

## **Gendered Spaces: A Dialogue with Women in Media and Diplomacy**

**Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and South Asian University**

***Date: 10<sup>th</sup> October 2024***

Feminist scholarship and practice have catalyzed new ways of thinking about gender and gender relations, and particularly drawn attention to the politics of 'public spaces'. For feminists across generations the politics of public spaces, with its contested manifestations in their everyday struggle has remained pivotal to the journey of emancipatory politics. But how do we understand the category of 'space'? Drawing on Doreen Massey, we draw attention to how "space is a challenge of multiplicity, encounter and relation: a 'throwntogetherness' that demands ongoing negotiation"<sup>1</sup>. Space, Massey argues, is open—it is capable of being made otherwise. Taking space as question, this dialogue draws attention to the ways in which women in Media and Diplomacy situate, formulate, navigate, encounters with 'difference' the idea of space. The idea of both dialogue and difference is integral to this conversation, given the location of this in India. In consonant with critical feminist scholarship, we explore the politics of 'stories -so- far'. We call attention to the implicit hierarchies in the ordering of spaces- both in Media and Diplomacy, the norms, the exclusions as women navigate both from the margins, and the front. We lay emphasis on the politics of situated knowledge, given the differing contextual realities in South Asia, the differing feminist histories and of course the coloniality in the politics of knowledge production itself.

The Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) is the world's longest-running and most extensive research on gender in the news media, and in its India report( 2020)<sup>2</sup>, it draws attention to some alarming trends. For instance men dominated both as subjects and sources in topics like the Economy (88%), and Politics and Government (89%). Also, globally women's presence as spokespersons rose to 24% in 2020 from 19% in 2015, while India saw a drastic decline from 15% in 2015 to a shocking 8% in 2020. Amplifying the bias against women in news coverage, the study showed that women figured as sources mainly in 'gender and related' category (32%) and least in 'politics and government' category (11%). Not just as subjects or sources, even the number of women journalists are on the decline. Between 2015 and 2020, there has been a sharp drop in the number of women reporters in print from 43% to 13% and from 60% to 52% in TV. In the backdrop of this the dialogue draws attention to key questions like : Where are the women in media, in India ? Who are the women in Indian media? And where and when do they appear? Further it draws attention to the intersections of gender in the 'politics of representation itself? So for instance the politics of gendered representation in conflict reporting? Do feminist perspectives on war, and peace find space in front pages or prime time news? The challenges and possibilities so far?

There has been an increasing attention to gender and diplomacy<sup>3</sup>, with increasing clamour for foregrounding frames of feminist ways of diplomacy, and foreign policy. In India, the

---

<sup>1</sup> For details see: Massey, Doreen B. (2005). *For space*. London, UK: Sage Publications.

<sup>2</sup> Global Media Monitoring Report, India(2020), Available at: <https://whomakesthenews.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/India-GMMP-Report.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> For details see: Karin Aggestam & Ann Towns (2019) *The gender turn in diplomacy: a new research agenda*, *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 21:1, 9-28, DOI: 10.1080/14616742.2018.1483206; Kreft, A.,

percent of women who are in the Indian Foreign Service is roughly 37.8%; however, only approximately 20% of women are appointed as Ambassadors or Permanent Representatives (DoPT, 2024). As stated at the outset, the dialogue seeks to explore the space of/ and in diplomacy for women? While conventionally both the discipline of international relations and diplomacy remains largely masculinist, critical feminist scholarship has been making inroad, in both the thinking within IR, and also its manifestation in practice. In the backdrop of growing interest and scholarship on feminist ways of diplomacy, some of the key questions that this dialogue aims to explore are: Why, and how does gender matter in the theory and practice of diplomacy? What are some of the ways in which India, has aligned/ or not aligned with feminist ways of thinking? Why a gender sensitive foreign policy, and not feminist foreign policy?

The one-day consultation aims to explore and navigate some of these key questions, and will be organized around two panel, one with a focus on Gender, Spaces and Media, and second with a focus on Gender, Spaces, and Diplomacy