



"WOULD INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS CHANGE IF MOST LEADERS  
WERE WOMEN? A LIBERAL FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE"

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**Abstract:** *This article examines whether international relations (IR) would fundamentally change if most of the world's political leaders were women, using a liberal feminist perspective. While difference feminism argues that women's leadership could transform global politics through empathy and cooperation, liberal feminism maintains that women, when given equal access to power, operate within the same political, economic, and security structures as men. Drawing on theoretical debates and real-world examples, this paper argues that a greater presence of women in leadership would not significantly alter the core dynamics of international relations, such as power politics, state sovereignty, and national interests.*

*Case studies of leaders including Jacinda Ardern, Margaret Thatcher, and Angela Merkel demonstrate that women leaders have pursued foreign policies shaped largely by realist considerations, including security, diplomacy, and economic stability. Although increased female leadership may lead to greater emphasis on social justice, human rights, and humanitarian issues, the structural constraints of the international system remain decisive. Consequently, gender balance in leadership is important for representation, but it does not fundamentally transform how states interact globally.*

## INTRODUCTION

Would international relations (IR) work differently if most of the world's leaders were women? It is important to look at this question from both different feminist and liberal feminism points of view. Difference feminism says that women have unique traits, like being more likely to empathize and find peaceful solutions to problems, which could lead to huge changes in IR. Liberal feminism, on the other hand, says that women would behave like men in the present political system if they had the same chances. This essay takes a liberal feminist point of view and says that if most of the world's leaders were women, international relations would not change much. However, there might be more focus on some social and humanitarian issues, but power politics and state interests would still be very important. Real-life examples of women leaders who have worked within the rules of foreign relations back this point of view.

If there were more women in leadership roles, the main ideas of international relations, like power politics, state authority, and security, would not change a lot, according to liberal feminists. Women would work in the same political, economic, and security systems that make states act the way they do. Although having women in charge might include more different viewpoints and make the decision-making process more open to everyone, international relations would still be mainly about national interests, diplomacy, and realpolitik (Abigail Temperley, 2013). Difference feminism, on the other hand, says that women in charge could make the world a better place for everyone to live



in peace. Liberal feminism, on the other hand, says that equal leading roles for men and women are important, but that women and men will be affected by the needs and limits of foreign politics.

A change that might happen if there are more women in top positions is that problems like human rights, social welfare, and gender equality might get more attention. Concerns about these things are not inherently gendered, but many women leaders have pushed for them while they were in office. According to Kate Whiting (2023), Jacinda Ardern of New Zealand showed a strong dedication to social justice and human rights, especially in how she handled the terrorist attack in Christchurch and her policies during the COVID-19 outbreak. Some people might think of different feminism when they think of her way of leading, which stresses sensitivity and working together. But it's important to remember that Ardern's foreign policy choices, even though they were progressive, were still based on the usual rules of international relations. They were mostly about national security, economic stability, and allies.

However, liberal feminism says that women leaders would still play power games and use armed force when needed, even if their policies were different. This is shown by historical figures like Margaret Thatcher. Thatcher was the first woman to be Prime Minister of the UK. She was known for taking a tough stand on foreign policy, especially during the Falklands War. Her view on international relations was based on realist ideas, which put armed power and national authority first. Thatcher's leadership during the Cold War, her friendship with US President Ronald Reagan, and her readiness to use force to protect British interests show that women can and do lead in the same ways that men do (Hugo Young, 2024.4).

In the same way, Angela Merkel, who was president of Germany for more than ten years, handled the complicated politics of Europe and the world by focusing on economic security and diplomacy. In 2024, Social Studies Help wrote that Merkel's leadership during the European debt crisis and the way she dealt with ties with both the US and Russia showed a careful balance of power politics and teamwork. Merkel mostly focused on Germany's national interests and its place in the European Union. She is praised for her calm and thoughtful leadership, but she also followed the rules of foreign relations. Even though her policies were open to everyone and looked to the future in areas like climate change and migration, they didn't change the way states behave or the rules of diplomacy.

With these examples, it's clear that women leaders can and do the usual things that men do in international relations, like military action, economic diplomacy, and making alliances when they are given the same chances as men. More women in leadership positions might bring more attention to problems like fairness and social justice, but it wouldn't change how countries interact on the world stage. No matter what gender a leader is, the way they act is set by the structure of the international system, which is shaped by national goals and power relations.

To sum up, from the point of view of a liberal feminist, adding more women to top positions would not significantly alter how foreign relations work. There are many points of view that women leaders could bring to the table and focus on problems like social justice and human rights. However, they would still be limited by the facts of



international politics, such as state sovereignty, security concerns, and economic interests. Women leaders like Jacinda Ardern, Angela Merkel, and Margaret Thatcher show that they can work well within the current structures of international relations. They can engage in diplomacy, armed warfare, and power politics just like men. So, having a mix of men and women in top positions is important, but it probably won't completely change the way countries interact with each other.

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