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# **Scotland's ethical paradiplomacy as strategic narratives**

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## Abstract

This dissertation seeks to interrogate Scotland's upcoming publication of a feminist approach to international relations, announced in 2021 - situating it within a growing cohort of states. It assumes the position that Scotland's international activities - conceptualised as paradiplomacy – are already feminist. In conducting this argument, it will explore questions as to why Scotland adopts a feminist foreign policy and as to how this policy might look. The analytical frameworks necessary to answer these questions are conjured through feminist theory, soft power, and strategic narratives. Building on these concepts, content analysis is utilised in relation to Scottish Government communications through the years of Scotland's 'good global citizenship' from 2016 until the present. From this approach, an array of interesting feminist strategic narratives are gleaned and harnessed to better understand how Scotland approaches gender within its paradiplomacy.

### Key Terms:

Paradiplomacy and protodiplomacy, Scottish Government, Scottish National Party (SNP), Scottish Greens (SG), soft power, feminist foreign policy (FFP), strategic narratives, norm diffusion and translation, gender-based violence (GBV), liberal and intersectional feminism, Women, Peace and Security (WPS), United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325), Sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR)

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Contextualising the problem

The last two years have been characterised by turmoil within Scotland's devolved parliament, marred by disputes between itself and its centralised authority, Westminster. Towards the end of 2022, Scotland failed at the UK Supreme Court to obtain a legal mandate for independence, seemingly quashing the Scottish National Party's ambition for independence any time in the near future (BBC, 2022b). Additionally, earlier this year, tensions brewed over a controversial Gender Recognition bill passed by the Scottish Parliament, leading to the first instance in nearly thirty years of devolution of Westminster triggering article 35, in effect vetoing one of Scotland's policies (The Guardian, 2023). This was topped off by the resignation of Nicola Sturgeon as first minister, who had been the Scottish National Party's leader since 2014. During her time as first minister, Nicola Sturgeon championed many progressive and pioneering policies, particularly those that advanced feminism. Amongst these policies, Sturgeon's government was among the world's first three to adopt a gender-balanced cabinet, whilst it was also Sturgeon's government that became a world first in introducing free sanitary products, a revolutionary drive to tackle period poverty (BBC, 2020; Sturgeon, 2017b). However, most salient among these legacies to the aims of this dissertation was her government's announcement of a feminist approach to international relations in 2021, brought in to cultivate Scotland's endeavour to become a 'good global citizen' (Scottish Government, 2022b).

Naturally, the announcement of a feminist approach to international relations poses a just set of questions. Scotland is one of four subnational regions under the central authority of the United Kingdom, comprised of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Thus, its parliament in Holyrood is not a sovereign one. Whilst it achieved devolution in 1998, granting it its own parliament and an array of devolved powers, the Scotland Act of 1998 also retained many powers under Westminster's leadership, curtailing Scotland from engaging in

matters entailing diplomacy, security, defence or foreign policy. However, the literature points to Scotland's navigation within these constraints through 'paradiplomacy', a form of diplomacy specific to subnational entities, leading to braver and more pronounced international activities and granting scope to engage in matters traditionally held under the remit of the central authority (Keating & McEwen, 2020; Dellepiane & Reinsberg, 2023).

Whilst abating confusion as to why Scotland announced its plans for feminist international relations, confusion arises as to what exactly a feminist foreign policy entails. By the Scottish Government's own admission, there is no agreed definition of a feminist foreign policy (Scottish Government, 2022b). Sweden - the first to champion a feminist foreign policy and a perceived leader in the field - cast it aside shortly after Scotland announced its own (BBC, 2022a). Indeed, in devising this dissertation, the words of Sweden's current foreign secretary Tobias Billström were particularly thought-provoking:

'Gender equality is a fundamental value in Sweden and also a fundamental value for this government ... but we're not going to use the expression 'feminist foreign policy' because labels on things have a tendency to cover up the content.' (Billström cited in The Guardian, 2022)

Billström's statement seems to infer that the ascription of 'feminist' to Sweden's foreign policy was redundant, perhaps even performative, leading to a justification for Sweden abandoning its feminist foreign policy. It contends that Sweden does not need to have an explicitly 'feminist' foreign policy for its international agenda to be feminist. Some authors, such as Dellepiane & Reinsberg, are cognisant of the argument that Scotland's narrative of global citizenship is emblematic of an 'imagined community' or a 'symbolic state' (Dellepiane & Reinsberg, 2023). Indeed, Zwingel demonstrates that the neo-liberal position implies that states adopt ethical foreign policies to enhance the state's image rather than take its implementation seriously (Zwingel, 2012). Thus, the adoption of a feminist foreign policy could be perceived as a cynical one. Indeed, Scotland is complicit with an array of 'un-feminist' policies; it is host to the entirety of Britain's nuclear arsenal and is pro-militarisation through an explicit aim to join NATO following independence (Rosamond et al., 2022). It has also failed in other international commitments – reflected, for example, by falling short of its net-zero targets three years in a row (Rosamond et al., 2022).

Thus, this dissertation arrives at an impasse, and with Scotland's feminist approach to international relations yet unannounced, it is unclear whether these valid questions can be answered until it is announced. However, Scotland perhaps does itself a disservice in exclaiming that it will assume a feminist approach to international relations. Indeed, not only are Scotland's domestic policies pioneering, but its international policies are too. Scotland has funded the training of fifty women peacekeepers a year from conflict-afflicted regions through UNSCR 1325 (Scottish Government, 2017). It has financed the education and training of thousands of Pakistani women through its international development scheme and used its position as host of COP26 in Glasgow to bring to light the harmful and gendered impacts of the climate crisis (Scottish Government, 2016; Sturgeon, 2021). These are just a few examples of Scotland's considerations of gender abroad. Concludingly, at least elements of Scotland's existent paradiplomacy could be considered demonstrative of feminism.

## 1.2 Research questions

This leads to this dissertation's core contention, which assumes the argument that Scotland's paradiplomacy is already feminist. Ascertaining an answer to this is no easy feat; it requires of the research a robust understanding of contemporary feminist foreign policies and what it means to be feminist, which presents a challenge in itself. Indeed, there are different strands of feminism, all offering different interpretations of what being a feminist state entails. Zhukova et al.'s work accounts for the disparate manifestations of feminist foreign policies, building on norm translation theory and strategic narratives to capture the varied feminist ideologies between states, and this is the framework from which this research will follow the lead (Zhukova et al., 2022). It is argued that by interrogating the strategic narratives behind Scotland's position and the type of feminism they engage with, a clearer picture will emerge of Scotland's international position on gender, which leads to this set of research questions:

1. Concerning its feminist paradiplomacy, what are Scotland's strategic narratives?
2. What strand of feminism do these strategic narratives reflect?

## 1.3 Innovative aspects and significance

In answering these questions, this dissertation's research will add to the growing body of literature that addresses the co-option of feminist norms across the international community. It will reveal the types of feminism that Scotland engages with, attempting to relate this to the literature on feminism and strategic narratives, showing that Scotland harnesses feminism as a means to bolster its soft power as well as using it based on the pragmatic approaches of the Scottish state, which incorporates an economic (market feminist) approach through membership of G7 and alignment with the global status quo. It will aid in understanding Scotland's feminist foreign policy, offering comments on its trajectory and how it could resemble in the future.

## 1.4 Chapter outlines

In setting out to achieve its intended outcomes, this dissertation will be structured into several main chapters. The following chapter will delve into relevant literature, initially seeking to define Scotland's approach to diplomacy, considering theories such as 'paradiplomacy' among others, and how Scotland approaches its overarching narrative of 'good global citizenship' through these processes. Building on this, it will combine the theories of soft power and strategic narratives, seeking to foster an analytical framework that captures Scotland's international actions in a specified way for feminism. It will conclude the literature review by analysing feminist-specific literature, introducing concepts such as norm translation and its convergences with soft power and strategic narratives, enabling the research to locate a research gap that will allow it to answer the research questions. The third chapter deals with this research's methodology and analytical framework, revealing a qualitative content analysis approach that includes how texts were both located and harnessed. This will lead into the results section of the dissertation, revealing the narratives that have arisen from Scottish Government communications in relation to both research questions. The discussion chapter will engage more deeply with the dataset, seeking to rigorously analyse the data by harnessing the literature review.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Paradiplomacy in Scotland



In further establishing the relevancy of Scotland as a credible international actor despite its situation as a substate, this chapter will outline some key concepts and literature pertinent to Scotland's paradiplomacy and strategic narrative building. Under the 1998 Scotland Act, foreign policy remained under the jurisdiction of Westminster, which stayed put as a 'reserved area', as did security and defence matters, thereby limiting Scotland's legal authority in engaging in foreign policy-related activities. The devolved settlement and an external affairs department offer some scope to Scotland's capabilities abroad. However, a typical foreign policy will never be realised unless full statehood is achieved. Tensions between Holyrood and Westminster have been frayed by a recent legal battle to hold a referendum, ultimately denied to the Scottish government by the Supreme Court, seemingly quashing the prospects of a second referendum. Nonetheless, in 2021, the Scottish National Party (SNP) entered its fourth term as the leading party in Holyrood, persistently advocating for Scottish independence. Despite a relatively narrow defeat in a 2014 independence referendum, the nationalist sentiment continued to grow. This was reflected in increasingly popular support for the SNP, providing Scotland's government with ample impetus to engage in nation-building activities such as 'paradiplomacy' and to push the limited boundaries of their devolved powers (Keating & McEwen, 2020).

As per Chatterji and Saha, paradiplomacy refers to the international activities and diplomatic engagements undertaken by subnational entities such as regions or provinces, challenging the traditional Westphalian understanding and dominance of sovereign states in studies of foreign affairs (Chatterji & Saha, 2017). Its increasing recognition represents a significant shift in the international system, encouraging greater emergence of subnational actors and their participation in global affairs. The conceptualisation of paradiplomacy provides a theoretical framework to analyse and comprehend the international activities of subnational actors like Scotland or other European substate actors such as Catalonia or Flanders and to differentiate them from sovereign states.

Literature on paradiplomacy conveys that the concerns of paradiplomacy are seemingly transient; it was once a term primarily concerned with economic engagements, yet contemporary paradiplomacies are increasingly holistic and are marked by engagement with human rights, gender, environmentalism and development (Dellepiane & Reinsberg, 2023;

Cornago, 2018). It can be derived from this that contemporary paradiplomacies are bolder. An observation of the literature on paradiplomacy is that this has stemmed from the 21st-century diffusion of central powers as fostered by the proliferation of informational technologies among other decentralising agents brought about by globalisation (British Council, 2019; Cornago, 2018; Chatterji & Saha, 2017). Czapiewski refers to this novel phenomenon as a 'horizontal dispersion' (Czapiewski, 2015. P. 60). Credence is given to this the announcements of a feminist foreign policy in Scotland, perhaps the most resemblant encroachment by the Scottish Government over the 'reserved matters' of Westminster thereby blurring the lines of a legal harnessing of devolved powers or an ostensible breach of reserved powers, which such inadvertent dispersions of centralised powers have enabled.

Though paradiplomacy serves as a fruitful state-building tool and may advance eventual bids for statehood, paradiplomacy does not necessarily indicate proximity to full statehood nor serve as justification for independence. It is misguided to conflate paradiplomacy with secessionism, as substates adept at paradiplomacy can also serve as positive examples of the devolved state system (British Council, 2019). This is shown in literature whereby Scotland's nation-building efforts can exist without posing a detriment to the UK, as demonstrated by Dellepiane and Reinsberg's perspective, and may even benefit Britain by enhancing Scotland's and by extension the UK's international standing (Dellepiane & Reinsberg, 2023). Further credence is granted to this perspective by the British Council, which advocates for increased development of Scotland's soft power capabilities and a more robust national narrative (British Council, 2019). Scotland, which has taken an increasingly divergent approach to foreign relations since Brexit and imparity over approaches in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic and has drawn criticism from Westminster over Scotland's engagement in paradiplomacy, whose government offers viewpoints that contrast with Westminster's (Dellepiane & Reinsberg, 2023). Scotto provides a counterpoint, however, leading a survey comparing attitudes towards foreign policy in both Scottish and English populations. Deriving from the survey's findings, he contends that, at least among its people, attitudes to both foreign policies differ only in matters of degree rather than direction (Scotto, 2023).

Concerning paradiplomacy, the literature reveals other concepts worth pondering in the Scottish context. Based on Cornago's understanding, the idea of protodiplomacy is

perhaps a more natural fit for Scotland in place of paradiplomacy due to the Scottish Government's explicit attempts at independence (Cornago, 2018); this is also considered elsewhere by commentators of Scotland such as Czapiewski (Czapiewski, 2015). This is because protodiplomacy focuses on nation-building with the eventual goal of statehood, and this is done by more explicitly conjuring an external coalition around independence through protodiplomacy (Dellepiane & Reinsberg, 2023). Czapiewski notes that pinpointing which form of (sub)diplomacy is in action is conceptually tricky because they often differ only symbolically (Czapiewski, 2015). Czapiewski demonstrates an example stemming from Lockerbie whereby, despite London's protests, Scotland released convicted terrorists from the 1988 bombing. This represented Scotland's dissent towards Westminster and its allies because it held different laws and beliefs to that of Westminster (Czapiewski, 2015). This represented a rather occasional symbolic difference between the two entities. This is seemingly backed by Dellepiane and Reinsberg, who contend that 'paradiplomacy and protodiplomacy are fluid realities' (Dellepiane & Reinsberg, 2023. P. 4.).

Dellepiane and Reinsberg highlight the construction of a distinct national narrative as a central dimension of protodiplomacy and paradiplomacy, forming the basis of what would become an 'imagined community' or a 'symbolic state' (Dellepiane & Reinsberg, 2023). In recent years, Scotland has endeavoured to conjure such a narrative. Indeed, a notable aspect of Scotland's paradiplomacy is its commitment to projecting itself as a 'good global citizen', an integral part of its 2016 manifesto, updated in 2021 (Dellepiane & Reinsberg, 2023). This was manifested in drives for international development, environmentalism, and the announcement of a feminist approach to foreign affairs, which all stem from an overarching narrative of positive global citizenship (Dellepiane & Reinsberg, 2023). Dellepiane and Reinsberg demonstrate the limitations of Scotland's international development fund, which is relatively small compared to most international development funds, and to this end, it is directed largely to four states: Pakistan, Rwanda, Malawi and Zambia so as to maximise its efficiency (Dellepiane & Reinsberg, 2023).

In recent years, Scotland's internationalist ambitions put Scotland at odds with Britain's contracted approach to a positive foreign policy, reflected, for example, by a reduction in international development efforts and bitter withdrawal from the EU (Dellepiane & Reinsberg, 2023). Though Scotland's paradiplomacy is covered sparsely in literature,

Dellepiane and Reinsberg articulated a firm link between domestic policy and the paradiplomacy of Scotland in that domestic policy informs external policies (Dellepiane & Reinsberg, 2023). This is salient when discussing a feminist approach to foreign affairs, as little is confirmed about Scotland's unpublished proposed feminist foreign policy, but much is known about its radical feminist domestic policy.

Some literature considers the perspective of Westminster on Scotland's paradiplomacy. The Scottish Government's attempts at paradiplomacy have not always been met with scepticism by Westminster. For example, Scotland's involvement in international development was initially uncontroversial and uncontested, beginning around the G8 summit in Gleneagles, where Scotland made great strides to develop its international presence through international development schemes (Dellepiane & Reinsberg, 2023). The benign nature largely owes itself to a party congruence between the two British parliaments, with Westminster and Scotland under the leadership of Labour governments at the time. However, divergences have become more apparent during the Brexit process and the Covid-19 pandemic, with increased imparity between the SNP and Conservatives. Scotland reaffirmed its commitment to global citizenship, while Westminster took a different path with its "Global Britain" approach (Dellepiane & Reinsberg, 2023). The decision by the UK government to reduce developmental aid from 0.7 to 0.5% of GNI was met with dismay from Holyrood (Dellepiane & Reinsberg, 2023). Some unionists have balked at the announcement of Scotland's FFP, now emphasising that it treads on Britain's reserved matters. Drawing on this literature, it can be hypothesised that Scotland's paradiplomacy, in its present form, diverges significantly from Westminster's foreign policy and its expectations of Scotland compared to the situation pre-Brexit.

Ultimately, Scotland's efforts to influence the broader world through paradiplomacy exist as a marginal and unexplored field of study, particularly with announcements of a feminist approach to foreign affairs. Literature often opts to present summarised reports of Scottish paradiplomacy rather than delve into theoretical frameworks such as its discursive underpinnings, with Dellepiane and Reinsberg's publication offering an uncommon exception. There is still much scope to perceive the phenomenon of Scottish paradiplomacy through, for example, the understudied lens of soft power and strategic narratives.

## 2.2 Soft power and the emergence of non-coercive means of influence

Among questions pondered by this paper is in what ways Scotland can influence matters of security without official access to the domains of foreign policy, security or defence. ‘Soft power’ emerges naturally as a concept to consider in a substate with limited to no means of hard power. Soft power is an emergent field relevant to foreign policy and security studies. In 1990, Nye wrote a seminal chapter introducing ‘soft power’, proposing a post-Cold War pluralisation of what it means to be a powerful state (Nye, 1990, P. 20). He noted that the cold war preoccupation with military capabilities had led to the US marginalising their non-military coercive instruments, which were emerging as equally if not more pertinent to contemporary international relations (Nye, cited in Miskimmon et al., 2017). This understanding of security demarcated a shift in which the established and dominant factors of military force and conquest were ceding ground to technology, media, education, and economic growth as modes of international influence. Nye put forward the then-novel idea of ‘soft power’ and the emphasis that states must undertake to conjure it to non-coercively influence other states (Nye, 1990).

Nye's assertion was initially given credence as the United States emerged from the cold war as the sole global hegemon, embodying the ultimate soft power project of Western liberalism, which aligned with Fukuyama's controversial idea of the ‘end of history’ – notably achieved through soft rather than hard power (Fukuyama, 1992). Soft power has become a pivotal part of any modern state's strategy. Indeed, Hall and Smith shed light on the fact that the absence of a soft power strategy is now few and far between amongst modern states (Hall & Smith, 2013). The proliferation of informational technologies and the diminishing effectiveness and increasing cost of force have brought non-coercive means of influencing other states to the forefront, perpetuating this ongoing trend (Blanchard & Lu, 2012). This is reflected in the growing global desire to host international cultural events, like the Olympics and the World Cup, supporting this perspective in the literature. As highlighted by Blanchard and Lu's work, China's focus on soft power is evident in the 2010 Shanghai Expo, its contributions to international peacekeeping efforts, and the establishment of entities like the Confucius Institute (Blanchard & Lu, 2012). By investing in non-coercive methods of influence, states cultivate attraction, leading other states to admire and emulate their policies

(Nye, 2008). Nye's identification of culture, political values, and foreign policy as the main pillars of soft power is significant (Nye, 2008).

Literature increasingly refers to the idea that soft power as a field of study had become stagnant and incongruent with fruitful theoretical frameworks that track how influence is being operationalised, as much is confirmed by Miskimmon and O'loughlin, who perceived its terminal form as a 'sophisticated counting of tools and resources' (Miskimmon et al., 2017. P. 70) while Nye himself lamented that 'we're mesmerised by concreteness, ... we're totalling up resources not (explaining) what behaviour they generate' (Nye, in Miskimmon et al., 2017. P. 72). As surmised by Miskimmon et al., contemporary soft power manifests itself as counting of Twitter and social media followers akin to the cold war equivalent of counting armies, alliances and nuclear arsenals (Miskimmon et al., 2017). Blanchard and Lu note that it is a loosely ascribed term, and defining soft power as any non-coercive measure poses conceptual problems (Blanchard & Lu, 2012). This is the case when considering that hard power sources can be purveyors of soft power inasmuch as a well-trained military can be. Among other issues within the studies of soft power, salient considering Scotland's characterisation as a marginal small sub-state, is that soft power studies' fastidious method of counting soft power tools and resources tends to preference the analysis of larger sovereign states, and this is reflected a scarce availability of literature on Scottish soft power or those of other substates. This is true except for a 2019 study by the British Council on Scotland's soft power (British Council, 2019). The British Council have noted a diffusion of power in recent years, with power devolving from nation-state governments towards regional and non-state actors, demonstrating the relevancy of smaller states within studies of soft power (British Council, 2019)

In 2019 the British Council published a study titled Gauging international perceptions: Scotland and Soft Power which the British Council noted was 'probably the first (study) of its kind to focus solely on Scotland's soft power.' (British Council, 2019. P. 6.). It contributed novel perceptions on Scotland's soft power, including the study's cognisance that with the emergent threat to rule-based international order and in the twilight of American hegemony, 'Scotland will need a strong approach to shaping its global narrative that sets out what it has to offer the international community' while 'mastery of soft power is paramount for devolved governments' here remarking on the diffusion of power from the hegemon into

multi-polar world (British Council, 2019. P. 5.). The British Council's focus on narrative here is a focal point of interest to this dissertation. It realises the importance of Scotland conjuring up strong narratives about itself is imperative and that this offers a way for Scotland to harness agency over its soft power. It discerns that Scotland needs a solid approach to shaping its national narrative and that the success of its soft power depends on assertively telling its story to international audiences (British Council, 2019).

The centrality of narrative within soft power is met by consensus within literature (Nye, 2008; Franz, 2022; Roberts, 2006). Ultimately however, theoretical frameworks and methodologies sufficient for its study in Scotland are not easily satisfied by Nye's understanding of soft power studies, with Lu and Blanchard shedding light on a deficiency over the operationalisation of soft power, thus posing theoretical and methodological problems (Blanchard & Lu, 2012). However, the British Council succeeded in their study by adopting surveying as a methodology, using objective data, and collecting its target's response and the outcomes. The results were gathered by drawing opinions from populations of other states and then contrasting and comparing Scotland to results derived from several other substates (British Council, 2019).

The British Council's study exists as the most lucid attempt at analysing Scotland's soft power, and derived insightful conclusions from respondents; that Scotland's soft power strengths lie in matters such as education, environmentalism and culture (British Council, 2019). By elucidating what Scotland's soft power strengths were, it was subsequently able to locate the common agents of this soft power, demonstrating that the 'lion's share' of Scotland's soft power has little to do with the government (British Council, 2019. P. 23.). Hence, Scotland's government was notably deficient in utilising the soft power resources available to it (British Council, 2019). This, it contended, happened because of Scotland's limited global presence and diplomatic ties, with only 18 international consulates compared to 58 in Catalonia, serving as a stark example (British Council, 2019). In support of this perspective, Dellepiane and Reinsberg note that in comparison to other substates, Scotland's institutional capacity lags behind other substates such as the Basque region (Dellepiane & Reinsberg, 2023). Drawing these perspectives together, the onus is not on improving soft power in its raw form but rather on engagement with global audiences through political and diplomatic entities. The British Council saliently discerns that a 'mastery of narratives' could

ameliorate the gulf between Scotland's soft power resources and its lagging global presence (British Council, 2019. P. 6.). This demarcates a convergence with narrative theory, wherein academics focalise narratives as a means of enhancing soft power. In demonstrating that a fruitful study of Scotland's soft power can be achieved, along with a suitable template to do so, practical problems would doubtless emerge upon attempting surveys on the scale of the British Council. However, the insight into the importance of narrative building seems like the natural place to progress a study on Scotland's paradiplomacy and soft power.

### 2.3 Strategic Narratives as discursive agents of soft power

As previous literature elucidated, the value of narrative as a mode of explanation and understanding is becoming ever more ubiquitous in academia and public discourse, and this is diversely attested to by academics (e.g., Roberts, 2006; Castells, 2013). This recognition has been particularly evident since the early years of the 21st century, as then arrived a 'narrative turn' wherein Robert's work conveyed that using narratives in academic fields such as political science and international relations became increasingly pertinent (Roberts, 2006). These narratives were employed to explain actions and enhance comprehension, foster empathy, and create a richer experience for the readership (Roberts, 2006). Castells' *Communication Power* further elucidated the significance of communication as an increasingly focal form of power. In the modern 'network society,' new media technologies have altered the ways people (can) relate with one another, and power has been democratised, owing itself to the diffusion of such technologies now widespread around the globe granting voices to those previously on the periphery (Castells, 2013).

On the back of the emergence of discursive theories and security studies, the subsequent emergence of strategic narratives in academia built upon the foundations laid by Nye and granted a shot in the arm for soft power. Expanding on Nye's and Roberts' ideas, strategic narratives played a crucial role in revealing the operationalisation of soft power and the behaviour it elicits. Miskimmon, Roselle, and O'Loughlin identified the inherent limitations of Nye's initial theory, recognising that the accumulation and scrutinisation of soft power resources are insufficient and neglect to locate the operationalisation of these resources. They argued that soft power must be channelled in a coordinated and purposeful manner to serve as both a fruitful tool for states and for academics to understand how it



works (Miskimmon et al., 2017). Drawing on the growing field of narrative theory, Miskimmon and others developed a robust idea of strategic narratives as a new approach to understanding the operationalisation of soft power (Miskimmon et al., 2014). This was manifested in three seminal works by Miskimmon, Roselle and O'loughlin, advancing and developing the theory of strategic narratives. These works published in the last decade collectively exist as the most robust and original framework for strategic narratives (Miskimmon et al., 2017; Miskimmon et al., 2014; Miskimmon et al., 2015).

Via Miskimmon et al.'s understanding, strategic narratives serve as an effective means for political actors to 'construct a shared understanding of the past, present, and future of international politics' (Miskimmon et al., 2014. P. 1.). They seek to shape the behaviour of both domestic and international actors, thereby attempting to alter the global systems and structures of power. By their understanding, strategic narratives are essentially stories that states tell about themselves, other states, and the current state of world affairs with a purposeful effect and can be disseminated by both political and non-political actors (Miskimmon et al., 2014). Miskimmon et al.'s publication demonstrate that by formulating a problem and proposing a solution, these narratives potentially garner a positive image of the state and can foster influence, such as the emulation of a state's policies (Miskimmon et al., 2017). Schmitt also defines strategic narratives as crucial stories crafted by political actors to influence an audience (Schmitt, 2018). Therefore, strategic narratives propose an important discursive theory that ties in with soft power but promises more of an understanding of where influence is taking place.

Understanding strategic narratives and their function is crucial in comprehending soft power's role and the behaviours it elicits. Saliently, Miskimmon et al. conceptualise a theoretical framework and methodology for locating the structure of strategic narratives by emphasising their formation and projection and measuring their reception (Miskimmon et al., 2017). To their understanding, strategic narratives can be located in various manifestations of discourses (Miskimmon et al., 2017). Expanding further, Hagstrom and Gustafsson demonstrate that strategic narratives and their purpose can be located by answering the following questions: Who are the main protagonists, and how are they depicted? Is there a lucid order of events or ascription of causality? Is there a proposed set of takeaways, lessons to be learned or descriptions of resolutions? (Hagström & Gustafsson, 2021). Narratives are

distinguished by their focus on three principles: action, temporality and causality (Miskimmon et al., cited in Bevan et al., 2020). As Bevan expands further, ‘a narrative pertains to: actors, characters and events, as well as the relations between them that have temporality, causality and interpretivity’ (Bevan et al., 2020. P. 3.). Further to this, Bevan et al. show that what makes narrativity strategic is the coordinative and persuasive effect added to the mix (Bevan et al., 2020). It is not just about telling a narrative – but a narrative with a purpose.

Though Miskimmon et al. offer a theoretical framework for studying strategic narratives, methodologies used to capture strategic narratives can vary broadly. Additionally, Bevan conveys that different academic disciplines approach strategic narratives with varying methodologies (Bevan et al., 2020). Another point is that most publications focus on the content of strategic narratives, while some emphasise the actors producing the narratives, such as Bevan et al.’s 2020 publication (Bevan et al., 2020).

Academia does not reach a consensus on the usefulness of strategic narratives. A topical critique of strategic narratives stems from Crilley; he bemoans the marginalisation of ‘the visual’ as a mode of advancing or contesting strategic narratives. The image-driven ecology - manifested on, for example, Twitter and Tik Tok - has emerged as a significant mode of communication in contemporary international affairs. Imagery’s incongruence with the study of strategic narratives owing to its textual nature is, therefore, a disappointment (Crilley, cited in Miskimmon et al., 2015). Another possible challenge with strategic narratives arises when seemingly opposing narratives are underpinned by the same ‘master narrative’. Hagstrom and Gustafson's study of strategic narrative-building during the Covid-19 pandemic by the US, its allies, and China exemplifies this issue (Hagström & Gustafsson, 2021). Both countries sought to convey the narrative that they were the most successful in containing the virus. However, Hagstrom and Gustafson show that these narratives were ultimately influenced by the underlying master narrative that China's rise needs to be contained, and conversely, from China’s perspective, the overarching desire to usurp the US as a hegemon (Hagström & Gustafsson, 2021). This master narrative seemingly shapes the nature of subsequent strategic narratives, perhaps rendering them more easily discernible by understanding the overarching master narrative.

Aside from soft power, strategic narratives build on other discursive concepts. For example, constructivism plays a central role in the theory of strategic narratives. Constructivist scholars emphasise the role of ideas, norms, and discourses in shaping international relations. They argue that strategic narratives are powerful tools for constructing shared meanings, identities, and worldviews. Narratives contribute to the social construction of reality, influencing how actors perceive their interests and interact with each other. A pitfall of constructivism is the lack of focus on the agency or the purveyors of said structures. According to Checkel, constructivism over-emphasises norms and social structures whilst marginalising the agents of norms and why such norms have been advanced in discourse in the first place (Checkel, 1998). This contrasts with authors such as Zwingel, who finds fascination in how and why key agents select certain norms and how they travel from state to state (Zwingel, 2012). In Zwingel's case, this was revealed through the seminal theory of norm translation instead of diffusion (Zwingel, 2012).

Returning to strategic narratives, an overview of the literature on the theory reveals its scant application within the context of Scotland, despite the emphasis placed on narrative building in Scotland by Dellepiane, Reinsberg and the British Council. In reflection on their work, Miskimmon et al. convey gratitude to the ongoing work that incorporates their framework, though they still note that 'many political narratives are receiving no attention,' cajoling further work with the theory, thus inviting and encouraging further study (Miskimmon et al., 2015. P. 422).

## 2.4 Feminist foreign policies as strategic narratives

Feminist foreign policies represent a relatively recent political development relevant to international relations. Championed by a growing number of governments, these policies seek to promote gender equality, women's rights, and feminist principles in foreign policy decision-making (Thorburn, 2000). This section provides an overview of the emergence and historical context of feminist foreign policies. Literature shows that women's security has become inextricable from national and international security in recent years; policies such as the Hillary Doctrine in the US, WSP and UNSCR 1325 add credence to the ubiquity of this narrative. Krause et al. have shown that greater participation from women in peace processes as representatives and delegates and in civil society results in reduced violence and

consolidation of peace settlements (Krause et al., 2018). Additionally, the UN has shown that violence disproportionately affects women, further exacerbating pre-existing inequalities and discrimination (UN, 2020). Thus, many states have endeavoured to adopt a gender component within their security strategies.

Parallel to the widespread incorporation of gender-based goals in states' security strategies, feminist theory scholars have converged with analyses of foreign policies. Among work from these scholars, Aggestam et al.'s 2019 publication attempts to provide a theoretical framework to understand these developments (Aggestam et al., 2019). Drawing on Aggestam's theorisation of feminist foreign policies, feminist foreign policies promise a reconception of Westphalian understanding of security. For example, neo-realism – a prevalent concept in security studies - puts more emphasis on the anarchic international system and its structure rather than contemplation of the ideological makeup of the states inhabiting said system. Within such a system, survival is paramount and leaves little practical room for ethical ideologies such as a feminist foreign policy (Aggestam et al., 2019). Importantly, feminist foreign policies are more concerned with human security rather than state security, seeking to securitise, more specifically, women (Aggestam et al., 2019).

Aggestam and True have also shown that a convergence between both feminist theorists and foreign policy analysis can be met with trepidation, owing to scepticism of state-centred institutional frameworks, as states have been perceived to have served as wards of patriarchal and oppressive systems (Aggestam & True, 2020). Indeed, feminist theory scholars treat the idea of a feminist foreign policy critically. For example, Sweden is a world leader in arms exports (Zwingel, 2012), and Mexico struggles with its high rates of domestic violence, as does France (Zhukova et al., 2022). Canada is a key NATO member and has committed to increased militarisation since the outbreak of war in Ukraine.

There is also scepticism about Scotland's future FFP. Rosamond et al.'s 2022 publication on the future of Scotland's FFP is a key publication concerning what Scotland's FFP should and could resemble (Rosamond et al., 2022). Rosamond et al. urge Scotland to be bolder in adopting its FFP and not to simply adopt and mirror the liberal and pragmatically rooted approaches of Sweden (Rosamond et al., 2022). It is further critical of intersectional approaches that do not go far enough in a transformative sense, as intersectionality is 'not just

compounded disadvantages that individuals or groups experience' and should instead be cognisant of the drivers of insecurities, which in many cases, traditional foreign policies have served to foster (Rosamond et al., 2022. P. 3.). This could be a natural progression for Scotland, which has considered the brutalities of Britain's - and by extension, Scotland's - foreign policies. For example, Scotland has recently spoken more about its role in the British Empire and why this contributes to Scotland being in the privileged position that it is today, setting the foundations for an approach that deals with drivers of intersectional insecurities of women. (Rosamond et al., 2022). However, Rosamond et al. convey concerns that Scotland's reluctance to reconcile with fossil fuel extraction, arms exportation and harbouring of nuclear weapons could undermine its future FFP (Rosamond et al., 2022). Sweden's recent abandonment of its FFP and application to NATO perhaps speaks to the fragility of feminist foreign policies, wherein 'smart policies' can be subordinated to other foreign policy objectives, demonstrated by an application to NATO in light of Russia's war in Ukraine.

Scholarship reflects the primacy of international institutions and their frameworks as the foundations of many states' normative frameworks (Zhukova et al., 2022; Zwingel, 2012). Both Aggestam and Zhukova have shown that Sweden and Canada heavily utilise norms found in the UN's 2000 Women Peace and Security (WPS) agenda to inform their foreign policies (Aggestam et al., 2019) (Zhukova et al., 2022). However, Aggestam and Shepherd offer criticisms of the WPS agenda itself, which has been seen within feminist IR theory to perpetuate gendered myths that 'women are in need of masculinised protection' (Shepherd in Aggestam et al., 2019. P. 28). Aggestam notes that the WPS agenda poses a conceptual problem concerning its applicability to different and nuanced conflict settings (Aggestam et al., 2019). Zwingel is also cognisant of the neo-liberal position on ethical foreign policies that often posits the idea that human rights regimes sign off on human rights-based treaties as a means to legitimise themselves as international actors rather than take their implementation seriously (Zwingel, 2012). Zhukova does contend that FFPs can be guided by practical reasoning; liberal feminism, for example, does not oppose militarism and permits a coupling of pragmatism and idealism (Zhukova et al., 2022). Indeed, feminist policies can be highly lucrative within a growth-based liberal system. Zhukova points out that if all women were to enter the labour market, the world's economy could increase by as far as a quarter, adding credence to the pragmatic underpinnings of FFPs (Zhukova, 2023).

The aforementioned points reflect and relate to a broad variety of feminist theories, pertinently including intersectional and liberal feminisms - none of which reflect a consensus on how best to conduct a feminist foreign policy. Most feminist foreign policies, particularly those in the global north, align themselves with the liberal position (Zhukova et al., 2022). This position perhaps draws the most criticism from feminist theorists for its reluctance to confront the drivers of inequality. These drivers include colonisation, arms trade, militarisation and extractivism (Rosamond et al., 2022). Sweden's FFP is the most famous embodiment of liberal feminism or, as Zhukova et al. often refers to it, mainstream feminism (Zhukova et al., 2022). Sweden explicitly places a focus on the '3Rs' – rights, resources and representation. This model focuses on institutional parity between sexes and human rights, empowerment, and access to resources. On the other hand, Mexico reckons with intersectionality within its FFP (in addition to liberal feminism), often aligning itself with the global south, owing to its own history of colonialism (Zhukova et al., 2022). In understanding more clearly intersectionality and feminism, Collins relays that intersectionality pertains to the 'interdependent phenomena' of oppression, which includes race, class, a person's sexuality or nationality, among a plethora of other identities which can exacerbate negative experiences in relation to gender (Collins, 2016, cited in Runyan, 2018. P. 11.).

Whilst contemplating whether feminist foreign policies are truly ethical is both conceptually challenging and beyond the scope of this paper, it does attract curiosity as to why states adopt feminist goals in their foreign policies along with the norms they co-opt. In embarking on answering this question, answers can be found within Aggestam and True's publication, reflecting their studies on norm diffusion and entrepreneurship (Aggestam & True, 2020). They note the 'dynamic and nonlinear evolution of the meaning of norms on gender and gender equality', which leads to varied manifestations of feminist norms in the international community (Aggestam & True, 2020). There is no consensus on a definition for a feminist foreign policy, and states that have adopted them have harnessed different interpretations of what feminist foreign policy goals are, along with displaying a nuanced approach to the hierarchisation of feminist norms (Zhukova et al., 2022). In a 2012 publication, Zwingel conducted a study of how feminist norms diffuse transnationally. In that publication, Zwingel contends that 'the assumption of a global-to-local flow of norms inherent in most of the global norm diffusion literature is simplistic' (Zwingel, 2012. P. 155.). Rather, norms are co-opted by varying and more complex degrees (Zwingel, 2012). True

offers another point, noting that individual norms can be interpreted differently, allowing an academic understanding of why even the most important and agreed-upon norms rarely achieve their intended aims (True, 2019).

Zwingel's theoretical framework for this analysis rests upon seeing how feminist norms in the UN's 1979 Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the most important international framework on security and gender having been ratified by 189 states, have been incorporated into foreign policies by states that have embraced it. By focusing only on a single institutional framework, it is then able to lucidly picture and analyse how the norms propagated by the international framework are co-opted domestically and then compare and contrast the differences between states taking part in CEDAW. Zwingel finds the concept of norm diffusion insufficient to explain the varying degrees of norm appropriation from global to national, replacing it instead with norm translation (Zwingel, 2012). This inherently suggests that feminist norms have not diffused linearly but have rather manifested transnationally to nuanced enough extents to indicate that they have been translated, reflecting agency and negotiation of norms on behalf of the state. Indeed, Zwingel contends that 'universal principles, when applied to particular contexts, inevitably take on different forms' (Zwingel, 2012. P. 126.) It also compels further study on the negotiation of these norms, particularly by critical political actors (Zwingel, 2012). Similar research has been conducted in relation to WPS, which also reflects varied approaches within national frameworks.

Building on discrepancies in the adoption of feminist norms from the global to local, some academics have attempted to understand the motivational underpinnings behind announcing feminist foreign policies beyond ethical ones, all of which have discrepancies with one another. Most salient was a well-observed convergence between feminist norms and strategic narratives. This academic observation owes itself to the recent work of Zhukova et al.'s Feminist foreign policies (FFPs) as strategic narratives (Zhukova et al., 2022). Building on the idea that few ubiquitous norms exist in any sovereign state's feminist foreign policies, Zhukova et al. have tried to articulate - alongside theories of norm translation - why feminist foreign policies manifest in varied forms. Their work refers to Zwingel's publication ten years prior, whose understanding of norm translation can answer the non-linear adoption of feminist norms across states (Zwingel, 2012). This is combined with Miskimmon et al.'s

theory of strategic narratives to contend that feminist foreign policies' dynamic representation embodies the use of strategic narratives. Actors can facilitate unique narratives by selecting certain norms to incorporate into a strategic narrative (Zhukova et al., 2022). These are tailored to the aims of the state in question, allowing a projection of soft power through the discursive means of strategic narratives, which, as discussed through Miskimmon et al.'s framework, are essentially states projecting stories about themselves to the rest of the world conducted purposefully to garner appeal and foster influence (Miskimmon et al., 2017).

It is important to note that there are three types of strategic narratives: International system, national, and issue narratives. The first, international system narratives, articulate broader (global) issues as its narratives whilst also relaying which other actors the states see as important within the international system (Miskimmon et al., 2014). Miskimmon relays this as 'how the world is structured, who the players are, and how it works' (Miskimmon et al., 2014. P. 76.) As per Zhukova et al., national narratives in relation to FFPs 'incorporate gender into the vision of the nation' (Zhukova et al., 2022. P. 201.) while issue narrative hone in on a specific issue and how it needs to be dealt with using specific policies (Miskimmon et al., 2017). This framework of understanding can be harnessed to attain clarity on both what hierarchy of feminist norms feature in any given actor's feminist foreign policy and also the type of strategic narratives that are being used by political actors (Zhukova et al., 2022).

Beyond theoretical outlines, Zhukova et al.'s methodology in their 2022 publication is critical. Qualitative analysis is conducted on texts from four states: Sweden, Canada, Mexico and France, all of which states with published feminist foreign policies. It analyses their press releases, policy documents, speeches, media reports and op-eds (Zhukova et al., 2022). It is able to derive all of these texts from NexusUni and online (Zhukova et al., 2022). In sum, it closely analyses 46 sources across the four states, highlighting 110 important texts within them (Zhukova et al., 2022). It codes each text to various feminist types, liberal or intersectional, as the two focal feminisms (Zhukova et al., 2022). Further, it selects the type of strategic narrative used, which, as mentioned, are either international system, national or issue strategic narratives (Zhukova et al., 2022). This bridges Miskimmon et al.'s strategic narrative theory and feminist theory, showing that the negotiation of norms can be located through strategic narratives and vice versa.



Zhukova et al. are cognisant of the limitations of this methodology, as competing narratives within civil society and other political parties can reflect further contestation of feminist norms within a state, meaning the strategic narrative is not necessarily reflective of the entire state (Zhukova et al., 2022). Nonetheless, it offers a compelling methodology that convincingly locates what strategic narratives are being operationalised and what strand of feminism each state engages with.

## 2.5 Research Gap

This chapter sets out where this dissertation can contribute to existing research. The literature review opened a clear research gap with each field discussed, and a research gap was considered after each section of the literature review. Nonetheless, this chapter will consolidate the research gap. Firstly, Scotland offers a novel country to explore as a case study of feminist foreign policies and one which is very viable. Keating, Dellepiane and Reinsberg were able to reflect Scotland's international work as a nation-building exercise and embodying of the increasingly bold nature of paradiplomacies, which have benefited from Czapiewski's concept of 'horizontal dispersion', which allows substates like Scotland to tread into state-like realms like feminist foreign policies and environmentalism (Dellepiane & Reinsberg, 2023; Keating & McEwen, 2020; Czapiewski, 2015). Dellepiane and Reinsberg demonstrated 2016 as a seminal year in which Scotland launched its narrative of 'good global citizenship,' marking Scotland's bolder engagement in paradiplomacy (Dellepiane & Reinsberg, 2023). Further, in demonstrating a drive to project itself as a credible global actor despite its situation as a substate, Scotland, in its 2021 Programme for Government, announced that it was beginning work on a feminist foreign policy (Scottish Government, 2021). This has been preceded by and then built upon by an array of government documents wherein gender and foreign policy are mentioned, despite work still ongoing on the exact makeup of Scotland's feminist foreign policy.

The aforementioned point ties in well with strategic narratives. Indeed, there is much scope to examine Scotland's paradiplomacy through strategic narratives, which are unique in the context of Scotland. Additionally, Miskimmon et al.'s recent reflections have urged further use of their theory, noting that 'many political narratives are receiving no attention'. (Miskimmon et al., 2015. P. 344.) The British Council's 2019 study on soft power in Scotland

alluded to the significance of narrative building within the nation, noting a disconnect between discursive diplomatic elements and the strength of its overall soft power resources, leading to the contention that Scotland requires a stronger narrative (British Council, 2019). Dellepiane and Reinsberg have highlighted that narratives are integral to Scotland's paradiplomacy, demonstrated through the overarching narrative of Scotland's global citizenship (Dellepiane & Reinsberg, 2023). It then comes of interest to analyse and verify the existence of Scotland's narratives, and doing so through the lens of feminist strategic narratives – a theory introduced only recently in 2022 by Zhukova et al. – presents a novel opportunity to do so.

Additionally, Aggestam and True note that more academic work is needed that 'systematically and cross-nationally assesses the extent to which pro-gender norms and feminist goals are present, adopted, and practised (if not fully realised) in foreign policy' (Aggestam & True, 2020. P. 146.). By drawing on the growing convergence of feminist theory and foreign policies, ripe for use in Scotland with a history of feminist discourse within their global affairs, compounded by announcements of a feminist approach to foreign policy, new research can be conducted on a pertinent topic.

### 3. Analytical Framework & Methodology

Having drawn together literary concepts and having positively explored their congruence with Scotland as a case study, this paper opts to follow – relatively closely - Zhukova et al.'s methodology in their 2022 publication, wherein the qualitative analysis is operationalised to map strategic narratives within four states (Sweden, Canada, France and Mexico), but adapting it to the Scottish context (Zhukova et al., 2022). Following this, qualitative analysis is undertaken on texts reflecting the Scottish Government's discourse on international feminist issues. This predominantly involves analysis of qualitative data derived from the Scottish Government, currently led since 2021 by a coalition of the Scottish National Party (SNP) and the Scottish Green Party (SG), though the preceding SNP minority government of 2016-2020 will also be covered. Further, the period deemed appropriate for analysis will be 2016 to the present; this follows Dellepiane & Reinsberg's logic wherein they date the beginning of Scotland's narrative of 'good global citizenship' to 2016.

#### 3.1 Qualitative content analysis

The following section further consolidates the methodological approach of this dissertation, as it is important to demonstrate the specifics of how its methodology functions. Although reference has been made to qualitative research, this dissertation more specifically adopts qualitative content analysis as its methodology. Content analysis is a research method used to analyse and interpret the content of various forms of communication, with text being the most pertinent to this case study. It involves studying the content of these texts to identify patterns, themes, and trends, which, as per Kolbe and Burnett, allows an ‘unobtrusive appraisal of communications’ (Kolbe & Burnett, 1991. P. 244.). This will lead to meaningful insights from Scottish Government communications whilst further being able to draw conclusions from the data in relation to the research questions. Thus, this case study will harness content analysis to analyse and interpret the communications from various texts related to Scotland's feminist foreign policy.

This also leads to considerations of data collection within content analysis. Within qualitative research, there are two ends of the spectrum concerning the amount of data necessary for a qualitative study; this concept is usually referred to as the point of saturation (Saunders et al., 2018). On the one hand, Morse notes that ‘failure to reach saturation has an impact on the quality of the research conducted’ (Morse, 2015. P. 587.), but on the other, a qualitative research paper risks ‘losing its coherence and potency if its conceptualisation and uses are stretched too widely’ as per Saunders et al. (Saunders et al., 2018. P. 1.). By no means is data on Scotland’s feminist foreign policy-like discourse inexhaustive. This plausibly owes itself to the fact that Scotland’s feminist foreign policy is yet to be published, whilst Scotland’s devolved status hampers, to some extent, the scale at which it projects feminist strategic narratives, at least relative to sovereign states. Whilst this could represent a limitation of the methodology, the data and text collection results should reflect a healthy and robust representation of Scottish feminist strategic narratives if given in-depth analysis, and this is what this dissertation seeks to do with its qualitative content analysis.

### 3.2 Gathering data

This section reveals the methods of how this dissertation located and collected data. In locating data based on the Scottish Government’s discourse and narratives, keywords such as ‘feminist foreign policy’, ‘GBV’ and ‘gender and climate change’ were entered concerning

Scotland using online search engines. Within these search parameters, the first text to appear was ‘Scotland’s feminist foreign policy: a background note’ (2022), wherein Scotland delineates its aims and justifications for a future FFP, conveying apparent relevancy to the context of this dissertation (Scottish Government, 2022b). This text is highly significant independently, conveying content reflective of Scotland’s feminist narratives and the focal aims of Scotland’s future FFP. However, most pertinent to locating further data, the document spoke of other important Scottish Government publications:

‘Crucial to this work is ensuring any approach brings together the range of our international activity in a way that is coherent and aligned with the principles set out in our recently published Global Affairs Framework.’ (Scottish Government, 2022b).

The above quote reflects the primacy of Scotland’s Global Affairs Framework; this document is what much of Scotland’s international work pivots on. Subsequently, the Global Affairs Framework was straightforwardly located and analysed. Due to the nature of this document being less focalised on gender-related issues – relative to, for example, the background note on Scotland’s FFP – the ‘find’ function on the document reader was utilised, searching for keywords similar to the aforementioned.

Scotland’s Global Affairs Framework yields a detailed overview of Scotland’s international work. It refers to existing Scottish international frameworks, such as Scotland’s International Development Fund and its Climate Justice Fund, as well as partnerships with the global south - more specifically with Rwanda, Malawi, and Zambia - and a partnership with Pakistan. These four countries emerged as Scotland’s four main partners. These frameworks and related policy documents were sought, and the same analysis method concerning feminist narratives was operationalised. Understanding that the Global Affairs Framework covers much of the vital work of Scotland’s affairs abroad gave confidence that much of what underpins Scotland’s feminist policies abroad had been located and that any document that was not unearthed by this search was relatively unimportant.

This paper considers a broad range of communication channels an important component of its qualitative analysis, especially as narratives across different communication channels may reveal unique insights. In harnessing Aggestam and True’s concept of norm

entrepreneurs, key Scottish figures such as Nicola Sturgeon (former First Minister) and Angus Robertson (Secretary for External Affairs) were entered into online search engines alongside similar keywords as above (Aggestam & True, 2020). Importantly, the Scottish Parliament's website possesses an archival section with a search function, which was also utilised to pinpoint parliamentary debates and speeches; this time, more specific search terms were used, such as - '*UNSCR 1325, WPS, Feminist foreign policy*'. Notably, these texts largely reflect narratives of gender problems and solutions abroad, outside Scotland. Though reference will be made to the work Scotland has done in relation to gender domestically, especially concerning national narratives, the texts analysed will largely pertain to global problems. This paper interprets strategic narratives as a vision of the global system and structure, so the focus of qualitative analysis will predicate this.

In sum, 23 documents were collected and analysed, totalling 25 texts. This dissertation contends that the quantity and content of these texts substantiate the robustness and recurrence of narratives without reaching the point of oversaturation or being demonstrative of undersaturation, in accordance with the literature on qualitative analysis (Morse, 2015; Saunders et al., 2018). Also, external institutions have been included in the results section (UK government and Oxfam) in two instances. While this does not represent a Scottish Government narrative, it does help contextualise the international activities of the Scottish Government, and thus these have been sparingly included. The communication channel type of these texts is outlined in the first of two tables (Table 1). Additionally, the slight discrepancy between the number of documents collected and the number of texts analysed results from some documents containing more than one relevant text. For example, a meeting of the Scottish Parliament (4 Nov 2020) includes speeches from Emma Harper (SNP) and Angus Robertson (SNP), thereby revealing two relevant texts in one document (Robertson 2020; Harper 2020).

### 3.3 Categories and Coding

Having gathered ample data, it is useful to convey how the texts were operationalised to answer the research questions. In doing this, Kuckartz demonstrates the necessity of categories in qualitative research designs (Kuckartz, 2014). Categorising the collected texts involves a thematic approach, which has been guided by Zhukova et al.'s operationalisation of questions that provide instructions for coding the texts into the respective strategic

narrative types, along with several different feminist types (Zhukova et al., 2022). This method ensures that texts have been systematically organised based on their alignment with the three strategic narrative types and the multiple strands of feminism. In qualitative research, this categorisation might reflect a concept-driven (deductive) approach (Kuckartz, 2014). In this approach, the categories used for organising the texts are derived from pre-existing theories and concepts, which this dissertation enacts by relating its research design to existing work on strategic narratives, crucially Zhukova et al.'s and Miskimmon et al.'s to which this dissertation's methodology is mainly faithful.

### 3.4 Results of the Methodological Process

This section bridges the methodology and results chapter, revealing how the results and discussion chapters are structured. It also describes two tables that this dissertation will use, demonstrating the significance of their content. Firstly, the type of communication channel represents the projection stage of Scotland's strategic narratives; the projection stage of strategic narratives will be answered by the kind of text analysed, such as speech, policy document, manifesto, and essay. These will be presented in the first of two tables (Table 1) - representing the total of each type of text. The second table (Table 2) summarises Scotland's main issue, international system, and national strategic narratives; these summaries will also be elaborated in the results chapter.

The findings chapter is structured into four sections. The first three sections focus on coding findings derived from qualitative analysis and categorising them into the three strategic narrative types: international system narratives, national narratives, and issue narratives. This coding process follows Zhukova et al.'s (2022) methodology, albeit with some adaptations, considering Scotland's lack of a published feminist foreign policy (FFP), in contrast to Sweden, Canada, Mexico, and France. Collaboration is not exclusively mentioned in Scotland's international system narratives, as it is argued that collaboration also ties in with Scotland's national strategic narrative due to Scotland's devolved status, where it rejects Westminster's shift away from multilateralism, demonstrated by, for example, Brexit. Occasional reference will also be made to Zhukova et al.'s (2022) line of questions in the results chapter for further clarity on the analytical process. The first three sections will determine the presence and makeup of strategic narratives within Scotland's feminist discourse. The fourth and final section conveys what strand of feminism Scotland's strategic

narratives demonstrate, being enabled to conduct this by linking with Zhukova’s categorisation of the three strategic narratives, thereby allowing this dissertation to assert what feminist type Scotland’s strategic narratives embody.

In approaching the discussion that follows the results chapter. It will draw together the findings in relation to the three strategic narrative types: issue, international system, and national narratives, and link these to different feminism strands. It will analyse these findings with the literature review, thus helping to understand the meaning of the results and to understand why Scotland manifests its feminist strategic narratives in such a way. Having given answers to the research questions, it will then discuss their implications and interpret their different meanings. It will be right to assess the implications of adopting an explicitly ‘feminist’ foreign policy, especially in reference to Sweden’s decision to abandon its FFP. It will also comment on Scotland’s future FFP and how this research can be built upon by other research.

### Communication Channels (Table 1)

ScotGov policy documents and publications	Speeches and statements (SNP and SG)	Manifestos (All SNP)	Op-eds and essays (SNP Officials)	External references to ScotGov work (Oxfam and British Government )	Total Texts
9	10	2	2	2	25

Issue Narratives	International System Narratives	National Narratives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peacekeeping, WPS and human rights are central - Training of 50 women peacekeepers a year from conflict-afflicted regions since 2015, the narrative has evolved to incorporate climate change in 2021.</li> <li>• Economic emancipation of women, particularly in partner countries (Pakistan, Rwanda, Zambia, and Malawi).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Climate change is the most significant problem the international system faces. Women - and other marginalised groups - are those most affected.</li> <li>• Leadership and empowerment of women essential in mitigating climate change.</li> <li>• Collaboration with other states key, use of UN platforms such as COP26 as a platform for projection.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parity with feminist domestic policy - FFP reinforces narrative of Scotland as a feminist nation.</li> <li>• Collaboration and multilateralism as a rejection of Brexit and Westminster's parochialism and neglect of feminist issues.</li> </ul>

Strategic Narrative Summary (Table 2)



## 4. Results

The following result chapter sets out with the goal of locating the existence of strategic narratives in Scotland's feminist foreign policy, then harnessing this to answer the research questions with an empirical coverage of 2016 - when Scotland initiated the narrative of good global citizenship as per Dellepiane and Reinsberg - to the present day (June 2023) (Dellepiane & Reinsberg, 2023). The results will be thematically presented, beginning with issue narratives, followed by international system narratives, and ending with national narratives. In exploring the second research question, this dissertation also seeks to map what strands of feminism these engage with; these will be presented in a single section that draws on the findings of the previous three results sections – meaning there are four results sections in total. This will provide an in-depth and holistic overview of Scotland's feminist strategic narratives, covering their manifestations in relation to their content and what feminist strands they engage with.

The type of text represents the formation and projection phase of strategic narratives; these are presented along with their sum totals in Table 1 (see above). All texts referred to in the first table are located in the bibliography's primary source section. Direct quotations will be used as examples of Scotland's strategic narratives, though references will also be made to texts which are not quoted.

## 5. Issue Strategic Narratives

The following section approaches the first of three feminist strategic narratives, issue strategic narratives. As a quick summary, it has found that Scotland uses feminist strategic narratives parallel to a few key agendas (issues), which include Scotland's own UNSCR 1325 peacekeeping initiative and its international development fund, which targets the economic

emancipation of women as well as mitigation of GBV and SGBV within its partner countries (Rwanda, Malawi, Pakistan and Zambia).

In pinpointing feminist issue narratives, Zhukova et al. operationalise the following questions: ‘How is a country doing on gender equality? What gender issues has the country been involved in solving at home and abroad? What gender issues are emphasised to be solved through FFP at home and abroad?’ (Zhukova et al., 2022. P. 204.). This section diverges slightly from Zhukova et al.'s line of questioning, opting to discuss the resolution of gender issues domestically in the national narrative section. Unlike states that have published FFPs which pivot on a single central policy document, Scotland's FFP is yet to be officially published. Consequently, a range of policy documents and publications are analysed in its place.

## 5.1 Peacekeeping

Though the most significant issue Scotland's narratives propose solutions to through feminist action is climate insecurity, this narrative is covered by international system narratives because of its international nature. Scotland has actively sought to address specific gender issues in particular states. These issues and the narratives surrounding them are better aligned with issue narratives. Since 2015, more specifically during the Syrian civil war, Scotland has been a devoted supporter of WPS, assuming an active role in the agenda by establishing the Women in Conflict 1325 fellowship. This fellowship, carried out by Beyond Borders Scotland and funded by the Scottish Government, trains peacekeepers from conflict-afflicted regions taking place in Scotland under the supervision of the UN. Narratives pertaining to this emphasise the importance of peacekeeping, women's empowerment in leadership positions, and the protection of women's human rights, constituting the bulk of the Scottish Government's strategic issue narratives (e.g., Harper 2021; Sturgeon 2023).

In an op-ed for Cable Magazine, Sturgeon (2017) articulates the purpose of the Women in Conflict Fellowship, stating that it aims to address the lack of female leaders in conflict-affected regions by providing mediation and conflict resolution training, thereby encouraging broader participation of women in peace negotiations (Sturgeon, 2017). Further, in the same op-ed with Cable (2017), Sturgeon relays the importance of protecting women's human rights, projecting a narrative that protecting women's rights depends on empowering

women into leadership roles and influential positions (Sturgeon, 2017). These texts reflect peacekeeping, women's empowerment in leadership roles, and protection of human rights as the dominant narratives and features of Scotland's 1325 fellowship.

However, Scotland's narratives in the above form are largely unique to 2016 to 2020, when the fellowship was in its infancy. Further analysis has detected a transience to Scotland's strategic narratives. In more recent years, the fellowship has evolved to adopt a more holistic approach to the traineeship of women peacekeepers. In 2021, Angus Robertson (SNP) highlighted the introduction of a climate change element within the 1325 fellowship, along with much-increased funding. According to Robertson (SNP), Scotland has:

‘An opportunity to support women to play a full role in work to mitigate climate impacts, disaster risks and loss and damage that are inextricably linked to both conflict and the climate emergency.’ (Robertson, 2021).

This narrative is supported by Sturgeon, who notes that the peacekeepers’:

‘Expertise, specialism and – above all – compassion in dealing with the broader issues resulting from conflict, which are being further exacerbated in many cases by the impact of climate change, is invaluable’ (Sturgeon, 2023).

Hence, Scotland adopts a more novel narrative that connects climate change and gender - an increasingly prominent feature of Scotland's feminist narratives since 2021. As will be conveyed in the next section, the gendered climate narrative is Scotland's central international system narrative, revealing that both issue and international system narratives converge. The narrative's focus still rests upon peacekeeping, women's empowerment, and protection of human rights, but since 2021 has tied in with Scotland's dominant narrative of climate change and its intersection with gender.

## 5.2 Economic Emancipation.

Scotland's feminist narratives are an important facet of its engagement with its four partner states, where much of its international development fund is directed (Dellepiane & Reinsberg, 2023; Scottish Government, 2022a). These states are Malawi, Pakistan, Rwanda,

and Zambia. Issue narratives pertaining to these partner states revolve around women's economic empowerment, with occasional references to GBV. In Malawi, Scotland's Global Goals Partnership (2018) focuses on enhancing women's and girls' economic empowerment by increasing access to economic and social institutions (Scottish Government, 2018). Additionally, Scotland contributes to formulating, enforcing, and implementing GBV laws in Malawi (Scottish Government, 2018). The chief emphasis, however, is placed upon a narrative of women's economic emancipation, which is the central focus of Scotland's issue narratives in relation to its partner states.

In Scotland's feminist interactions with Pakistan, the sole focus is women's economic empowerment, particularly through education. This aspect is explicitly outlined in Scotland's Pakistan Engagement Strategy (2016), which emphasises equal opportunities for women. The document highlights Scotland's support for over 400 Pakistani women pursuing master's programs in Pakistani universities and its international development fund, which has enabled over 5,200 women to generate income through farming (Scottish Government, 2016. pp. 8-9). In Rwanda, GBV, as well as sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), are significant focal points. Oxfam relays the work the Scottish Government is contributing to in Rwanda, exclaiming that:

‘This funding from the Scottish Government is hugely welcome and will help stamp out the scourge of sexual and gender-based violence in Rwanda. The Scottish Government’s support for Oxfam’s work will enable and empower thousands of Rwandans to live safe and healthy lives free from violence and fear, both now and in the future’ (Oxfam, 2017).

This reflects an external institution's emphasis on the Scottish Government's work to tackle SGBV in addition to GBV. It should be noted that these narratives about Scotland's partner states often occur in isolation and are not projected to the scale of, for example, Scotland's feminist climate narratives. Therefore, Scotland's issue narratives that explicitly concern its partner states are relatively marginal but still demonstrative of narratives.

The overarching narrative of women's empowerment is deeply ingrained within Scotland's strategic narratives. This is not exclusive to discourse referencing its partner states

and is projected ubiquitously by the Scottish Government (e.g., Harper, 2020; Purdie, 2021). Nicola Sturgeon, emerging as Scotland's focal norm entrepreneur, plays a central role in projecting this narrative. During a visit to Stanford University in the US, Sturgeon (2017) emphasised the necessity of economic empowerment for women; part of this text epitomises why the solutions proposed by Scotland's strategic narratives are essential:

‘Leland Stanford actually pointed out in a letter in 1893 that if vocations were thrown open to women, there would be a 25 per cent increase in the nation's production. I was very struck by the fact that that letter was written 124 years ago. It makes a simple and overwhelmingly obvious point – that any nation which underuses the talent of half of its population is impoverishing itself.’ (Sturgeon, 2017a)

Hence economic empowerment is a key tenet of Scotland's issue narratives, rooted in the pragmatic views of the substate. To the Scottish Government's understanding, neglecting women's economic inclusion and productivity is a detrimental economic policy for itself and any other country. In summary, the analysed texts and derived narratives highlight Scotland's focal emphasis on empowering women economically and institutionally, but with the addition of a commitment to protecting women's human rights and mitigating GBV through peacekeeping.

## 6. International system strategic narratives

The following section reveals Scotland's strategic narratives in relation to the international system. As a brief header, climate change is the international system's most significant problem, relayed at large by Scottish Government communications. Women, and other marginalised groups, such as women of indigenous communities and the global south, are those worst affected. Additionally, leadership and empowerment of women are essential in mitigating climate change. Collaboration with other states is also key, with the use of UN platforms such as COP26 as a platform for projection. In exploring Scotland's strategic narratives within the international system, Zhukova et al. offer the following set of pertinent questions: ‘What global problems does the FFP aim to solve? What collaboration does the country already have on gender? How is FFP linked to this existing collaboration? What new collaboration and with whom is emphasised through FFP?’ (Zhukova et al. p. 204).

## 6.1 Scotland's climate and gender narrative

The primary challenge faced by the international system – to which Scotland coordinates narratives and solutions - is climate change. Scotland highlights the gendered implications of climate change while recognising that women are integral in mitigating its effects. Notably occurring within the timeframe covered by the analysis, Scotland hosted the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) in November 2021, which served as a highly advantageous platform for its strategic narratives. The narratives presented by Scotland during COP26, which were furthered at COP27 in Egypt, often revolved around the intersection of gender and climate change. Scotland's narratives reflect women as those most harshly affected by climate change and also as the climate crisis' solution (e.g., Sturgeon, 2021; Sturgeon, 2022). This narrative is embodied in a statement by Scotland's first minister during COP26 in celebration of Gender Day in Glasgow (2021). Sturgeon conveys that 'The Glasgow Women's Leadership Statement on gender equality and climate change acknowledges the disproportionate impacts of climate change on women and girls.' The statement asserts the importance of women's leadership in successfully combating climate change and its consequences (Sturgeon, 2021). Scotland's feminist discourse since 2021 has consistently projected this narrative, a narrative also shared by the Scottish Greens (e.g., Chapman, 2023). A number of analysed texts reflect nigh identical narratives, highlighting the gendered consequences of climate change and the importance of empowering women through increased representation (e.g., Robertson, 2021; McAllan, 2022).

Scottish narratives often emphasise that women's negative experiences of climate change do not occur in isolation but are exacerbated by factors such as indigenous status and geographical placement in the global south. The Scottish Government, in the background note published alongside the announcement of its FFP (2022), conveyed Scotland's allocation of £2 million from its £36 million Climate Justice Fund to address loss and damage, acknowledging that those least responsible for the global climate emergency – which includes women, indigenous peoples, and those from the global south - suffer its impacts most severely (Scottish Government, 2022b). Within a year, this loss and damage fund increased to £5 million (Scottish Government, 2022b). The document outlines the purpose of this fund, which aims to address existing inequalities such as wealth disparity and discrimination based on gender, age, disability, or indigenous status (Scottish Government, 2022b). It recognises

that women's negative experiences of climate change are deepened by these factors, noting that its solution seeks to 'tackle existing inequalities such as wealth disparity and discrimination based on gender, age, disability or indigenous status, as the impact of climate change can be made worse by these factors.' (Scottish Government, 2022b). The same document expands further on the future of Scotland's FFP and its drive for an intersectional approach:

'Our approach to international activity will put the rights and empowerment of women and girls, and other marginalised groups at its heart. Listening to, and learning from, others we will take an intersectional approach seeking to understand how multiple interconnected social categories, such as gender, sexual orientation, race, disability, religion and socio-economic status, interact' (Sturgeon, 2021)

Hence reflecting an explicit delineation of Scotland's intersectional lens. Many of Scotland's international system narratives since 2021 have configured themselves on this axis. Speeches and statements from Scottish Government officials demonstrate further intersectionality. A particular text derived from Mairi McAllan (SNP) notes the importance of women's voices from the global south, effectively coupling women and their geographical positioning as part of this climate narrative:

'We are working with WEDO to ensure that more women from the global south can attend and influence crucial climate negotiations, including next year's COP28 in Dubai. In doing so, we are actively placing women exactly where they need to be - at the centre of climate action that will successfully deliver on the promise of the Paris Agreement.' (McAllan, 2022)

Drawing from this text and others, Scotland's international system narrative emphasises the gendered impacts of climate change, whilst the solutions called for and offered by Scotland are still very much rooted in women's empowerment. This is an inveterate strategic narrative of Scotland since hosting COP26, though women's experiences of climate insecurity are occasionally configured alongside intersectionalities as above, which is an increasingly ubiquitous facet of Scotland's gender and climate narrative since 2021.

## 6.2 Primacy of collaboration

A crucial part of international system narratives is that they reveal who the other key actors are and how the nation positions itself in relation to these actors. Drawing on the texts and findings, collaboration is central to Scotland's feminist international system narratives. Reference has already been made to the UN, which Scotland has much-relished engagement with through UNSCR 1325 and WPS, developing its peacekeeping fellowship under the UN's supervision. Scotland was host to COP26 – a yearly climate conference run by the UN – which it used to significant effect. Parallel to its narratives outlining the gendered impacts of climate change, it also emphasises the importance of multilateralism, producing a joint statement alongside UN women and with signatories from a host of other states, including those from the global south such as Bolivia (Scottish Government, 2021c).

Reference is made to Sweden's FFP within Scottish political discourse, which offers inspiration for Scotland's own FFP. For example, Scotland's document on trade (2021) explicitly calls for partnerships with 'like-minded countries', further stating that Scotland wants to 'explore a partnership with Sweden on gender and trade'. (Scottish Government, 2021. P. 86). Scotland benefits greatly from its partnerships with the global south, where experiences of women enrich Scotland's feminist perspectives. One text in particular derived from Alison Johnstone's speech conveys this narrative (Scottish Greens, 2020):

'Rwanda has a cohort of formidable and inspiring women who, after the genocide there, became politicians and activists and worked hard to achieve peace in the aftermath of atrocity. They have learned hard lessons; they now have an equal number of girls to boys in education and increased participation of women in the country's democratic processes and conflict handling. Those lessons from other countries can be ones from which we learn. They can inspire us and show us new ways of doing and being.' (Johnstone, 2020)

Thus, the culminant narrative of Scotland's place in the international system is one of collaboration and recognition of other states' work. The primacy of collaboration is perhaps best encapsulated by Nicola Sturgeon's speech to the UN in New York (2017),



‘One of my great heroes is Eleanor Roosevelt, who was of course, a great supporter of the United Nations and the UN Charter of Human Rights. She once said that “Alone we cannot keep the peace of the world, but in cooperation with others we have to achieve this much longed-for security.”’ (Roosevelt. cited in Sturgeon, 2017a)

Scotland and its former leader are cognisant that Scotland is a cog in a vaster machine that demands a multilateral effort in advancing feminist norms, and this is the clear sum of the collaborative component of Scotland’s international system narrative.

## 7. National Strategic Narratives

The following section explores how Scotland connects itself to gender beyond its borders through national strategic narratives. Briefly, one of Scotland’s focal national narratives is that it underpins its feminist paradiplomacy with its domestic agenda, which is perceived to already be feminist. The analysis also reveals that Scotland's collaboration stems from its unique national situation within a state that has - through Brexit - displayed a parochial resistance to multilateralism against Scotland’s will, according to its national narrative. In further exploring these narratives, Zhukova posits the following questions: ‘What is a country’s national identity with respect to gender? Does FFP reinforce the status of this identity or change it?’ (Zhukova et al., 2022. P. 204). In another slight divergence from Zhukova et al.'s framework, it is necessary to highlight collaboration’s additional significance to Scotland’s strategic national narratives, particularly in instances where reference is made to Westminster. It is argued that this aspect of collaboration reflects more on Scotland's national context rather than the international system, and so collaboration will be analysed in this section in cases where Westminster is referred to.

### 7.1 Parity with domestic feminism

Scotland draws extensively on its history as a feminist country to bolster its strategic narratives; the announcement of an FFP is demonstrated as a means to foster parity with its domestic and foreign policies (e.g., Scottish Government 2022b; Scottish Government, 2022c). Amongst Nicola Sturgeon’s 2017 op-ed with Cable Magazine is a section titled

‘Domestic values underpin our international work’ wherein Scotland’s former first minister exclaims that ‘Our commitment to gender equality at home is one we seek to extend to Scotland’s work overseas’ thereby substantiating this narrative, which connects its FFP and domestic policies (Sturgeon, 2017a). Scotland also connects its narratives to the domestic achievements of the Scottish Government, which has a proud history of feminist policies, giving its feminist strategic narratives credibility. This is reflected, for example, by Nicola Sturgeon’s op-ed with Cable Magazine (2017) in the discussion of Scotland’s institutional parity:

‘I’ve been determined to lead by example in my own appointments. When I became First Minister, I appointed a cabinet of 5 men and 5 women. According to the United Nations, it was one of only three gender balanced cabinets in the developed world – subsequently we’ve seen Canada have a gender-balanced cabinet, and I’m sure there are others now.’ (Sturgeon, 2017a)

Nicola Sturgeon not only relays a narrative of Scotland as a feminist nation but – as analysis has interpreted it – Sturgeon perceives Scotland as an influential actor, with other states occasionally following its lead on feminist policies. Its narrative of itself as an influential state is not infrequent. One text derived from a Sturgeon speech praises the Climate Loss and Damage fund introduced by Scotland in 2021, which between CO26 and COP27, was followed by similar commitments from ‘Wallonia, Denmark, and from philanthropy through the Children’s Investment Fund Foundation’ thus building on this narrative (Sturgeon 2022a).

## 7.2 Collaboration based on a rejection of Westminster

Scotland’s strategic national narrative emphatically conveys the juxtaposition of its feminist work with that of Westminster’s, which it comparatively perceives as parochial and obstructive of Scotland’s multilateralist nature (e.g., Purdie, 2021). The words ‘disastrous’ and ‘chaotic’ are ways that the Scottish Government narrates Brexit. For further example, an excerpt from Scotland’s Global Affairs Framework is emblematic of tensions with Westminster, whose Brexit serves as a driver of Scotland’s increasing diplomatic efforts:

‘In the face of the UK Government’s disastrous and chaotic Brexit, which was rejected by an overwhelming majority in Scotland, the Scottish Government will

remain committed to the European Union and its values, and to internationalism. We will continue to work with our fellow Europeans and friends beyond to deepen our ties, improve our global networks and unlock new economic and business opportunities' (Scottish Government, 2022c)

In deriving themes from this text, it is clear that an emphasis on collaboration – an integral facet of Scotland's strategic narratives - is partly due to Scotland's national context as a devolved sub-region. Other texts consider failures of Westminster in relation to gender issues abroad as cause for a Scottish FFP, such as a text derived from Emilie-Louise Purdie (SNP, head of research at Westminster) - a chief orchestrator of Scotland's future FFP. Purdie conveys Westminster's failures in keeping up with gender commitments and calls on Scotland to take leadership in renegotiating Britain's apparent apathy to events beyond its borders (Purdie, 2021). It is also appropriate to mention Westminster's veto of Scotland's gender recognition bill earlier this year, as this move demonstrates a further rift between the two parliaments over gender. This was the first time since the Scotland Act of 1998 that article 35 had been triggered, with Westminster viewing the Scottish Government's legislation to have 'an adverse impact on the operation of Great Britain-wide equalities legislation' (British Government, cited in The Guardian 2023). The Scottish Government contested this, producing an official challenge to Westminster's veto on the grounds that it threatened Scotland's devolved powers (Scottish Government, 2023a). This adds to Scotland's narrative of imparity on gender along with malevolent constraint by Britain's central authority, with multilateralism through feminist foreign policies providing an outlet for Scotland's internationalism. Drawing this together, Scotland's national strategic narrative asserts itself as a credible feminist actor whilst revealing imparity with Westminster, which impedes Scotland's internationalism.

## 8. Feminist narrative types

In introducing the following chapter, it is necessary to summarise Scotland's strategic narratives again as a collective; this is essential as it will inform Scotland's feminist narrative types. Scotland's feminist narratives embody a negotiation of other FFPs and normative frameworks, representing, at times, a novel interpretation of a feminist foreign policy. With

Scotland's issue narratives, peacekeeping is the most prioritised area, as conveyed by the Women in Conflict fellowship and its detailed narratives. These reflect a few key feminism types; the emphasis on leadership training and empowerment of women's voices clearly demonstrates liberal feminist policies. The empowerment of women - through leadership and peacekeeping training - is a homage to basic UNSCR 1325 norms: An emphasis on human rights, tackling GBV and SGBV. These tie in with human rights-based feminisms and security feminisms, deductively following Zhukova et al.'s logic (Zhukova et al., 2022). Economic empowerment constitutes another area of focus within Scotland's feminist strategic narratives. The partnership with Pakistan best demonstrates this narrative, mainly through the education of women, but so does Nicola Sturgeon's speech to the UN (2017). The culminant narrative is one that clearly reflects market feminism. In drawing all these feminist narratives together, all the feminisms above relate to liberal feminism. Zhukova et al. and Rosamond et al. typically refer to this as 'mainstream feminism' which accompanies a typical emphasis on the 3Rs; rights, resources and representation (Zhukova et al., 2022) (Rosamond et al., 2022). Therefore, it can be asserted confidently that Scotland's issue narratives demonstrably embody liberal feminist narratives.

As for Scotland's international system narratives, which project a gendered climate narrative, the emphasis remains on women's empowerment (representation) and human rights, whilst Scotland securitises women in relation to the climate emergency. Women are securitised in relation to climate in addition to conflict. Indeed, Sturgeon's 2021 speech on the UNSCR 1325 fellowship conveys that climate change and conflict are inextricable. However, intersectionality is also an increasingly focal facet of Scotland's feminist narratives, which analysis has dated to 2021 when its official FFP was announced. Saliently, Scotland's background note to its FFP delineated that Scotland aims to take an intersectional approach in its future FFP. This was built around regularly within Scotland's climate narrative, wherein women's intersectional experiences are periodically considered, though the coordinative aspect of the narrative encourages liberal solutions (primarily increased representation) (e.g., McAllan 2022; Robertson 2021). Subsequently, Scotland's international system narrative incorporates intersectional feminism into its strategic narratives.

## 9. Discussion

This discussion-based chapter seeks to elaborate on the results, answering *how* and in *what ways* Scottish feminist strategic narratives manifest themselves in relation to their content and feminist alignment. This analysis will further establish links between the research findings and the existing literature review, thereby providing a comprehensive contextualisation of Scotland's feminist strategic narratives, including looking at the *why* concerning Scotland's feminist activities. This integration will foster a deeper understanding of not only feminism and feminist approaches to foreign policy but of broader literature pertinent to theories of soft power, strategic narratives and paradiplomacy. Additionally, the practical implications of the research findings on the broader landscape of FFPs will be presented, including a discussion of Scotland's unpublished FFP and how this research's findings can foster discussion over it.

The analysis has positively uncovered the existence of Scotland's feminist strategic narratives. Strategic narratives relay stories about the self to the rest of the international system, telling stories about global problems and coordinating solutions to them, which in turn reflect a positive image of the self to the rest of the world - garnering influence and causing other states to emulate its policies (Miskimmon et al., 2017). The results section reveals that Scotland lucidly narrates gender inequality as a global problem and incorporates coordinative aspects by proposing solutions. This includes, for example, its own UNSCR 1325-based peacekeeping fellowship, promoting women to leadership and platforming their voices at platforms such as COP whilst further stressing a multilateral effort in tackling gender inequality.

Additionally, in some instances, Scotland has garnered positive influence and has experienced emulation of its policies. For example, Denmark and others replicated its loss and damage fund introduced in 2021, whilst Scotland also championed a gender-balanced cabinet which would be followed up by other states – in presumably less direct a manner than the loss and damage fund. This provides affirmation that Scotland has deliberately coordinated feminist strategic narratives. The second research question asks what type of feminism Scotland engages with, but the answer is not set in stone when taking the period of 2016-2023 as a whole. Scotland's strategic feminist narratives are seemingly transient, with a vivid change in approach manifesting in 2021; this perhaps owes itself to the effects of

explicitly adopting a ‘feminist’ foreign policy in 2021 and hosting COP26, creating an impetus to develop a novel approach. Consequently, this discussion will divide 2016 to 2020 and 2021 onward as they demonstrate alternate answers to the second research question, which engages with the feminist strand of Scotland’s feminist strategic narratives.

### 9.1 Scotland’s feminist strategic narratives of 2016-2020: A liberal feminist approach

This section engages with Scotland’s overarching liberal feminist strategic narrative throughout the period of 2016 to 2020, before the announcement of its FFP. It demonstrates that Scotland emphasises market feminism, with the more subdued addition of security and human rights-based feminism. In doing so, this section will draw together the findings from the research that is relevant to Scotland’s liberal strategic narrative, setting aside conclusions pertaining to the primacy of collaboration, strategic national narrative, and intersectional feminist narratives, as these will be used in separate sections to substantiate other answers to the research question.

In 2016, Scotland revealed its drive to become a ‘good global citizen’, revealing a bolder approach to its paradiplomacy (Dellepiane & Reinsberg, 2023). As part of its drive for good global citizenship, Scotland demonstrated transparent dissemination of strategic feminist narratives. As the results demonstrated, peacekeeping became a significant component of Scotland’s strategic narratives; this was conducted through Scottish funding of Beyond Border Scotland’s traineeship of women in line with UNSCR 1325, developed to train and empower women into positions of leadership to foster the protection of women’s rights, further revealing securitisation of women in areas of conflict demonstrated by a focus on GBV and SGBV. Owing to deductive logic, these showed security and rights-based feminisms, and in further following Zhukova et al.’s logic, these types of feminism were categorised as liberal feminism (Zhukova et al., 2022).

However, parallel to Scotland’s Women in Conflict fellowship, narratives also emerged in relation to Scotland’s partner countries. These countries are important as they are recipients of much of Scotland’s international development fund (Dellepiane & Reinsberg, 2023). Whilst narratives surrounding feminist engagement with Rwanda, Malawi and Zambia occasionally reveal strategic narratives about GBV and SGBV, thus advancing Scotland’s security and human rights-based feminisms, there is an even more explicit focus on the

economic emancipation of women, which was revealed as demonstrative of market feminism. Indeed, market feminism was the only feminist strategic narrative used in its partnership with Pakistan, wherein the focus was on women's education. Additionally, key Scottish Government actors – whom this dissertation has labelled norm entrepreneurs in line with literary definitions such as Aggestam and True's - have been central to advancing Scotland's market-based, liberal approach (Aggestam & True, 2020). Nicola Sturgeon's speech at Stanford University (2017) lucidly demonstrated Scottish perceptions of women as valuable and neglected economic resources, furthering a market feminist agenda and hence liberal feminism (Sturgeon, 2017b). Saliently, Zhukova et al. note that all states that produce FFPs emphasise a particular aspect (Zhukova et al., 2022). In the Scottish context, market feminism is the pervasive facet of Scotland's issue strategic narratives - with mitigation of GBV subordinate to narratives based on market feminism, aimed at a pragmatic and economic approach of the Scottish Government, which analysis will develop further. This is a surprise, given that GBV is an entirely pertinent issue within all four partner states, and its resolution would, by extension, foster the economic emancipation of women (Oxfam, 2017). Drawing this all together in relation to both research questions, Scotland's feminist strategic narratives from 2016, from when it announced its global citizenship up until 2021, demonstrate a liberal feminist approach with a clear focus on the 3Rs (rights, representation, resources), but with market feminism reflecting the strongest and most recurrent of Scotland's strategic narratives.

## 9.2 Analysing Scotland's liberal feminism using literature

Having consolidated Scotland's liberal approach to feminist strategic narrative building from 2016 to 2020, underwritten by a market feminist attitude, it naturally follows to discuss the implications and meanings of this strategy. In doing so, this section will build upon Scotland's liberal feminist narrative, contending that this was largely reflective of the economic and pragmatic goals of the Scottish Government, demonstrating further meaning to Scotland's strategic narratives by analysing what it has gained or sought to gain by assuming a liberal feminist approach.

As discussed, Scotland, during the years 2016 to 2020, assumed a coordinated liberal feminist approach. The literature demonstrates that liberal feminism is the dominant strand of feminism within FFPs of the global north (Zhukova et al., 2022). In this sense, Scotland

aligns its feminism with the status quo. Indeed, the issue narratives of Sweden, Canada, Mexico and France are all exclusively governed by liberal feminism (Zhukova et al., 2022). Like Scotland, the priority areas of Sweden's issue narratives base themselves on WPS/UNSCR 1325, with the leadership of women within peacekeeping as a means to protect human rights and mitigate SGBV and GBV, but there is also a pervasive market feminist approach within Sweden's FFP (Zhukova et al., 2022). As the literature suggests, liberal feminism embodies a practical policy, and its approach is often called 'smart politics' (Aggestam & True, 2020; Zhukova et al., 2022). In mentioning Scotland's partnership with Pakistan again, which lucidly presents an example of Scottish market feminism in action, Scotland is home to a large Pakistani diaspora, 'many of whom maintain close links with family members in Pakistan' (Scottish Government, 2016. P. 2.) Through the economic empowerment of Pakistani women, Scotland fosters the enrichment of itself through the large Pakistani diaspora.

Literature adds credence to this idea of harnessing women as an economic resource; Zhukova shows that the global economy (GDP) would increase by up to a quarter if all women were to enter the global workforce (Zhukova, 2023). It is also posited by Zhukova et al. that Canada and France's advancement of market feminism ties in with their membership in G7, where 'economic growth remains the main driver of world progress' (Zhukova et al., 2022. pp. 212-213). Likewise, Scotland is part of the G7 via its union with the UK; hence the same logic likely applies to the Scottish context. Indeed, Scotland's foray into international development was borne out of a G7 summit in Gleneagles in 2005, initially driving Scotland's internationalist agenda (Dellepiane & Reinsberg, 2023).

Given that Sweden is perceived as the archetypal liberal feminist state, it is no surprise that Scotland refers to Sweden in its vision for trade, drawing kinship with 'like-minded countries' and seeking trade deals that explicitly pertain to gender with Sweden (Scottish Government, 2021b. P. 86.). Hence, Scotland's feminist strategic narratives through these years are very much rooted in smart politics, and are thus not feminist in a transformative sense, but this is not surprising having elucidated the nature of liberal feminism through literature (Aggestam & True, 2020; Zhukova et al., 2022). It does, however, represent - in a much more modest sense - a typical global north FFP, thus helping to contextualise Scotland's liberal feminist approach in these years. Thus, in taking the



research question further, Scotland's liberal feminist strategic narratives from 2016-2020 can be labelled pragmatic strategic narratives, which speaks to how Scotland's feminist strategic narratives are manifested.

### 9.3 An intersectional feminist strategic narrative: 2021 to the present

This section is structured to demonstrate Scotland's intersectional approach from 2021 onward. That Scotland's approach to feminist strategic narratives cannot appropriately be discussed as a collective represents a key finding to the research question because it shows that Scotland's strategic narratives are transient. 2021 demonstrated a clear change in Scotland's formulation of feminist strategic narratives, revealing a unique alignment with intersectional feminism. This section will draw together the results that substantiate this assertion and then elaborate on their significance by harnessing sources from the literature to reveal the significance of an intersectional approach within a country of the global north.

In 2021, Scotland launched plans to adopt a feminist foreign policy, solidifying its paradiplomacy as feminist and thus building on the feminist work that it had done previously, whilst it was also host to COP26 in Glasgow in the same year, giving it an opportunity to build on the announcement of its FFP. Around these events, Scotland began to develop a novel international system narrative, connecting climate change with women; women suffer the most from climate insecurity whilst also proposing women as those best placed to mitigate climate change. The Scottish Government conveyed this at great lengths, introducing new policies such as the climate loss and damage fund and a climate component within its UNSCR 1325 fellowship. Further to narratives arising from Scottish Government publications and policy documents, they also arose within speeches and statements by crucial Scottish norm entrepreneurs (e.g., Chapman 2023; Sturgeon 2021). However, one finding of real significance, was that Scotland adopted intersectionality within its international system strategic narratives. Scotland progressively began to perceive gender as one of many identities that suffer most from the climate crisis, with women in indigenous communities and women in the global south those among those most harmed. Solutions were formulated primarily through funding, such as the loss and damage fund and the climate component of Scotland's UNSCR 1325 fellowship, constituting largely liberal solutions. Nonetheless, Scotland's feminist narratives engage with the intersectional strand of feminism during this period.

## 9.4 Analysing Scotland's intersectional approach using literature

This section seeks to go further than relay that Scotland's approach to feminist strategic narratives incorporates intersectional feminism. It is necessary to further examine the results, which reveal Scotland's intersectional feminist approach, with sources from the literature review, as this will help contextualise Scotland's intersectional feminist narrative and why it manifests as it does. In doing this, it will also take the research question further, showing that Scotland's strategic narratives demonstrate a grander drive to bolster its soft power by harnessing intersectionality within its feminist strategic narratives, which embodies a unique approach to FFPs in the global north.

Whilst Scotland's liberal feminist narratives demonstrated the semblance of feminist paradiplomacy in Scotland since 2016 leading up to 2020, it also demonstrated that Scotland's pre-2021 feminist strategic narratives are close simulacrum of FFPs of the global north, with Scotland co-opting feminist norms from a well-established status quo (Zhukova et al., 2022). When looking at this through Zwingel's theory of norm translation, it appeared that Scotland had enacted little, if any, negotiation of international norms, demonstrating instead a rather linear diffusion of feminist norms into their context (Zwingel, 2012). However, as conveyed, 2021 was a seminal year of change for Scotland's feminist narratives. It was, after all, 2021 that Scotland announced plans for an official FFP. With this announcement, Scotland has become bolder in its approach. The aims section of its background note to its FFP was explicit in its aims of taking an intersectional approach (Scottish Government, 2022b). COP26 in Glasgow offered Scotland a unique platform, where it closely configured the climate emergency alongside its feminist strategic narratives. Pertinently, it configured intersectional feminism alongside this new narrative, with cognisance that a multitude of factors beyond gender exacerbates women's experiences of climate change. This was a pervasive facet of Scotland's international system narrative, latterly spilling over into Scotland's peacekeeping agenda with the addition of a climate component in the Women in Conflict fellowship.

The addition of a climate component in Scotland's UNSCR 1325-based fellowship is salient and reflective of Scotland's growing agency in translating international norms, which aligns with Zwingel's theory of norm translation (Zwingel, 2012). On adding a climate

component to the WPS agenda, Smith notes that only 17 out of 80 states mention climate change within their WPS frameworks, placing Scotland in a minority (Smith, 2020). Not only is this a relatively uncommon facet of feminist foreign policies, but in coupling it with intersectionality, Scotland fosters an idiosyncratic feminist strategic narrative. This can be asserted because neither France nor Sweden refers to intersectionality in their FFPs (Zhukova et al., 2022). Mexico offers an exception, adopting intersectionality as part of its FFP to draw attention to women's experiences in the global south (Zhukova et al., 2022). However, Mexico's intersectional agenda logically follows its context as a global south country (Zhukova et al., 2022). Scotland's strategic narratives reflect Scotland as the first global north nation to incorporate intersectionality within its feminist strategic narratives - albeit interspersed with liberal narratives - demonstrating a massive break from the status quo in the global north.

In further contextualising Scotland's novel intersectional approach, it is salient that an intersectional policy was a charted area of influence of Scotland's policies and strategic narratives, referring here to the climate loss and damage fund introduced in 2021, which was subsequently replicated through commitments from several other nations and would proceed to become a critical agenda at COP27 (Scottish Government, 2023b). This can be tied in with the literature on soft power and strategic narratives, as mentioned in the literature review. Both theories are predicated on the idea that the very function of non-coercive power is to elicit approval from the international system, causing states to approve of and emulate the narratives and policies disseminated by an actor (Miskimmon et al., 2017; Nye, 1990). Indeed, looking at the British Council's findings on Scotland's soft power, Scotland exerted lacklustre agency over its soft power as of 2019 whilst urging Scotland's diplomatic entities to adopt a 'strong approach to shaping its global narrative that sets out what it has to offer the international community' (British Council, 2019. P. 5.). This seemingly asks Scotland to bring forward a unique narrative - something of a novelty. Zhukova et al. also posit that small states are more likely to engage with norms in a translative sense, which will help improve their image both nationally and internationally (Zhukova et al., 2022).

As an exercise in soft power and strategic narrative building, Scotland's intersectional narrative can be perceived as a triumph and represents a coordinated effort at producing a feminist strategic narrative that has positively impacted Scotland's soft power. Thus, adopting

an intersectional component seems to have galvanised Scotland's feminist strategic narratives and, by extension, its soft power, with this novel approach fostering international influence. Expanding further, Keating delineates that paradiplomacy refers to the 'external projections of substate actors aimed at supporting local agendas' (Keating, 2021, cited in Dellepiane & Reinsberg, 2023. P. 3.). Thus, there is also a lucid paradiplomatic element to this answer. This speaks to the why of Scotland's feminist strategic narratives; it has levelled up its image by becoming the first to take an intersectional approach in the global north, which helps understand Scotland's intersectional approach. Additionally, in taking this answer to the research question further, Scotland's strategic narratives from 2021 demonstrate a unique and successful soft power drive.

### 9.5 Scotland's mirroring of feminist domestic policies.

Among Scotland's national strategic narratives is one that reveals a parity with its domestic agenda of feminism. It will demonstrate how this offers another answer to the first research question, though more importantly, this section opts to contest the very narrative itself, showing how Scotland's feminist foreign policy more closely mirrors international norms than it does its own context and that this is representative of norm diffusion.

In answering why Scotland's feminist strategic narratives take up their exact form, it is argued by Zhukova et al. that a central influencing factor in the formulation stage of feminist strategic narratives is the work already done domestically on feminist issues (Zhukova et al., 2022). This would seem to follow in Scotland, which is lucidly assertive of the idea that its FFP is there to mirror its domestic feminism. However, this is true only in broad terms, insofar as they can both be labelled as feminist. Surprisingly, they do not coherently emphasise similar aspects. The climate and gender narrative follows logically due to Scotland's ambitious climate policies, such as becoming a net-zero nation by 2045. However, the omission of, for example, SRHR in Scotland's feminist strategic narratives is surprising. Domestically, Scotland champions SRHR demonstrated by, for example, being a global first in the introduction of free sanitary products in an effort to end period poverty in 2021. In revealing plans to publish an FFP, Scotland was explicit about fostering parity with its domestic feminist policies. Dellepiane and Reinsberg also strongly link Scotland's domestic and foreign policies, with domestic agendas informing foreign agendas (Dellepiane & Reinsberg, 2023). Whilst this does not alter the fact that Scotland's national strategic

narratives emphasise their feminism at home, this section has argued that this narrative of coherency does not stand up to reality in the context of Scotland's strategic narratives and is, instead, reflective of diffusion of other states' feminist foreign policies – to which Scotland's narratives but for its intersectional one closely mirror. Credence is given to this by Rosamond et al., who note that more work needs to be done to achieve coherency with Scotland's domestic policies in Scotland's future FFP (Rosamond et al., 2022).

In pinpointing why this happens and, by extension, being able to take the answer to the research question further, Zhukova et al. note that all strategic narrative builders – in this case, Scotland - are recipients of other states' strategic narratives, which exist in a system of competition (Zhukova et al., 2022). By formulating strategic narratives that mirror other states' contexts (chiefly Sweden's), at times more closely than their own, Scotland is, in effect, revealing itself as an embracive recipient of other states' feminist strategic narratives. Though Zwingel noted that the translation of feminist norms does occur, this does not rule out the process of diffusion, which possibly accounts for why Scotland's feminism in the local does not mirror its international feminism (Zwingel, 2012). Thus, a further answer to the first question is that Scotland's strategic narratives often embody a diffusion of other states' feminist foreign policies rather than a translation of their own context.

## 9.6 Scotland's collaboration narrative.

Collaboration emerges as one of Scotland's focal feminist strategic narratives, revealed at length in the results section, and it is argued that this stems largely from Scotland's opposition to Westminster, harnessing collaboration as a way to dissent to its central authority.

Scotland's collaboration narrative is reflected, for example, in Scotland's vision for trade, wherein it praises Sweden as a 'like-minded country' and seeks out trade deals pertaining to gender with Sweden (Scottish Government, 2021b). It also gives the UN primacy through UNSCR 1325 and by hosting COP26, using the latter to coordinate a joint statement with UN Women in disseminating the gender and climate narrative (Sturgeon 2021). Nicola Sturgeon's 2017 speech in the US is further emblematic of multilateralism, referring with agreement to Eleanor Roosevelt's words: 'Alone we cannot keep the peace of the world, but in cooperation with others we have to achieve this much longed-for security.'

(Roosevelt. cited in Sturgeon, 2017b). Thus, in relation to the first research question, which asks what Scotland's feminist strategic narratives are, this demonstrates collaboration as one of Scotland's core feminist strategic narratives.

Zhukova et al. convey that collaboration is the common approach of states that have produced FFPs; this is partly fostered by international normative frameworks such as WPS, CEDAW and UNSCR 1325, to which all FFP states have signed up to (Zhukova et al., 2022). Thus, collaboration is a well-accepted feminist norm. Nonetheless, the primacy of collaboration is another answer to the first research question, which asks what exactly Scotland's feminist strategic narratives are.

However, part of the novelty of this dissertation is derived from its case study of a state subregion, which contrasts with studies of FFPs that pivot exclusively on sovereign states. It is important to convey why Scotland's subnational context matters and how it influences the answers to the research question. Scotland's strategic national narratives stress harnessing collaboration as a show of dissent to Westminster's subjugation and, saliently, their subversion of Scotland's internationalist nature. This is also important in answering the first research question, which considers the makeup of Scotland's feminist strategic narratives, within which collaboration is key as a direct consequence of Westminster's actions.

In tying this in with literature on paradiplomacy, the notion of disagreement between two parliaments has parallels with the literature on paradiplomacy; Dellepiane and Reinsberg, for example, reveal that Scotland's drive for global citizenship was instigated by imparity over the Brexit vote, with Scotland voting by a large majority to remain within the EU (Dellepiane & Reinsberg, 2023). This imparity was further laid bare by Boris Johnson's government's decision to reduce Britain's IDF from 0.7 to 0.5% of GDP, which was met with dismay by the Scottish Government, who in contrast increased their international development fund, which was an irregular approach during times of hardship brought on by Covid 19 and austerity (Dellepiane & Reinsberg, 2023). Indeed, Scotland's feminist strategic narratives reflect this imparity, with its Global Affairs framework referring to Brexit as 'chaotic' and disastrous' and indicative of Scotland's need to work harder to maintain its international links (Scottish Government, 2022c). Additionally, an integral part of Scotland's

paradiplomatic activities is its commitment to multilateralism (Dellepiane & Reinsberg, 2023 P. 4.). Thus, in taking the collaboration-based answer to the first research question further, Scotland's national strategic narrative of collaboration and rejection of Westminster is the starkest example of paradiplomacy, coherent with Scotland's master narrative of global citizenship.

## 9.7 Implications of findings

This chapter will discuss the broader implications of this dissertation's research findings. In particular, it will do so by linking to the dissertation statement, which contends that Scotland's paradiplomacy can already be considered feminist. Indeed, in proving the dissertation statement correct, it was found – albeit in a transient and evolutionary sense – that Scotland's paradiplomacy has been feminist since, at the earliest, 2016. However, in demonstrating that Scotland's paradiplomacy was already feminist before having published its FFP, the implications of this dissertation's research might trivialise the meaning of adopting an explicitly feminist foreign policy. However, Scotland's feminist strategic narratives were undoubtedly altered in the year 2021, the year in which it announced its plans to develop an FFP, and this change will be discussed in relation to FFPs on the whole.

As was revealed by the results, by labelling its foreign policy 'feminist' in 2021, Scotland became beholden to a higher standard, despite not having fully published its FFP. This is demonstrated by more ambitious approaches than in the years prior to announcing its FFP in 2021, pertinently with the adoption of intersectionality and greater engagement with international norms, such as the addition of a climate component in its UNSCR 1325 fellowship. Credence is given to this contention by Zhukova et al. through Sweden's example. Like Scotland, Sweden was also broadly considered feminist before adopting an FFP but became far bolder with announcing its FFP (Zhukova et al., 2022). This point is pertinent when considering Sweden's current foreign minister Tobias Billström's remarks, which in reference to Sweden's abandonment of its FFP, contended that the ascription of 'feminist' to Sweden's foreign policy was redundant in conveying Sweden's feminist nature, surmising it as performative and obscuring of its actual contents (Tobias Billström, cited in *The Guardian*, 2022). Instead, the Scottish experience reveals that adopting an explicitly 'feminist' foreign policy was a crucial lever in breathing new life into its feminist narratives and, contrary to Sweden's foreign minister's remarks, was by no means trivial. This perhaps

reveals the substantiative effect of adopting an explicitly feminist foreign policy. The research questions concluded that Scotland's paradiplomacy was indeed already feminist, but this is not to say that announcing a new FFP has been inconsequential to Scotland's paradiplomacy, which is what this point has sought to get across.

## 9.8 Future of Scotland's FFP

Having examined Scotland's feminist strategic narratives from the years of 2016 to the present, this dissertation will now speculate on the future of Scotland's unannounced FFP. Doing this will again leverage more insights from the literature review, primarily drawing on Rosamond et al.'s publication on the future of Scotland's FFP (Rosamond et al., 2022). Notably, this dissertation's research has charted Scotland's paradiplomacy as already being feminist, whilst its evolutionary nature perhaps sheds light on its trajectory for the future, thereby establishing an avenue for this research to contribute to the scarce but existent literature on Scotland's feminist foreign policy.

Looking back to Rosamond et al.'s publication which was mentioned in the literature review, it envisions and indeed encourages a bolder approach for Scotland's FFP in the future, criticising the liberal approach adopted by Sweden before it was scrapped by its new government (Rosamond et al., 2022). Their publication proposes substituting the 3Rs of liberal feminism with 3As - 'authenticity, ambition and accountability' - with an intersectional lens functioning as an integral facet of this approach (Rosamond et al., 2022. P. 2). Given the evolution of Scotland's paradiplomacy from a purely liberal feminist paradiplomacy to one that also incorporates an intersectional lens, this would seem to point in the direction of Scotland shifting to more of an approach that incorporates intersectionality. Credence is given to this by Rosamond et al., who note that Scotland has been gearing up for an approach that tackles some of the drivers of global inequality and insecurity (Rosamond et al., 2022). For example, Nicola Sturgeon has spoken more in recent years of Scotland's historic role as a perpetrator of empire and how its relatively privileged position partly stems from profiting from the misery of those living under British Empire rule (Rosamond et al., 2022). When pairing these findings with this dissertation's research delineating a shift toward intersectionality, it seems at least some level of intersectionality will remain a feature of Scotland's future FFP.



There are, of course, limitations to Scotland's intersectional approaches that this dissertation's research can outline. Whilst the climate loss and damage fund and desire to platform indigenous women are representative of intersectionality, it in no way challenges traditional approaches to foreign policy, which can quite easily accommodate the extension of largely liberal policies such as representation and access to women with, what Rosamond et al. refer to as having 'compounded disadvantages' (Rosamond et al., 2022). In adding credence to this, proponents of intersectional feminism argue for addressing the root causes of inequality and insecurity, not simply extending solutions to those based on 'compounded disadvantages' but transforming the systems that maintain them (Rosamond et al., 2022). The findings of this dissertation suggest that Scotland's intersectional approach might still be limited in this regard, as it falls short of advocating for a transformative overhaul of international structures perpetuating inequalities and injustices. This is especially true when considering Scotland's other foreign policies, such as its pro-NATO stance, with militarisation at odds with feminism (Rosamond et al., 2022). Indeed, feminists have noted incongruencies between Canada, Sweden and Mexico's feminist foreign policies, which, as mentioned in the literature review, are undermined by high domestic violence rates in France and Mexico, whilst Sweden and Canada are world-leading arms exporters (Zwingel, 2012; Rosamond et al., 2022). Thus, Scotland would have to reconcile with internal contradictions to achieve a transformative intersectional FFP.

Lastly, a noteworthy observation is that Scotland's feminist strategic narratives in this research have aligned with its broader strategic goals, serving both economic interests through its liberal approach and then positively imbuing its soft power by adopting an innovative intersectional approach – an idiosyncratic and pioneering negotiation of feminist norms. That is not to suggest that its FFP is 'playing politics' or adopting a neo-liberal approach that Aggestam warns of (Aggestam et al., 2019), but it has, from 2016 to 2023, utilised feminism in a pragmatic sense, and it will have to reconcile this pragmatic approach with its foreign policies that sit at odds with transformative feminism, if it is to assume a meaningful intersectional feminist approach. This was notably something that Sweden could not do, subsequently ditching its FFP and applying to NATO. This point speaks to the difficulty of aligning a feminist foreign policy with feminism, especially intersectional feminism, as there are many nuances inherent in adopting an intersectional FFP that need to be considered beyond 'compounded disadvantages' (Rosamond et al., 2022). The future of

Scotland's FFP is very much aligned with these concerns, which helps contextualise the research questions and answers and relay the limitation of Scotland's feminist strategic narratives.

## 9.9 Limitations and Successes

This section will discuss some of this dissertation's limitations and demonstrate how it navigated these limitations, along with some of the successes that arose from working around these perceived limitations. It will discuss limitations with regard to methodologies, such as the appropriation of Zhukova et al.'s analytical framework, difficulty locating data, and framing of the research objectives and questions.

Firstly, Scotland's feminist foreign policy is not yet published, having only recently published a roundtable on discussions on what the FFP may look like, and changes may manifest in how Scotland approaches its upcoming feminist foreign policy. Thus, the implications of this research's findings may not have any concrete bearing on the future of Scotland's FFP, which may serve as a limitation, having attempted to speculate as to the trajectory and future of Scotland's FFP. However, in the context of a state without an FFP, a more pertinent point in relation to the research objectives would be the appropriation of Zhukova et al.'s methodology, devised to capture feminist strategic narratives from states that have already published complete FFPs (Zhukova et al., 2022). In attempting to navigate this, a slightly different line of questioning was adopted, which was elucidated during the methodology and results chapters. Zhukova et al. make routine references to the central FFP document of Sweden, Canada, Mexico and France, which this research could not do in the Scottish context, and so it had to draw on a broad range of Scottish policy documents and publications that reference gender. These, at times, reflected disparate narratives, making the data collection process more challenging.

However, one of the innovative aspects of this dissertation and its methodology was harnessing Zhukova et al.'s methodology in a state without an FFP, which was yet to be done to this research's knowledge. It demonstrates that feminist strategic narratives are not exclusively applicable to states with FFPs, and thus was able to answer the research question with a novel case study. By researching a region that did not have an official FFP but was in the making of one, it was also able to pick up on the nuances within Scotland's feminist

strategic narratives, particularly the transient and evolutionary nature, which was an interesting facet of Scotland's strategic narratives that this research was able to convey. This evolution may not have been possible to locate in states that have already committed to a set-in-stone FFP, who are likely to follow the central FFP document more closely and thus produce more predictable results.

With further comments on the methodology of this dissertation, it was noted in the analytical framework and methodology chapter that the material containing Scotland's strategic narratives was not inexhaustive. Indeed, 23 documents revealing 25 texts were found, which could seem scant for an empirical period that covers 7 years of data (2016 to 2023). However, by analysing these closely and going further in-depth during the results section, it was able to draw meaningful insights from Scottish Government communications and make the most of the data sample size, which can be seen as a success of this dissertation. With regard to the framing of the research questions, another limitation may well stem from the presentation of the strategic narratives as Scotland's; it perhaps could have been better presented as the strategic narratives of the Scottish National Party and the Scottish Greens. This is because, as revealed in the literature review, Zhukova speaks to the idea that the contestation of norms and competing narratives within states subjected to analysis negates the idea that there is a universal acceptance of a normative framework within a state and, thus, by presenting this dissertation as 'Scotland's' strategic narratives, it may have missed out on the nuances of Scotland's overall narratives, which are comprised not solely of the governing parties' communications (Zhukova et al., 2022).

However, a success of this research lies in the cognisance of this limitation. It focused primarily - though not exclusively - on key norm entrepreneurs such as Angus Robertson and Nicola Sturgeon. Aggestam and True demonstrate as the key figures in the formulation and projection stages of strategic narratives, and thus these are the best-placed and most significant purveyors of Scotland's overall narratives (Aggestam & True, 2020). Concludingly, this was a deliberate move by the research, done so as to reveal Scotland's most important narratives, which are embodied by communications disseminated by its elected government.

Finally, as touched upon in the previous point, Aggestam and True are cognisant of norm entrepreneurs' importance, including figures such as Margot Wallström, who play

invaluable roles in promoting and adopting feminist foreign policies (Aggestam & True, 2020). This is salient to the Scottish context, as Scotland's most prominent norm entrepreneur was undoubtedly its former first minister Nicola Sturgeon, who had done much to advance feminism domestically, and it was under her leadership that Scotland announced a feminist foreign policy. Indeed, many of the texts this paper has analysed stem from discourses by Nicola Sturgeon. With the resignation of her position as first minister in February 2023, the embeddedness of much of Scotland's feminist norms, which crucially she helped to foster, can be called into question, despite Scotland's new first minister Humza Yousaf seemingly intent on carrying out the publication and advancement of Scotland's FFP.

### 9.10 Future Research

The aim of this short section is to demonstrate how this dissertation can be built upon through further research, with recommendations largely focused on further study of Scotland, with paradiplomacy still existing as a marginal and understudied topic. The most obvious place to build upon this research would be appropriate when Scotland fully publishes its official FFP. Zhukova et al.'s methodology could be harnessed – in a similar way to this research – to ascertain the feminist strategic narratives of Scotland after the point of producing a published FFP. The scope of this research was predicated on Scotland's feminist strategic narratives from 2016 to 2023. Still, in conducting the research, it noted that Scotland's feminist strategic narratives have been transient and evolutionary, and a future period of analysis would doubtless yield alternate results to Scotland's future FFP. Doing so would also complement this dissertation's research; it could chart differences between the period this has covered and where Scotland's paradiplomacy is marked by a fully-fledged and published FFP, forming a chain that provides a lucid overview of Scotland's feminist narratives.

Additionally, this dissertation's research covered the first two stages of strategic narratives, the formulation and projection states, opting to omit the reception phase because it necessitates an entirely different scope and a different data set. Thus, another obvious place to take the lead from this dissertation would be to assess the reception of Scotland's feminist strategic narratives. As an example of how this could be conjured, Scotland's international development is directed specifically to four states: Zambia, Rwanda, Malawi and Pakistan (Dellepiane & Reinsberg, 2023). Novel research could assess the reception of Scotland's

strategic narratives pertaining to these states through content analysis of local media communications and political communications within the recipient state. This only posits an example, as there are many avenues to study the reception of Scotland's strategic narratives, but this would be a worthy approach to Scotland's strategic narratives and would build upon the research of this paper.

Finally, this dissertation's research objectives sought to locate how Scotland's strategy manifests; the discussion was incorporative of why it does this, as it helped to take the research questions further, framing Scotland's strategic narratives as pragmatic, initially through liberal means of harnessing women as an economic resource, followed by showing that intersectionality reflected well on Scotland's image and thus built its soft power, which themselves represented answers to the research question. However, a research objective that sets out more clearly questions why Scotland adopts a feminist foreign policy – which will be especially interesting when Scotland publishes its FFP – would make for an interesting research topic.

## 10. Conclusion

With the announcement of Scotland's feminist approach to international relations in 2021, this dissertation set out with the research objective of discerning whether Scotland's international relations (revealed as paradiplomacy) have already been underpinned by a feminist approach. It drew from pre-existent literature on Scottish politics, revealing that Scotland's international activities have been heavily developed since 2016, emboldened by 'horizontal dispersions' of power that have given rise to the activities of state subregions along with peak levels of imparity between the parliaments of Westminster and Holyrood, making Scotland's paradiplomacy a salient case study (Czapiewski, 2015; Dellepiane & Reinsberg, 2023; Keating & McEwen, 2020).

It built on this case study, delving into soft power theories and strategic narratives, helping to contextualise Scotland's paradiplomacy drive. The British Council were particularly helpful in this approach, discerning that Scotland 'will need a strong approach to shaping its global narrative that sets out what it has to offer the international community' (British Council, 2019. P. 5.). Thus, attention was shifted from Nye's understanding of soft

power and devoted to locating Scottish strategic narratives through Miskimmon et al.'s works (Nye, 1990; Miskimmon et al., 2017). In further developing its scope, it honoured the goals of IMSISS, focalising its study on feminist foreign policies, a policy that seeks to expand the traditional understanding of security beyond military and state security, instead emphasising the securitisation of women, building upon pivotal security-based frameworks such as the Hillary Doctrine, UNSCR 1325 and WPS agenda, which serve to reduce levels of violence overall, not just in relation to GBV, and to attain greater and longer lasting peace (UN, 2020; Krause et al., 2018).

It located a convergence of feminist foreign policies and strategic narratives through Zhukova et al.'s seminal work, building on theories of norm translation developed by Zwingel and others to elucidate feminist foreign policies as strategic narratives (Zwingel, 2012; Zhukova et al., 2022). This perfectly tied together Scotland's plans for a feminist approach, compounded by its need to develop strong narratives as part of its nation-building exercise and to elevate its soft power. In combining these theories, this dissertation's research fostered an analytical framework that promised a comprehensive examination of the feminist strategic narratives and paradiplomacy of Scotland since the period 2016 to June 2023, owing to Scotland's ongoing period of 'good global citizenship' starting in 2016, which was elucidated by Dellepiane and Reinsberg (Dellepiane & Reinsberg, 2023). This theoretical framework derived the two research questions:

1. Concerning its feminist paradiplomacy, what are Scotland's strategic narratives?
2. What strand of feminism do these strategic narratives reflect?

In answering both of these, qualitative content analysis was harnessed to explore Scottish Government communications, which successfully drew from a broad range of communication channels, such as speeches and statements, policy documents and manifestos. The first research question is predicated on the three strategic narrative types: issue narratives, international system narratives and national narratives. The research answered these in-depth and contextualises them by harnessing the literature review, chiefly Zwingel's notion of norm translation which has been built upon by Zhukova et al. through the theory of feminist strategic narratives (Zwingel 2018; Zhukova et al., 2022). This dissertation located Scotland's principle issue narratives, built around a narrative of peacekeeping and women's

empowerment through leadership roles in conflict resolution, revealing narratives of security and human rights-based feminism, but its issue narratives more clearly underlined the importance of economic emancipation for women, particularly in Scotland's international development fund partner countries: Rwanda, Zambia, Malawi, and Pakistan, reflecting the pragmatic goals of the state which are still driven by economic drivers such as membership within G7. This firstly revealed Scotland's largely liberal approach from 2016 to 2020, showing that Scotland aligns with the global north consensus and aligned its strategic narratives with the pragmatic goals of Scotland.

Of particular salience is the emergence of an intersectional gender and climate narrative in Scotland's international discourse – charted from 2021 onward. This presents a novel case study within the sphere of feminist foreign policies, built upon by harnessing Zwingel's and Zhukova et al.'s notions of norm translation, revealing a state that is deeply cognisant of translating international feminist norms so as to bolster its own soft power and to break away from the international consensus, thereby fostering a unique and positive image of itself (Zwingel, 2012; Zhukova et al. 2022).

In comprehensively charting Scotland's paradiplomacy as feminist from 2016 to the present, thus proving the dissertation's argument which contended that Scotland's feminist paradiplomacy has already been feminist, it demonstrates the applicability of Zhukova et al.'s analytical framework for feminist strategic narratives to a context that does not officially have an FFP, thereby revealing a congruency of paradiplomacy and strategic narratives. In completing its research objectives, it has added the Scottish experience to the broader body of literature on norm translation theory, which cross-nationally addresses how norms are co-opted, demonstrating another state that engages with feminist norms in a translative and novel sense.

It contributes further to the field of paradiplomacy, elucidating further Scotland's approach to nation-building through feminist strategic narratives, which still exist as a marginal field of study. It is also hoped that this dissertation will offer a more robust understanding of what it means to take up the mantra of a 'feminist' foreign policy, whilst it is also hoped that the research findings can contribute to understanding Scotland's much anticipated upcoming FFP.

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