom have influenced the gender equality policies the government adopts. However, there are still challenges to enshrining gender equality in policy. Despite Government action over the past few decades, gender inequality isn't necessarily a priority in practice. For policies like the National Strategic Plan to end gender-based violence (GBV) and femicide, the lack of information as to how it will operate, how it should be governed, the exact role and responsibilities of different actors, and delays in establishing a council and Board of Directors have faced heavy criticism (Stoltz, 2021).

South Africa's current democracy has been crafted to enable a different method of governance in a conscious move away from the patriarchal and racist colonial models it had formerly been subjected to. The government actively engaged with civil society in the 1990s to co-create a vision of a just society that could heal from its brutal past. This sense of national unity filtered into the democratic elections of 1994 when a quota was set that one-third of representatives elected by the ANC to the national and provincial legislatures had to be women. As a result, twenty-five percent of the members of the National Assembly were women (Myakayaka-Manzini, 2003). The male-dominated parties were required to "find women to fill their quotas and, coupled with progressive donor countries, actually [empower] the women's liberation movement and [bolster] these Apartheid-era women. Everyone benefits from emancipation, even erstwhile oppressors" (CFFP Interview with Bernedette Muthien, 2021). The resulting Bill of Rights consequently includes sixteen intersectional rights, marking gender equality as a non-negotiable, which at the time was an unprecedented achievement.

The new South African democracy was "filled with women-positive (and at times outright feminist) policies and legislation" (ibid), and this feminist mobilisation began to infiltrate the movement for nuclear disarmament and peace. As a newly formed democracy, it was imperative to ensure Black African women's voices were heard. The Coalition for Defence Alternatives, founded in 1996, brought together cross-disciplinary experts from the environmental movement, security studies, faith traditions (e.g., South African Council of Churches), and security research institutes (e.g., Centre of Conflict Resolution at the University of Cape Town). This was a powerful and profound collaborative movement led by a young Black South African female feminist, Bernedette Muthien. In the late 1990s, whistleblowers shared arms deal dossiers with the coalition and unmasked the new South African government's allegedly corrupt arms procurement processes and the subsequent acquisition of armaments and related military equipment for the new unified National Defence Force. The coalition was particularly effective in lobbying against rearmament, basing conceptions of defence and security policy on human security [4].

“What is clear is the foundation of ethics, equality in general, and gender equality, on which the South African democracy is built. However, how far this ethical grounding is implemented depends on the country's leadership, which should be in constant engagement with civil society.”

CFFP Interview with Bernedette Muthien (2021)

Today, South Africa's nuclear policy focuses on nuclear energy with the primary goal to reinforce and promote the country's image as a responsible producer, possessor, and trader of advanced technologies. It wants to build memberships in non-proliferation areas, but the link between policymaking and feminist activism continues. The government routinely collaborates with civil society in various domestic, regional, and international processes, including women's issues and gender equality. The constitution, and by association its support for gender equality, underpins all policymaking processes. Since 2015, there has been an internal mandate for policymakers to critically question how they can consider gender equality, youth, and disabilities in planning, implementing, and monitoring its policies and programmes. Though a policy, not a law, this mandate does compel action and helps institutionalise direct and measurable accountability that reflects constitutional objectives in everyday, measurable actions. Such institutional changes have meant that now a third of all South African programmes and procurement activities must demonstrate how the changes benefit women.

### **South Africa's Foreign Policy Objectives**

Economic diplomacy is a priority for current South Africa foreign policy, particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic. Trade and investment with neighbouring states have been achieved through initiatives like the African Continental Free Trade Area and the Tripartite Free Trade Area (encompassing the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, the East African Community, and South African Development Community) (SADC, 2011). It is assumed that the state will take a more proactive role in conflict resolution as part of this economic diplomacy and push for global governance, which was central to its anti-Apartheid origins (Nganje and Ayodele, 2021). Through partnerships like the New Partnership for Africa's Development Socio-economic Programme of the African Union, chaired by South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa, the goals of poverty eradication, sustainable growth and development, integrating Africa in the world economy, and accelerating the empowerment of women are of primary focus (IISD, 2020).

Broadly, post-Apartheid South African foreign policy has been grounded in the ideals of human rights, democratic governance, and socio-economic justice. The government has



aimed to be seen as a champion of the marginalised for Africa and other LMICs. However, critics argue that due to leadership changes, there has been a move away from a global liberal democracy and toward more pragmatic and special interest-driven priorities (Nganje and Ayodele, 2021). For example, South Africa's policy on disarmament, non-proliferation, and arms control includes reinforcing and promoting the country as a responsible producer, possessor, and trader of defence-related products and advanced technologies (South African Government, n.d.). However, it is well known that such activities disproportionately impact marginalised communities, being gendered activities themselves and having gendered consequences. Regardless of the tensions between the ideal and the reality, negotiating the struggle for intersectional liberation and human security on the heels of an imposed system of colonial government marks South Africa's history as a remarkable one.

## **Case Study II: Mexico**

**“The existence of nuclear weapons poses a threat to the whole of humanity”.**

**Luis Videgaray Caso during the signing of the TPNW – September 2017**

### **Mexico's Nuclear History**

Mexico's vision of a world free of nuclear weapons is best seen through its vocal and collaborative history of promoting disarmament. Despite not having a delegation for disarmament in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs until 2012, Mexico has been a key figure in nuclear conversations since the first UN General Assembly in 1946, held just months after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (CFFP interview with Tonie Jaquez and Ambassador Alicia Buenrostro Massieu, 2021). Since then, the government has been involved in organising and participating in numerous conferences, research projects, and proposals intended to increase the range of conversations around nuclear disarmament (CFFP interview with Tonie Jaquez and Ambassador Alicia Buenrostro Massieu, 2021).

In the 1960s, Mexico invited Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, and Ecuador to initiate a multilateral agreement to ensure Latin American countries would agree not to manufacture, receive, store, or test nuclear weapons or nuclear launching devices (OPANAL, 2021). This began a series of meetings of the newly formed Denuclearisation of Latin America (COPREDAL) to reaffirm their purpose of a nuclear-free zone and prepare a draft multilateral treaty for the denuclearisation of Latin America. Through collaboration, open dialogue, and set objectives, three working groups were created to define the geographic boundary for the treaty, determine how possessor states would respect the legality of denuclearisation, and study the

methods of verification, inspection, and control (OPANAL, 2021). The result was unanimous support for the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America, known as the Tlatelolco Treaty, in 1967 (ibid).

Mexico then ratified the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1969 (and the Additional Protocol in 2004) and continued to push for disarmament. To comply with the Tlatelolco Treaty obligations, the states formed the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (known as OPANAL) in 1969. Since 1998 this has included all thirty-three states in the region. Mexico is one of the five Council members who meet every two months and currently act as the host country to endorse other Nuclear Weapon Free Zones (Nuclear Threat Initiative, 2020).

Mexico has established itself as a progressive and proactive state in mobilising other world leaders to commit to denuclearisation. This is due in part to key women working in the Mexican Government, such as Zadalinda Gonzalez y Reynero (later Director of the UN), who petitioned in 1988 for an amendment to the 1963 Treaty Banning Nuclear Tests, also known as the Partial Test Ban Treaty, to extend the prohibition of testing of nuclear weapons from the atmosphere, underwater, and outer space, to also include the category of underground (see Appendix 3: Feminist Profiles). Rejected by the US, Mexico wasn't deterred, and the campaign for greater regulation continued with other women such as Perla Carvalho, who negotiated at the Conference on Disarmament and contributed to the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty in 1986 (see Appendix 3: Feminist Profiles).

Another example of Mexico's sense of global responsibility regarding nuclear weapons occurred in 2012 when a new delegation for disarmament was established for the first time in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Here, Mexico chaired the Second Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, concluding that a diplomatic process must be launched for the prohibition of nuclear weapons. This call to action saw the Nuclear Ban Core Group present resolutions at the 2017 UN General Assembly, highlighting the immorality and humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons and the essential need for a Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Mexico immediately signed the TPNW and in 2019 delivered a statement to the UN, encouraging all states that have not yet ratified the treaty to speed up their respective processes. The key message Mexico focused on was that nuclear weapons must first be prohibited before they can be eliminated as a core belief of the Mexican Government (CFFP Interview with Tonie Jaquez and Ambassador Alicia Buenrostro Massieu, 2021). There are lessons to be learned from the women involved in the outlawing of the acquisition, possession, and use of chemical weapons, such as Andrea García Guerra, who negotiated on behalf of Mexico at the 1993 Chemical Weapons Convention (see Feminist Profiles).

## Mexico and Feminism

Like South Africa, Mexico's feminist history is multifaceted. For some, the term 'feminist' is associated with the white bourgeoisie women in the North of the country and doesn't appropriately reflect the needs and demands of Indigenous women or lower caste women, reflecting a legacy of Colonial Mexico (CFFP Interview with Clara Franco, 2021). Despite the difference in feminisms, the early demands of Mexican feminist activists were generally oriented around education and political participation, especially concerning worker's rights and reproductive rights (CFFP Interview with Clara Franco, 2021).

After the War of Independence, Mexico's new 1857 Constitution was established with *La Reforma*: the separation of church and state and the right to education (Britannica, 2015). Where girls had previously been under Catholic Church-controlled education had been limited to the domestic sphere, the change in the constitution meant they were now subject to secular, compulsory, and free education (Na'atik, 2019). Rita Cetina Gutiérrez, considered one of the earliest Mexican feminists, was a key figure in this move toward inclusive education and opened *La Siempreviva*, the first secular school for girls, which taught the arts and sciences as well as domestic and religious classes. Wealthier women helped fund educational institutions and initiatives and created feminist leagues and publications such as *La Mujer Mexicana* (The Mexican woman) produced by the *Sociedad Protectora de la Mujer* (Na'atik, 2019).

Not long after, armed conflicts, protests, and the movement for a fair presidential election during The Mexican Revolution of 1910 gave women the opportunity to take on traditionally male jobs. After the revolution, women were side-lined once again, which invigorated the fight for suffrage. When women were permitted to initiate the Primer Congreso Feminista in 1916, this first Congressional feminist meeting laid the foundation for many of the rights that would become outlined in the Constitution of 1917, such as free state-sponsored secular education and equal pay for the same work (Na'atik, 2019). Feminists such as Elvia Carrillo Puerto and Rosa Torre González launched forty-five feminist leagues around the country and gave talks on family planning, childcare, and hygiene (Senate of the Republic, 2021).

Sex workers rights, sexual education, and access to abortion became key topics for women's rights activists from the 1920s. When the feminist movement met the socialist and Marxist movements of the 1970s, migration to urban areas increased attention on worker's rights, sanitation, and housing. For example, workers' unions incorporated female advisory boards to organise and prevent the exploitation of female garment workers. Currently, Mexico ranks as one of the top five countries globally for women's representation; forty-eight percent of the decision-makers in the country are women (Global Citizen, 2021). However, issues

concerning the gender pay gap, the lack of women in senior roles, and the lack of accountability for workplace discrimination and harassment are still present (Área de Derechos Sexuales y Reproductivos, 2018).

While many women today have similar concerns such as poverty, family planning, rurality, violence, workers' rights, and lack of political representation, Indigenous women also have to contend with racism, abuse, and early forced marriages (Despaigne, 2013). In the 1990s, women's groups like The Women's Group of San Cristobal de Las Casas or the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional advocated against the violence and disenfranchisement of Indigenous women. Despite broad advances in girls' access to education, such advances were not always felt by Indigenous girls experiencing the 'quadruple burden' of oppression due to poverty, indigeneity, rurality, and gender (Vázquez, 2017). The usage of Spanish instead of the sixty-seven Indigenous languages meant that learning materials were, and still are, rarely in the learner's native tongue (Despaigne, 2013).

Historically, feminist organising in Mexico has focused on domestic issues. However, in 2020, Mexico became the first Latin American country to adopt a Feminist Foreign Policy framework to extend a feminist perspective into global issues. This is done, however, by beginning with gender equality commitments at home, including a commitment to gender parity within the Foreign Ministry staffing; organisational reforms to achieve gender equality in the workplace; the creation of a Foreign Ministry free of violence; and visible feminist leadership (Government of Mexico, 2020). There has been considerable criticism from civil society that Mexico's FFP does not sufficiently address the changes needed outside of the ministry, e.g., addressing the high rates of national gender-based violence and femicides (CFFP Interview with Clara Franco, 2021). Nor does it explicitly address the impact of the pandemic on women and LGBTQ+ people within Mexico. Though tackling inequality within policymaking and government bureaucracy will enshrine equal rights for all in the long run, feminist demands link long-term goals to the urgent and short-term, focusing on personal security issues. The rise in femicide and violence against women in Mexico means that today's feminist movement, recognised as not one but many feminisms, is primarily focused on the safety of marginalised people (CFFP Interview with Clara Franco, 2021).

Mexico's FFP also claims to take "Mexico's international leadership on gender issues to the next level" and take "an intersectional feminist approach to all foreign policy actions" (Delgado, 2020). The language embedded in these commitments is vague and lacks any correlation to the tangible actions this might result in. However, it mirrors decades-long interest in multilateral policymaking, a lesson learned from nuclear disarmament. The disconnect between Mexico's active engagement in international security and its impact on its domestic population is common criticism by feminist civil society. For example, the

Tlatelolco Treaty does not mention gender, so while it is a landmark in multilateral cooperation, it lacks fundamental perspectives that reflect the society it seeks to protect. Mexico's FFP is seen by much of feminist civil society as a reaction to the women's movement against femicide, reflecting the popular Mexican idiom 'to have a lamp post outside but there's darkness in your home' (CFFP interview with Clara Franco, 2021). It borrows upon the language of feminism without reflecting its intention. Rather than directly addressing the systemic issues perpetuating femicide, the government has engaged with a women's rights-centric framework but focused on a different issue. Mexico's FFP framework and global status as an international nuclear policy advisor, for example, being part of the 'core group' leading the TPNW and hosting a series of inter-governmental conferences on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons in 2014 (ICAN, n.d.), is not seen as an accolade or progress when compared to the domestic problems. Optimistically, though, it is a 'policy first' for Latin America and indicates a willingness to address gender inequity in the region.

The focus of Mexican feminist engagement with domestic and personal safety concerns reaffirms the urgent need for action and government attention in these areas. Mexico's global participation in nuclear disarmament conversations or gender parity within the Foreign Ministry may seem insignificant when Mexican women are violently endangered. However, feminist civil society is not absent from nuclear disarmament conversations. In particular, activists are currently focused on the consequences of nuclear testing and humanitarian risks. For example, there is an anti-nuclear advocacy group in Veracruz, where the nuclear energy plants are located (Diez, 2008).

### **Mexico's Foreign Policy Objectives**

In 2015, the Mexican Government began to encourage policymakers to consider gender, youth, and disabilities in the planning, implementing, and monitoring of their policies and programmes (CFFP interview with Tonie Jaquez and Ambassador Alicia Buenrostro Massieu, 2021). This intersectional lens echoes South Africa's intentions and a desire to challenge the status quo by improving limiting processes and behaviours in policymaking.

When Mexico became the first LMIC to explicitly launch an FFP (Thompson, 2020), it meant that gender equality became mandated within Mexico's foreign ministry. It also emphasises an intersectional lens on global affairs, although Mexico's FFP does not explicitly detail priorities outside of internal gender equity. Still, Mexico's constitution recognises respect for international law and legal equality of states, a non-interventionist stance, peaceful conflict-resolution, and the promotion of collective security through participation in international networks (The Political Constitution of the United Mexican States, 1957, Article 89, Section 10). It follows the Estrada Doctrine, namely that Mexico should not make positive or negative

judgments about other nations' governments or changes in other nations' governments, as this undermines a nation's sovereignty (Law & Martin, 2014.). It is a member of international organisations such as Like-Minded Megadiverse Countries and the Organization of American States, indicating values of aligning and finding similarities with other nations (OAS, 2021). Mexico has been vocal in international and multilateral spaces, as we have seen with its openness to discuss nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and the need to reform the United Nations Security Council (Gobierno de Mexico, 2021).

Mexico is now the fifteenth largest world economy (World Population Review, 2021). Yet, its 16th-century Spanish colonial and 19th-century territorial losses to the US have indelibly impacted the nation's identity and reputation as a global player. Mexico's cultural and political identity has been shaped by Spanish colonists and its proximity to the United States (US). In recent history, its foreign policy has been defined by being in the shadow, or perhaps under the thumb, of the US (CFFP Interview with Clara Franco, 2021). However, Mexico has been a strong proponent of nuclear disarmament for over seventy-five years, with speculation that this has more to do with a fear of the US as a possessor state than a fear of the consequences of its own nuclear actions (CFFP Interview with Clara Franco, 2021). Such fears also expound upon the current immigration tensions with the US and concerns about mass movement resulting from a planned nuclear attack, fallout from a nuclear test, or a plant accident.

## End Notes

1. Four countries have dismantled their nuclear programmes. The other three, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine, inherited their arsenal from the former Soviet Union and disposed of their weapons in exchange for the support of the United States. South Africa is unique in that it both created and then dismantled its own weaponry (Friedman, 2017).
2. "In 1952, the African National Congress (ANC) initiated its Defiance Campaign, opposing apartheid laws through organised civil disobedience and African nationalism" (Bank and Carton, 2016).
3. The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language, and birth (Constitution of the Republic South Africa, 1996; Chapter 2, 9.3).
4. Defined by the UN as an analytical and planning framework to help realise a world free from fear, want and indignity. It focuses on prevention and resilience; localisation and 'leaving no one behind'; promoting multi-stakeholder partnerships with a wide range of actors; and integrated actions that reflect the multidimensional causes and consequences of complex challenges (UN Trust Fund for Human Security, n.d.).

# 04

## ***Recommendations***

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**1**

***Information about nuclear policy must be made more accessible.***

**2**

***We need to ask different questions about nuclear policy.***

**3**

***Nuclear policymakers must design inclusive spaces to ensure a greater diversity of voices and perspectives.***

**4**

***Women and historically marginalised groups must be meaningfully involved in decision-making processes at senior levels.***

**5**

***Nuclear weapons must be regulated like other weapons of mass destruction.***

**6**

***Nuclear possessing states must be subject to significant systems of accountability and checks and balances.***

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**The perspectives of non-nuclear possessing states, particularly LMICs, are often discounted in mainstream nuclear policy conversations. This means that most of our conceptions about nuclear weapons are not objective but instead largely shaped by a patriarchal and Western values system that utilises military intervention and the threat of violence to maintain peace (Conway, 2017; Hurley, 2021).**

In this way, the demands of nuclear possessors are imposed upon the rest of the world, as is the values system that has shaped it. Certain assumptions are baked into this process, including the idea that this dynamic is positive because it builds global democracy and brings ‘civility’ to LMICs (Hurley, 2021). In this way, the West, and Western nuclear possessors, in particular, are positioned as gatekeepers of safety and arms control norms.

Yet, as evidenced above, LMICs, including those who have never been in possession of nuclear weapons, have rich histories from which the collective global community can learn. In particular, the demands of feminist movements and how they have shaped disarmament in South Africa and Mexico hold invaluable lessons. Though their stories may be different, the histories of nuclear policy in South Africa and Mexico can provide activists, civil servants, and policymakers with key lessons. Both have been shaped by colonialism and, due to their respective contexts, have increasingly prioritised commitments to gender-inclusivity in policies and procedures whilst still grappling with gender-based violence, corruption, and exploitative power dynamics between the government and its people. Such issues are not unique to South Africa and Mexico; indeed, these dynamics can be found in any state. To extrapolate cautionary tales and signposts to a better future, we have crafted the following recommendations in collaboration with our case study interviewees. The successes and failures of the feminist movements in their respective countries provide lessons learnt that can benefit every country as they pursue better and more innovative nuclear policy.

## **1 Information about nuclear policy must be made more accessible.**

Language about nuclear weapons and policy is highly jargonistic and abstract—such language functions to distinguish between insiders, who possess ‘appropriate’ expertise, and outsiders. In doing so, specific patriarchal hierarchies are maintained by ensuring that only the ‘insiders’ are allowed access to decision-making power (Enloe, 2021). This functions to exclude information like lived experiences, indigenous expertise, creative ideas, or diverse voices, thus

ensuring nuclear policymaking is an elitist space. In general, nuclear language is entrenched in symbolism to such a degree that double meanings are common, invoking militaristic, violent, and phallic tropes that function to normalise patriarchal power dynamics.

To increase shared understanding and knowledge about nuclear weapons and nuclear policy, feminists have long called for the simplification of research and policy documents, so there is no room for ambiguity or assumption, and easy to understand by all. It is also necessary to be cognisant of the linguistic and cultural differences that make translating complex, as specific terms can be codified differently. For example, ‘deterrence’ in Chinese Mandarin is synonymous with ‘coercion’, so discussions around nuclear deterrence risks misinterpretation as ‘forcing’ or ‘threatening’ rather than the softer connotation of ‘discouraging’ as English-native speakers are likely to understand it (CFFP, 2020). Adopting a curiosity to translation produces more well-rounded discourse and encourages critiques of dominant narratives.

Opaque language is not the only barrier to understanding policymakers themselves; many have different specialisms, backgrounds, and interests. As more Foreign Affairs departments aim to be equitable employers, these differences will increase. It is wise not to assume that everyone is on the same page, and this means there needs to be more done to educate and share knowledge. For instance, is it clear to a possessor state what the benefits of disarmament are? Do policymakers understand the interconnections between security and development? How much does an outsider-policymaker understand about regional security in the LMICs? How does a policymaker move away from abstract theories to discussing real experiences and tangible impacts? By opening up conversations and sharing perspectives clearly, we can open up discourses devoid of ego, shame or misunderstanding.

## **2** *We need to ask different questions about nuclear policy.*

Nuclear narratives have been crafted around the same realist and patriarchal ideologies since their inception in the 1940s. But such mainstream discussions must be inclusive of data that is indicative of the impact on the 21st century. By collecting data and holding fact-based discussions, the only possible outcome would likely be an outlawing of nuclear weapons completely, just as other weapons of mass destruction have been. For example, an ethical imperative to declare nuclear weapons immoral was endorsed by all the Islamic conference countries, the Vatican, and the Council of Churches. Future treaties, conferences, and working groups need to ask whether historic policies are fit for purpose in today’s society.

Asking different questions also means involving new perspectives. There is an understanding and commitment via the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the importance of partnering with civil society throughout the policymaking process. While participating vocally in the room is important, civil society can also work behind the scenes in partnership with diplomats, gathering technical data, and producing research offering new perspectives and arguments for different approaches to policy. These collaborations were intrinsic to the processes of close ammunitions and personnel landmines treaties and would be beneficial to the nuclear disarmament sector. For example, in 1996, The International Court of Justice (ICJ) was asked by the World Health Organization (WHO) regarding the legality of the use of nuclear weapons because of the humanitarian impact, resulting in them being made illegal under humanitarian law. And as another example,

Post-Apartheid, South Africa had a unique opportunity to build its foreign policy from scratch. It led a Defence Review Process between 1996–1998, which involved a series of meetings between Parliament, civil society, feminist activists, researchers in the fields of security and disarmament, and the 'Hawks', South Africa's Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation, who came from both the liberation movements and Apartheid (CFFP Interview with Bernedette Muthien, 2021). This cross-discipline, multilateral collaboration invited multiple perspectives on the definitions of security and defence from the perspective of human security and development (as in Sweden's FFP of 2014). The result was a defence policy that explicitly identified poverty as the biggest security threat. This was a critical moment that paved the way for future progressive policymaking but was only possible through a period of collaboration to find shared meaning between seemingly disparate and polarised groups. Since, South Africa has implemented extensive public consultation built into its legislation and policymaking processes. South Africa's connection to civil society groups like the Landless People's Movement and Via Campesina provides profound insight and solidarity with women working in human rights and peace work. It is something that should be considered by all involved in nuclear policy. Although not every nation has the opportunity to write policy from scratch, it is clear that inviting a wide range of people to the table makes a significant difference in collectively defining innovative priorities and common ambitions.

### **3 Nuclear policymakers must design inclusive spaces to ensure a greater diversity of voices and perspectives.**

In close connection to the second recommendation, it is important to actively enable historically marginalised voices to be heard and taken seriously. This is true of both individuals and states. Despite Mexico's long history of nuclear disarmament campaigning, there is a noticeable lack of recorded addresses at UN General Assemblies, for example, because non-possessor states were not permitted to speak until 1962.

The recent COVID-19 pandemic and the necessary accompanying switch to virtual working patterns have demonstrated how technology can increase accessibility to important meetings, events, and networks, help facilitate greater representation, and offer mitigations to barriers some may face, including the financial cost of attending events, caring responsibilities, disabilities, or personal safety when travelling as a marginalised person. The responsibility to implement innovative solutions to ensure inclusive and diverse spaces falls to policymakers and leaders on nuclear policy, who lead by example. For example, during the women-led court victory against the South African government's construction of new nuclear power stations in 2017, the "men who were involved... didn't interfere or disrupt" but rather recognised the importance of elevating women's leadership, experience, and authority in this context (CFFP Interview with Bernedette Muthien on behalf of Liz McDaid, 2021).

Space to respectfully share and engage with different perspectives is integral to building systems that accurately align with human rights and constitutional rights. In particular, possessor states have a responsibility to engage with perspectives they may not agree with and centre the input from non-possessor states. So too must policymakers onboard input from civil society and take seriously the responsibility to represent the views of the general in their work.

## **4 Women and historically marginalised groups must be meaningfully involved in decision-making processes at senior levels.**

Although the representation of women and historically marginalised people has been slowly increasing, it is largely still concentrated in junior roles without significant decision-making power. In Mexico, for example, only three Heads of Mission have been women (see Appendix 3). In wider peacebuilding efforts, data supports that when women and civil society

representatives are involved in negotiations, the resulting agreements are more durable, sustainable, and thirty-five percent more likely to last at least fifteen years (WPS, 2015; UN Women, 2015). And generally, the lack of women involved in peace processes over the last thirty years has meant that only twenty percent of peace agreements contain references to women, girls and gender at all (Council on Foreign Relations, n.d.), despite disproportionately suffering conflict and post-conflict-based violence.

Due to patriarchal assumptions about who can make good policy, successful nuclear policy leadership has typically been seen as needing traditionally masculine-coded characteristics. In contrast, feminine-coded characteristics have been seen as best for 'softer'. Those who discuss the humanitarian or environmental impacts of nuclear policy are still often dismissed as 'emotional', 'irrational', or 'weak'. However, the lack of discourse on the human impact of nuclear weapons, the phallic and clinical language used in policy writing, and the void around discussing human and environmental destruction does not leave space for discussing the very real emotional impacts these policies are influencing. One may question the 'rationality' of discussing mass human and environmental destruction without showing any emotion. Relying on gender stereotypes to gate-keep who is involved in nuclear policy decision-making leads to poor policy outcomes as competent leadership is not gendered. Women in the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation (Foreign Affairs), including Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma (later Chair of the African Union Commission) and Dr Naledi Pandor, were strong gender equality proponents, leading South Africa in at-times complex continental waters on matters of international relations and cooperation (see Appendix 3). Complex political discourse for anyone in the sector becomes "bread and butter issues" (CFFP Interview with Liz McDaid, 2021).

Lastly, increasing women and marginalised people in nuclear policy must be intentional. For example, the James Martin Centre for Non-proliferation Studies in Monterey, California has a new mentorship program for young women interested in the disarmament professional diplomatic career. It partners them with women who have participated in negotiations of nuclear disarmament and can provide ongoing mentorship and is a model for meaningful participation (CFFP interview with Tonie Jaquez and Ambassador Alicia Buenrostro Massieu, 2021). As another example, Mexico has the ambition to reflect the holistic and intersectional approaches women can bring by increasing the number of women Mexican Security Council mediators and negotiators and creating a network across Latin America to ensure more women are involved in peace processes. Women leaders like Ambassador Alicia Buenrostro Massieu refuse to attend meetings where they can't see any other women visible in the process to send a message that gender inequality will not be condoned in international negotiations.

## 5

## ***Nuclear weapons must be regulated like other weapons of mass destruction [1].***

“The practice of violence, like all action, changes the world, but the most probable change is a more violent world.”

Hannah Arendt (1969)

Building the capacity for violence generates more violence. This was a consensus reached regarding other weapons of mass destruction as states agreed that the real danger of having weapons was more prescient than the imagined danger of having to use them. Mexico has advocated that nuclear weapons need to be prohibited before they can be eliminated, as historically, the only weapons that have been destroyed by law (e.g., the Close Munitons Convention, the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, and the Chemical Weapons Convention) were prohibited explicitly in international law. These multilateral treaties set out the destruction of weapons within a specific time alongside clear indicators of whether objectives have been achieved.

It is also valuable to point out that such weapons often contradict a nation's constitutions, policies, and values. For example, weapons and violence directly contradict South Africa's founding constitution, its Bill of Rights, and its resulting legislation and policy, hence its regulations on small arms and light weapons and support for the TPNW. These are viewed as an ethical imperative as their national values are antithetical to the armaments industry and associated culture of secrecy, corruption, and abuse of power. Possessor-states with ambitions to adopt a Feminist Foreign Policy (Thompson, 2019) or participate in multilateral gender equity working groups and improvements in human rights policies [2] must likewise acknowledge the juxtaposition in spending obscene amounts of GDP on nuclear weaponry they claim never to want to use. Instead, critics ask how to reinvest that money into human security to safeguard peace, justice, stability and equity, which do not beget more violence (Acheson, 2021).

Ethical and human rights considerations regularly shape many other laws and policies. For example, the African philosophy “Ubuntu” means “I am because I care, I am because I belong” and has been used to indicate the changes needed to ensure environmental and economic sustainability (Jackson, 2010), as well as a “Ubuntu Diplomacy” model for American foreign policy to foster collaboration and global responsibility (U.S. Department of State, n.d.). Non-possessor states argue that the nuclear industry and armaments industry is unethical and

uncompassionate and do not serve the interests of society. Possessor states have a responsibility to interrogate their ethical and moral integrity and integrate compassion and humanitarian concerns into societal decision-making to stop behaviours and policies that contradict other areas of the nation's identity and value system (CFFP Interview with Bernedette Muthien, 2021).

## **6 Nuclear possessing states must be subject to significant systems of accountability and checks and balances.**

The P5 [3], in addition to their role on the United Nations Security Council, are also nuclear-possessing states, meaning that any attempt to garner international action to eliminate nuclear weapons ultimately fails due to their veto power. The P5 have used dismissive and condescending language to justify refusing to sign the Ban Treaty and pitting it against the NPT. Doing so, however, serves to distract from the responsibility of possessor states to their non-proliferation obligations as outlined in the NPT. Though these aren't the only possessor states, their status on the Security Council means they function within a hierarchy which gives them access to power without sufficient accountability. To date, attempts to design an international system of checks and balances for nuclear possessors has failed due to this strategic positioning of P5 states. However, a system designed decades ago does not sufficiently reflect the modern-day concerns on a myriad of security issues, including nuclear weapons. Until the Security Council is reformed, and all members are subject to term limits, it will be difficult to impose checks and balances on P5 states regarding nuclear policy.

### **End Notes**

1. Chemical weapons are considered weapons of mass destruction and their use in armed conflict is a violation of international law (Arms Control Association, 2020c).
2. The UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs) was signed by the UK, France, Russia, China, and the US.
3. The US, the UK, China, Russia, and France.

## **Concluding Remarks**

The role of all policy, filtered through a feminist lens, must focus on rebalancing power inequalities, eliminating systems of oppression, and actively supporting the needs of the most marginalised in society. By challenging the militarised conceptions of what makes a person or a community safe, we can begin to build a world in which more people can experience wellness and peace.

This also means scrutinising how institutions, both global and local, perpetuate patriarchal, white supremacist, and capitalist systems. Within foreign policy, particularly nuclear policy, this means actively working to counter the gendered and racialised concepts of who can make 'good' policy and which countries are 'rational and responsible' enough to possess nuclear weapons. Ultimately, the only way to prevent the use of nuclear weapons is to eliminate nuclear weapons.

We hope that this report marks a step toward a collective shift in perspectives on nuclear weapons and nuclear policy. Valuing the voices of those who are typically discounted by those in positions of power leads to innovation, outside-of-the-box thinking, and better policies. Inspired by the remarkable stories captured in this report, we intend to use this report as a starting point for further advocacy, campaigning, and research work to ultimately ensure that global peace comes not from the threat of violence but through solidarity, collaboration, and equality for all.



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