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Does Female Leadership Matter? An Analysis of Swedish Foreign Ministers and their Parliamentary Speeches, 1955–2016

Bäck, Hanna; Björkdahl, Annika

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State-Making and the Origins of Global Order
in the Long Nineteenth Century and Beyond

Does Female Leadership Matter?
An Analysis of Swedish Foreign Ministers and
their Parliamentary Speeches, 1955–2016

Hanna Bäck and Annika Björkdahl

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Does Female Leadership Matter? An Analysis of Swedish Foreign Ministers and their Parliamentary Speeches, 1955–2016¹

Hanna Bäck

Professor in Political Science

Lund University

Annika Björkdahl

Professor in Political Science

Lund University

Abstract

The current Swedish Foreign Minister, Margot Wallström, has in her foreign policy statement claimed that a feminist foreign policy will be an integral part of activities throughout the Swedish Foreign Service. Even though an explicit ‘feminist foreign policy’ is a rather recent and ‘Swedish’ phenomenon, foreign policies in line with such a general ‘feminist’ agenda may have been implemented throughout history, by various foreign policy leaders. The question is, does the gender of leaders matter for foreign policy? The previous literature on women in foreign policy making has mainly been based on case studies of individual women in power, or on gender equality as key to explaining sustainable peace. We contribute to the literature on gender and foreign policy by systematically evaluating a claim that female foreign policy leaders make a difference, that is, having a female foreign policy leader in a country is likely to lead to certain policy outputs in the area of foreign policy. We evaluate this claim by analyzing the changes in policy rhetoric and suggested policy measures of Swedish foreign policy leaders, male and female, in their domestic foreign policy declarations during the post-world war II period.

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Introduction

The current Swedish Foreign Minister, Margot Wallström, has in her foreign policy statement claimed that a 'feminist foreign policy will be an integral part of activities throughout the Swedish Foreign Service, and aims to strengthen women's rights, improve women's access to resources and increase women's representation' (Statement of Foreign Policy 2015; Aggestam and Bergman-Rosamond 2016). Even though an explicit 'feminist foreign policy' is a rather recent and Swedish phenomenon, policies in line with a general 'feminist' approach may have been argued for and implemented throughout history, by various foreign policy leaders. The question we ask here is, does female leadership matter for the foreign policies suggested and implemented in a country?

The previous literature on women in foreign policy making has mainly been based on case studies of individual women in power (e.g. Jeffreys-Jones 1995), on gender equality rather than democracy as key to explaining sustainable peace (e.g. Hudson et al 2014), or has focused on the role of gender equality and representation when it comes to explaining political violence and violent conflict (e.g. Bjarnegård and Melander 2011). Enriched by a gender approach, the research on foreign policy leadership can begin to investigate the gendered dynamics of foreign policy making processes and outcomes, and map the set of dispositions that inclines women foreign policy leaders to pursue or not pursue a specific foreign policy that can be characterized as 'feminist'.

In this paper we aim to contribute to the literature on gender and foreign policy analysis by evaluating a claim that female foreign policy leaders make a difference, that is, having a female foreign policy leader in a country is likely to lead to certain policy outputs in the area of foreign policy. We evaluate this claim by analyzing the policy rhetoric of foreign ministers in their domestic foreign policy declarations, that is, by analyzing speeches made in an important assembly, the parliament.

We focus here on the Swedish case. Sweden has had a 'record' number of female foreign ministers, allowing us to analyze the variation over time in the impact of female FMs on foreign policy. More specifically, we evaluate the hypothesis that female foreign ministers make a difference in terms of policy output by analyzing the Swedish case between 1955 and 2016, starting with the post-world war II period, covering seven periods of office where the Foreign Ministry was headed by a woman. The results show that the gender of the FM matters to some extent, especially if the female FM is a 'heavyweight' and is in a cabinet with a left-wing Prime Minister (PM) – in such situations, the presented foreign policy seems to be more 'feminist'.

The previous literature

Engendering foreign policy analysis (FPA)

This paper brings together insights from three broad literatures; International Relations (IR), Comparative Politics and Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA). FPA as a field of study bridges the divide between IR and comparative politics, focusing on foreign policy-making (Hudson 2005). It draws on comparative politics to move beyond the conventional IR understanding of the state as a unitary actor. Rather than to 'black box' decision makers in explaining state behavior, FPA focuses on actors.

Recently, foreign policy analysts have been interested in how foreign policy actors construct foreign policy identity (Goldstein and Keohane 1993). From this research it appears that an understanding of "who we are" matters for our understanding of "what we do". Questions are asked such as, 'does the difference in polity type lead to noticeable difference in foreign policy?', 'why do democracies not fight each other?'. The democratic peace research has engaged scholars in Comparative Politics, IR and FPA into a dialogue. More recently, Hudson and colleagues (2014) have asked, 'what role does gender equality play in explaining why certain countries are more peaceful than others?'

One often disregarded aspect of state identity is the way it reflects domestic values. The Nordic states presents an interesting example of this. They are among the most gender equal countries in the world, and they have traditionally been strong supporters of gender equality, women's rights and the inclusion of women in international politics. Hernes (1987) first coined the concept 'state feminism' to describe these states and policies. Investigating the Danish state's identification with gender issues, Richey (2001) explores the link between domestic values, state identity and development policy and finds that the ambition to distinguish the Danish state as "feminist" is translated into the Danish development policy. Yet, she concludes that despite its feminist ambitions, the Danish state still reproduces gender hierarchies and power inequalities. By developing the idea of state feminism, Tryggestad (2014) explores how Norway, through its foreign policy, promotes gender equality and negotiate the inclusion of women in peacebuilding activities. Thus, from previous research it seems as if domestic values shape states' foreign policy identity, and that they can be translated into its policies and practices.

In contrast to feminist IR, there is no clearly defined feminist FPA approach. Here, feminist scholars with an interest in foreign policy have inquired into the role of women as sexed power holders in decision-making processes, the role of gendered norms in the conduct and adoption of foreign policies and gender mainstreaming as a feminist practice of transforming foreign policy activities (D'Aoust 2012).

The first studies of foreign policy from a feminist perspective discussed how “adding women and stir” affected foreign policy making and outcomes. Such work asked if it mattered if women held positions of power as foreign policy leaders, and if that would translate into a change in foreign policy towards less use of military force, coercion and unilateralism and more dialogue, cooperation, multilateralism and co-existence. Scholars often focused on individual women as decision-makers and tried to assess if women leaders conducted foreign policy with more peaceful goals than their male counterparts. The basic assumption was that because international relations was dominated by men rather than women it was more prone to war and violence than peace and co-existence.

Yet, studies of individual women leaders, such as Margaret Thatcher, Golda Meir and Benazir Bhutto, and their foreign policies, conclude that these leaders did not pursue a feminist foreign policy and did not contribute to transformative change in foreign policy directions. Hence, “the add women and stir approach” failed to engender foreign policy making. Gendered structures of leadership and governance as well as gender stereotypes, cultural norms and discriminatory practice of foreign policy institutions also impact foreign policy outcomes and need to be critically investigated. In response to these conclusions, the idea of gender mainstreaming emerged to integrate a gender perspective in institutional structures, decision-making process and policy outcomes.

Feminist scholars have recently shown an interest in the link between state actions in international relations and the situation of women within them. Hudson and colleagues unsettle some key understandings relating to cooperation and conflict in the international system, demonstrating that the security of women is a vital factor in the security of the state and its incidence of conflict and war (Hudson et al., 2012). Melander (2005) and Caprioli (2000, 2003, 2005) respectively have explored the link between violence against women and gender equality inside states and states’ propensity for interstate and intrastate conflict.

In the last decades attempts have been made to broaden the security agenda and to move beyond national and state security in order to put emphasis on the individual instead of the state by promoting the notion of human security, thereby linking security to human rights which in turn is linked to women’s rights. New questions were raised by gender scholars, such as, whose security is to be protected and who will make peace? The adoption of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 in 2000 provided new answers to these questions by making visible female victims of war and calling for their protection, and by stating the need for women’s participation in peace processes. With UNSCR 1325 and the concomitant resolution, the women peace and security agenda was firmly established, and a new subfield of research on women, peace and security emerged (Shepherd 2008, 2011; Björkdahl and Mannergren Selimovic 2015).

The comparative literature on women in legislatures and governments

One of the most important findings of the literature on representation is that women tend to be underrepresented in higher positions in the political hierarchy. For example, previous research shows that women are less likely to obtain a ministerial post, and when they do reach cabinet, they are likely to be found in less prestigious posts (see, e.g., Reynolds 1999; Krook and O'Brien 2012; Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson 2005).

The previous literature on gender and representation has mainly focused on the impact of candidates' gender on legislative voting behaviour (e.g., Matland 2005). Some work has also studied the role of gender in legislative debates, showing that women legislators are less likely to take the floor (see e.g. Kathlene 1994; Bäck et al. 2014). The literature on female representation suggests that there is not only a 'vertical division of labour' between women and men, but also a 'horizontal division of labour', where women are often seen in posts dealing with policy issues which have been described as being 'softer'. For example, Reynolds (1999: 564) finds that 'one sees a worldwide tendency to place women in the softer sociocultural ministerial positions rather than in the harder and politically more prestigious positions of economic planning, national security...'. Hence, women are clearly less likely to enter the highly prestigious foreign minister post.

Looking at the effect of gender representation on policy outputs, previous research has come to mixed conclusions regarding the effect of gender, focusing mainly on various issues seen as being of specific interest to women, such as family leave policy. Some studies find that there is a link between female representation and substantive outcomes (e.g. Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler 2005), whereas other researchers have not found any such effects. Some researchers even talk about a 'backlash' for women when representation increases. A number of scholars have focused on the constraints that stem from party affiliation, committee membership and the external political environment (Childs and Krook 2008: 733), suggesting that such structures are 'compounded by potential for backlash, which generally increases as the number of women rises'.

Focusing specifically on gender representation and foreign policy outputs, a study presented by Koch and Fulton (2011), tries to answer the question of whether 'women's political gains in office translate into substantive differences in foreign policy outcomes', by analyzing defense spending and conflict behavior of 22 democracies over a 30-year period. The authors show that increases in women's legislative representation decreases conflict behavior and defense spending, while the presence of women executives, that is, more women in government office, surprisingly are connected with higher defense spending and conflict behavior. This study is clearly relevant to us.

Theoretical framework

Assumptions about the role of foreign policy leaders

The foreign policy process and outcome are shaped by a number of foreign policy actors, among them the ministers for foreign affairs. Owing to his/her formal position, the minister of foreign affairs possesses not only political power and authority, but also informational and procedural resources that can be used to encourage the adoption of new foreign policy ideas and the change foreign policy direction (Björkdahl 2008, 2013). A foreign policy leader strongly committed to a particular idea, ideology or issue, and ready to invest energy in promoting it in order to shape the direction of foreign policy may under certain conditions have an impact on the foreign policy decision-making process (Björkdahl 2013).

If the minister of foreign affairs is seen as committed, convincing and acts from a position of power, the likelihood that such he/she is able to influence the foreign policy process increases. If the foreign policy issue he/she promotes is perceived as morally appealing, familiar and 'good', and agrees with the values, beliefs and identities of the country it is more likely to gain support. It is not only the intrinsic characteristics of the foreign policy issue that will make for a change in a specific direction, but also how it is promoted. Powerful players in the field of foreign policy are identified as the primary impetus for changing the direction of policy. Foreign policy leaders have at their disposal a number of resources, such as negotiation, diplomatic, rhetorical and pedagogical skills as well as authority and legitimacy.

Foreign policy leaders attempt to alter the direction of foreign policy in a conservative environment that is resistant to change. This conditions the types of issues that can make it into the foreign policy process, and it means that foreign policy leaders seeking to shape the content of foreign policy must remain cognizant of the manner in which existing foreign policies will affect how the new perspective on foreign policy may be evaluated. Hence, to be able to sustain itself over time a new perspective needs to become embedded in the structure of the relevant institutions i.e. ministry for foreign affairs, development and trade (Goldstein and Keohane 1993). Once institutionalized in policies and programs, the new perspective on foreign policy will become powerful, and introduce practices not previously considered relevant or efficient and induce new patterns of practice. The new perspective may still be contested as there may be pockets of resistance refusing to accept it or advocating different ideas or ideologies (Legro 2000: 420).

What constitutes a 'feminist foreign policy'?

Foreign policy is often understood as a policy defined by a government in its dealings with other states designed to achieve national objectives. Feminism is not a template that can be applied directly to theories and practices of foreign policy in order to produce, for instance, a feminist perspective on war, arms trade, cyber threats or peace processes. Instead, we can understand feminism in the words of Gita Sen, "feminism is the radical reinterpretation of tradition" (cited in Peterson 1990: 305). Thus, a feminist foreign policy challenges conventional foreign policy traditions, processes and issues. It foregrounds issues of gender often invisible to scholars and practitioners of global politics. Steans (2013: 5) describes that "to look at the world through gender lenses is to focus on gender as a particular kind of power relation, or to trace out the ways in which gender is central to understanding international processes". For a feminist foreign policy, the concept, nature and practice of gender is key. Gender refers to the socially and culturally constructed categories of masculinity and femininity (Enloe 1989, Zalewski 1995: 341).

Against this background, a feminist foreign policy is likely to highlight gendered power, gendered experiences, gendered knowledge, and gendered values, and as such it challenges the claim of foreign policy to be gender-neutral. Consequently, such a policy will challenge patriarchal practices, hierarchies of dominance and subordination and asymmetrical power relations, as well as the resilience of masculinities as a mode of making sense of global politics. A corner stone in a feminist foreign policy is that human rights are also women's rights. Hence, it is based on values such as gender equality, an understanding of women's rights as human rights and of security as human security, and focuses on women's rights, representation and resources, and female empowerment.

From the discussion above we can conclude that a feminist foreign policy is a value- and rights-based foreign policy that strives for inclusion of women in all areas of human activities, to strengthen women's political, social and economic rights and access to resources, as well as pursuing freedom of violence, discrimination and repression as well as increase women's participation, influence and empowerment. It can be conceptualized as a foreign policy defined by a government, informed by principled beliefs pertaining to feminism and gender equality, and pursued in the government's dealings with other states, designed to achieve national objectives in line with the beliefs held by the government. As such it is a foreign policy that is gender mainstreamed.

Who implements a feminist foreign policy, and when?

Having discussed what can be seen as a 'feminist foreign policy', and having clarified our expectation that important actors clearly matter for foreign policy, we now turn to the question, 'when should we expect to see a more feminist foreign policy, and

which actors are likely to implement such a policy?'. We here specify some expectations about under which conditions we should see a more 'feminist' foreign policy agenda.

We here follow the previous literature on cabinets (e.g. Laver and Shepsle 1996), and assume that a minister has at least some discretion over what policies are implemented in the specific policy area that the ministry has jurisdiction over. When a specific party or politician gains control over a ministry we would therefore expect that the policies implemented in the specific policy area controlled by the minister will to some extent mirror the programmatic profile of the party or the individual minister holding this post. Assuming that women have different interests than men when it comes to foreign policy², we hypothesize that having a female minister will lead to more 'feminist' foreign policy outputs, which is the main hypothesis that we will evaluate in this paper:

H1. Foreign policy outputs are more likely to be more 'feminist' when the minister in charge (Head of Department) is a woman.

The effect of gender may also vary depending on the partisan color of the cabinet and the Prime Minister (PM). Here we can connect to previous research on the effect of partisanship on social and economic policy, where most research has shown that whether a cabinet includes a large share of left-wing ministers influences the direction of policy (see e.g. Imbeau et al 2001). The partisanship of the PM may also influence foreign policy outputs, and may constrain the individual ministers' foreign policy decisions. We here follow previous research which suggests that left-wing parties are more prone to promote women's interests (see e.g. Lloren 2015 for an overview and recent study). We therefore suggest that a female foreign minister acting within a cabinet with a PM from a left-wing party is more likely to be successful in promoting a 'feminist foreign policy'. Hence, we hypothesize that:

H2. Foreign policy outputs are more likely to be more 'feminist' when the FM is female, and the Prime Minister comes from a left-wing party.

² We of course recognize that what can be considered as 'female interests' has been debated to a large extent in the previous literature, where many scholars have questioned the usefulness of the concept of women's interests (for an overview, see Wängnerud 2015, chapter 3). This type of discussion has followed from the work by for example Pitkin (1967) and Phillips (1995), where the latter suggested that there are 'particular needs, interests, and concerns that arise from women's experience', and that those may not be addressed properly if politics is dominated by men (Phillips 1995, p. 66).

Besides such contextual features as the type of cabinet that the foreign policy minister acts within, personal characteristics of the individual minister, and her background may also matter. We suggest that female foreign ministers are more likely to be able to ‘push’ for a feminist agenda when they are in a position of power. Of course, having reached the highly prestigious post as foreign minister clearly implies a lot of power, but here we expect that there may be some variation, for example depending on the background of the politician, and on the posts she has held during her previous career. As we will describe later, in the Swedish case, some foreign ministers were highly important figures in Swedish politics and their parties, for example, the current FM, Margot Wallström, had been European Commissioner before becoming FM. We therefore hypothesize that:

H3. Foreign policy outputs are more likely to be more ‘feminist’ when a female foreign minister is a ‘political heavyweight’.

To sum up, our main expectation is that the gender of a foreign minister matters for the foreign policy output, with women being more likely to implement a ‘feminist’ agenda. In addition, we expect that female FMs are more likely to be successful in implementing a ‘feminist’ agenda when they are in a cabinet where the Prime Minister is left-wing, and when they themselves can be characterized as political heavyweights.

Methods and data

The Swedish case – a record high number of female foreign policy leaders

In this paper we focus on the Swedish case, which is advantageous since Sweden has had a ‘record’ number of female foreign ministers, which gives us some variation over time in our main independent variable, that is the gender of the foreign minister. This variation allows us to evaluate the hypothesis that female foreign ministers make a difference in terms of foreign policy output by analyzing foreign policy statements made in the Swedish Riksdag over a longer time period, starting in 1947, covering seven periods of office where the Foreign Ministry was headed by a woman. The first Swedish female foreign minister, Karin Söder, was appointed in 1976 by Torbjörn Fälldin, and Sweden has since then had five other female foreign ministers.

Hence, having had relatively many female foreign ministers³, we have some variation over time in a variable measuring the gender of ministers. In addition, we have had a variation in the types of governments in place, with both socialist and non-socialist cabinets, and coalitions and single-party cabinets, allowing us to evaluate some hypotheses relating to the varying political context that the foreign minister acts within, but at the same time holding a number of other institutional and political features constant. For example, Sweden has during the entire time period been a PR electoral system, and has for a long time had a high representation of women in parliament, that is, several important alternative explanations to foreign policy output are held constant.

Let us look a bit more closely at our female foreign ministers. As mentioned, the first female foreign minister was *Karin Söder*, who was appointed³ in 1976 by a centre-led non-socialist coalition cabinet. Before being appointed to cabinet, Söder had been a Centre party representative at the local and regional level, and in the Riksdag since 1971, which is also when she became the second vice leader of the Centre party. Söder clearly had a political insider background, but had not held any top positions or cabinet posts before being appointed as foreign minister. She held the position during only a few years.

The next female foreign minister to be appointed was the Conservative *Margaretha af Ugglas*, who was foreign minister in the non-socialist coalition cabinet, led by Carl Bildt (1991–1994). Af Ugglas had long held a position as member of

³ Most other countries have not had any female foreign ministers – only 39 countries included in the data presented by Flores (2009) has had a female foreign minister (FM). Besides Sweden with 7 periods of office held by a woman, Colombia has had 5 periods with a female FM, Madagascar has had 4 periods with a female FM, US, India, Ecuador, and Bulgaria has had 3 periods of office with a female FM. The other 32 countries has had 1-2 periods of office with a female FM.

parliament before becoming foreign minister. According to Lindahl (2010: 151), the selection of af Ugglas as foreign minister was “natural” as she was a member of the Conservative party leadership, a member of the foreign policy committee in parliament, and had been involved in foreign policy and foreign aid questions. Af Ugglas can perhaps be seen as a ‘political heavyweight’, considering her long political experience, even though she had not held any higher office before being appointed to heading the foreign ministry.

This can also be said about the next female foreign minister, *Lena Hjelm-Wallén*, who was the first female foreign minister appointed in a Social Democratic cabinet. Hjelm-Wallén was appointed by Ingvar Carlsson in 1994 and held this post until 1998. Before being appointed she had a long career within the Social Democratic party and in the Riksdag, where she was a member since 1968. She had also held cabinet posts, first as Minister of Education (1982–1985) and then as Minister of Foreign Aid (1985–1991). Hence, Lena Hjelm-Wallén can clearly be characterized as a ‘political heavyweight’.

Also the following period of office, the Foreign Ministry was headed by a woman, *Anna Lindh*, who was appointed by Göran Persson in the Social Democrat cabinet that formed after the 1998 election. She held this position until she was killed in 2003. Lindh was early involved in the Social Democratic party and became the first female leader of its youth organization. She held important positions locally and was a member of the Riksdag (1982–1985) and Minister of Environment (1994–1998) before being appointed to Foreign Minister. She was also part of the Social Democratic party leadership from 1991, indicating that she was a political insider and ‘heavyweight’.

The next woman to be appointed as Foreign Minister was Social Democrat *Laila Freiwalds*, holding this position in Göran Persson’s cabinet between 2003 and 2006. Freiwalds had previously held the post as Minister of Justice during several periods of office, first being appointed by Ingvar Carlsson in 1988 (until 1991) and then in 1994 until 2000. Before becoming Minister of Justice, Freiwalds had mainly held high government authority positions and could then have been seen as a ‘political outsider’ (see Bäck et al. 2009). At the point of becoming Foreign Minister this had obviously changed since she was in cabinet during several periods of office before holding this post.

Sweden’s current FM, Social Democrat *Margot Wallström*, was appointed to this post by Stefan Löfven after the 2014 election when the first Social Democrat-Green coalition cabinet formed. Wallström is clearly a ‘political heavyweight’, having long been active within the party, and having held a number of important posts both in Sweden and internationally. For example, she had been European Commissioner for International Relations and Communication Strategy (2004–2009) and she worked as Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Sexual Violence and

Conflict. She has also held several cabinet appointments, for example as Minister of Social Affairs. Hence, her political background most likely implies a very strong position within the cabinet.

Studying foreign policy speeches in the Riksdag

In this paper, we have chosen one specific source of information for analyzing foreign policy outputs, namely the speeches or declarations made by the foreign ministers in the Riksdag, that is, the Swedish parliament.

As argued by Bäck and Debus (2016), most scholars would agree that in parliamentary democracies, legislative debate plays a central role and that legislative bills are typically debated by Members of Parliament (MPs) before they vote on them'. Hence, legislative debates may influence the policy-making process or differently put, speeches may be used by politicians to 'win arguments', or to persuade opponents. As argued by Proksch and Slapin (2014: 1), legislative debates may also be seen as forums for 'public communication which parties and their MPs exploit for electoral purposes'. Scholars of the US Congress have also long recognised that politicians use legislative speeches to communicate with the voters of their constituencies (see e.g. Maltzman and Sigelman 1996). Hence, legislative speeches may be used in a number of different ways.

In this case, we are not interested in just any speeches made by individual MPs in a legislature, but the (in Sweden, yearly) declarations made by the foreign ministers presenting the policy priorities made in the ministry and the cabinet. This type of declaration can be compared to the government declaration, which is presented yearly or when a new government is installed, where the Prime Minister (PM) presents the goals and policy priorities of the cabinet, presenting some of the agreements made by coalition partners within multiparty cabinets.

In the literature on coalition governments, the government declaration has been used to analyze the policy payoffs that political parties obtain when bargaining with other parties. For example, Budge and Laver (1993) measure the distribution of policy payoffs by comparing the ideal points of coalition parties expressed in their election manifestos and the policy positions reflected in government declarations (see also Warwick 2001). The foreign policy declaration is likely to be the equivalent of such a general statement made by the PM, but focusing and elaborating on the government's and the foreign minister's policy priorities.⁴

⁴ We are aware that the speeches are not a direct measurement of the actual policy outputs implemented by a government (but rather measurements of the goals/aims/positions of political actors) However, since the speeches analyzed here are of such central importance, we suggest that they can be seen as an indicator of the policies that a government will actually implement, and thereby giving us information of foreign policy outputs.

Indicators of a 'feminist foreign policy' as measured in speeches

One of the strengths of a feminist analysis is that it enables the analysis to go beyond looking at women and men as fixed categories and looks further at constructions of masculinity and femininity (Cockburn 2010). A feminist analysis works from the assumption of an existing gender inequality, and gender specific policy, i.e. policies aimed specifically at women or men, is an important part of a feminist foreign policy.

Thus to evaluate feminism in foreign policy we need to look at gender specific policy as well as how other policy is constructed in relation to masculinities and femininities (c.f. Peterson and Runyan 1993). To achieve this we have coded content of all the foreign policy declarations presented between 1955 and 2016, identifying how often women as a group are mentioned in the declarations, and classifying whether the policies proposed in the declaration can be characterized as 'feminist'.

As a basic measure of 'feminism', we code explicit mentions of women in the foreign policy declaration, measuring both the number of mentions or references in the text, and how large share of the text is devoted to women. This variable is clearly a very rough indicator of 'feminism' in the foreign policy declaration, but we suggest that it can be used as a proxy of a 'feminist foreign policy', as such a policy should, as mentioned before, 'foreground issues of gender'. The two variables, measuring the number of *references*, and the *coverage* of women in the foreign policy declarations, are therefore two of the main dependent variables that we analyze in this paper.

To classify different policies, we have created a list of policy areas that can be considered as being part of a 'feminist foreign policy'. Here, we for example include 'women's rights as human rights', 'freedom from violence against women', 'women's participation in conflict resolution and in political life', 'economic empowerment', and 'sexual and reproductive rights'.⁵ We also look at policy measures within the area of 'women's participation in conflict prevention', 'gender mainstreaming', 'participation of civil society', 'disarmament', 'women's participation in militaries', and 'resource allocation in favor of equality'. For each area we also divide findings into "aims" and "concrete measures". We search for suggestions in the texts matching any of these areas, where a higher prevalence suggest a more 'feminist foreign policy'. Therefore, as a third dependent variable, we analyze the number of feminist *policy measures* advocated, which should come close to the policies actually implemented by the government. We also analyze these policies in a more qualitative manner at the end of our analysis section.

⁵ These six areas are drawn from the Swedish Government's own action plan for a feminist foreign policy.

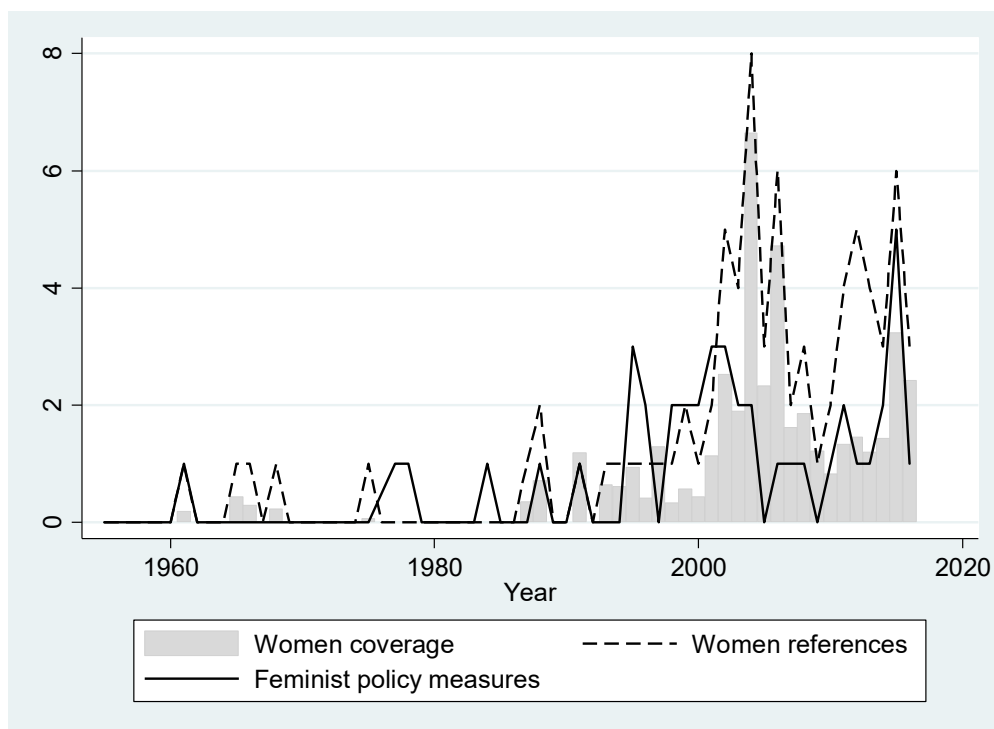
Empirical analysis

Descriptive results of 'feminism' in the foreign policy declarations

In figure 1 we present the variation in time for the three dependent variables that we will focus on in this paper, drawing on the results from the analysis of the foreign policy declarations. As can be seen, there has clearly been an increase in references to women in the foreign policy declarations, with a spike in 2004, when Laila Freivalds was foreign minister, who mentions women more often than Margot Wallström did in her 'feminist foreign policy' declaration in 2015. The same spike is visible when we look at the actual coverage of text which focuses on women. The variables measuring references and coverage are based on the same information, and are thus highly correlated ($r=0.92$).

The third variable that we are interested in, which measures how many 'feminist' foreign policy measures are included in each declaration, is less correlated with the two other dependent variables ($r=0.53$). There is clearly some variation over time in this measure also, with the highest number of 'feminist' policy measures (5) being introduced in the 2015 declaration presented by Wallström. Other spikes in this variable for example occur in 1995, when Lena Hjelm-Wallén was FM, and in 2001 when Anna Lindh was FM.

Figure 1. Variation over time in coverage, references and policy measures



Hence, to conclude from these descriptive statistics, there does seem to be a clear trend over time, where there is more mentions and coverage of women as a group, and more ‘feminist’ foreign policy measures introduced in more recent times. Also, there does seem to be a pattern that female FMs speak more about women as a group and that they propose policy measures that are directed towards increasing equality, and empowering women. However, to fully evaluate our hypotheses, a multivariate approach is needed, and we thus present regression analyses in the following section.

Regression analyses of the impact of female FMs on foreign policy

In table 1 we present a number of regression analyses, aimed at evaluating our four hypotheses. As independent variables in these analyses, we include a dummy variable measuring the gender of the foreign minister (*female FM* = 1), aimed at evaluating hypothesis 1, which suggests that foreign policy should become more ‘feminist’ when the FM is female. To evaluate hypothesis 2, which says that female FMs should be better able to introduce a ‘feminist’ agenda when the PM is left-wing, we introduce a variable, which interacts the variable describing if the FM is female with a variable measuring if the PM belonged to the Social Democratic party (*Female × left PM*).⁶ To evaluate hypothesis 3, which says that foreign policy should become more ‘feminist’ when the female FM is a ‘political heavyweight’, we introduce a variable which is a classification of FMs based on their previous political background, focusing on whether the FM had held a cabinet post before being appointed to become FM, and interact this variable with gender (*Female × heavy*).⁷ Considering changes in female representation and increases in overall gender equality, and an increasing acceptance of ‘feminism’ as such, we expect that policy outputs become more ‘feminist’ over time, and we thus control for time by introducing a variable specifying in which year the foreign policy declaration was presented (*year*).

For simplicity we here run linear regression models, not taking any time dependence into account, or considering that the dependent variables are count variables.⁸ The regression results are presented in table 1, where we present four models for each dependent variable, a first model including only the gender variable, then adding the year variable, and then adding either the interaction with a left-wing PM or the female heavyweight variable in models 3 and 4 respectively.⁹

⁶ There are no PMs in Swedish post-war history that comes from the Left party or the Greens, suggesting that the only possible left-wing PM is a Social Democratic representative.

⁷ There are several ways of measuring whether an FM can be considered a political heavyweight, for example focusing on various features related to the individual’s background within the party, parliament, and cabinet. We here use a simple indicator which describes if the FM had held a ministerial post before becoming FM.

⁸ Negative binomial regressions produce similar results as presented in table 1.

⁹ The interaction with left PM and the female heavyweight variables cannot be included in the same model since all female FMs with previous cabinet experience have been appointed by a Social Democrat PM.

Table 1. Regression analyses with women coverage, women references and feminist policy measures as dependent variables

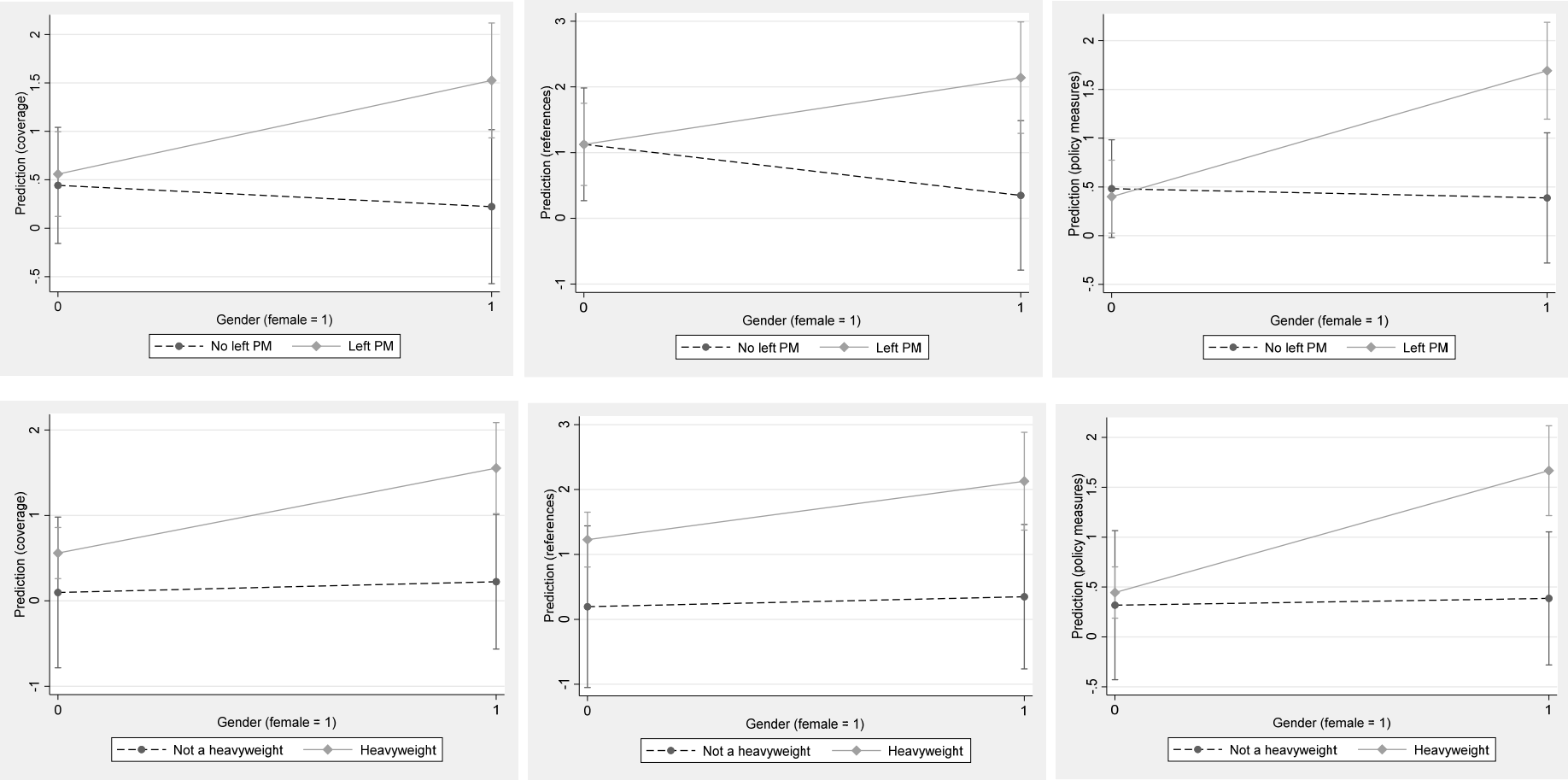
	Women coverage (%)				Women references (#)				Feminist policy measures (#)			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Female FM	1.244*** (0.299)	0.598** (0.293)	-0.220 (0.494)	0.126 (0.591)	1.635*** (0.466)	0.414 (0.415)	-0.778 (0.707)	0.154 (0.834)	1.262*** (0.246)	0.807*** (0.251)	-0.095 (0.415)	0.068 (0.500)
Year		0.035*** (0.008)	0.032*** (0.011)	0.031*** (0.008)		0.067*** (0.011)	0.060*** (0.015)	0.061*** (0.011)		0.025*** (0.007)	0.019** (0.009)	0.020*** (0.006)
Left PM			0.117 (0.427)				-0.001 (0.610)				-0.082 (0.360)	
Female × left PM			1.187 (0.724)				1.793* (1.036)				1.387** (0.610)	
Heavyweight				0.462 (0.463)				1.033 (0.653)				0.127 (0.392)
Female heavy				0.868 (0.670)				0.746 (0.939)				1.154** (0.563)
Constant	0.34** (0.167)	-69.95*** (15.171)	-63.63*** (21.247)	-60.56*** (14.845)	0.79*** (0.260)	-132.15*** (21.532)	-118.07*** (30.398)	-120.51*** (20.950)	0.32** (0.138)	-49.49*** (12.997)	-36.54** (17.859)	-39.72** (12.569)
No of obs.	61	61	61	61	61	61	61	61	60	60	60	60
Adj. R2	0.214	0.417	0.471	0.479	0.159	0.484	0.524	0.544	0.301	0.434	0.506	0.506

Note: Significant at the * 0.10 level, ** 0.05 level, *** 0.01 level. Coefficients are unstandardized regression coefficients, with standard errors in parentheses.

Looking first at the coverage of women in the foreign policy declarations, we find some support for the idea that it matters whether the FM is a woman or not (H1) – the effect of the gender variable is positive and significant even when controlling for the yearly trend (which is obviously important since we have seen more female FMs over time). However, this hypothesis is not fully supported when we look at the number of references to women in the foreign policy declarations, as the variable is no longer significant when we control for the year of the declaration. The hypothesis is however clearly supported when we look at ‘feminist’ foreign policy measures as a dependent variable – here, in model 2, when adding the yearly variable, we still find a significant positive effect of gender. Hence, there is some support for the hypothesis that female FMs are more likely to introduce a ‘feminist’ foreign policy.

Hypothesis 2, which focuses on the partisanship of the PM and whether this feature conditions the impact of female FMs on foreign policy output, is partly supported in these analyses. We find a positive interaction coefficient in all models, which is also significant in the model where we look at references to women, and in the model where we analyze ‘feminist’ policy measures. In figure 2 (top row), we plot the marginal effect of the partisanship of the PM for male and female foreign ministers for the three different dependent variables. All three figures show some support for the idea that female FMs who are part of a cabinet with a left-wing PM are more likely to implement a ‘feminist’ foreign policy, but the strongest results are found for the dependent variable focusing on policy measures – here the difference between female FMs in different types of cabinets is significant at the 95 percent level. Hence, there seems to be some support for the idea that it matters in what type of partisan setting the female FM operates – the results suggest that she may get more support for a ‘feminist’ agenda from a left-wing PM.

Figure 2. Marginal effects plots showing the impact of gender and left PM status / 'heavyweight' status



Lastly, hypothesis 3 is given support when looking at policy measures as our dependent variable presented in table 1 – the coefficient for female heavyweights is positive and significant in this model. The effect of this variable is however not significant when we look at mentions and coverage of women. In figure 2 (lower row), we plot the marginal effect of the FM’s heavyweight status for male and female foreign ministers for the three different dependent variables with 95 percent confidence intervals. All three figures here show some support for the idea that female FMs who have a ‘heavyweight’ status are more likely to implement a ‘feminist’ foreign policy, but the strongest results are found for the dependent variable focusing on policy measures – here the difference between female FMs with different backgrounds is significant at the 95 percent level. Hence, these results partly supports the idea that when the female FM has a strong position, she seems to be able to be better able to push for a ‘feminist’ agenda when holding the FM post.

To sum up the regression results, we find some support for all of our hypotheses, suggesting that the ‘feminist’ agenda in foreign policy is advanced when the foreign minister is a women, when the female FM is in a cabinet headed by a Social Democratic PM, and when she is a ‘political heavyweight’. In addition, we find that foreign policy has, not surprisingly, become more ‘feminist’ over time. In the following sections, we go more in-depth into analysing the foreign policy declarations in terms of feminist rhetoric and policy measures. Table 2 summarizes the results from this qualitative analysis.

What ‘feminist’ rhetoric is used in the foreign policy speeches?

Historically, feminism and pacifism has strong ties and the engagement with peace, peaceful conflict resolution, disarmament, nuclear weapons ban, arms control, conflict prevention, weapons export control, are an intrinsic part of feminist thinking of international politics. Many of these thoughts are also reflected in the Swedish foreign policy agenda. Feminist approaches to international politics rest on a discourse of shared humanity and the idea that sustainable peace goes beyond the cessation of violence and that inequity, including gender inequity, would lead to renewed conflict. The “third wave” feminism added complexity to the understanding of peace, pacifism and a shared humanity and postcolonial feminists’ analysis for example, brought in an intersectional perspective to connect gender with class, sexuality and race (for an overview see Björkdahl and Mannergren 2016). Such progress in the relationship between feminism and pacifism is to some extent reflected in the evolution of Swedish foreign policy ideas.

Rhetorical developments in Swedish foreign policy from the 1950’s until today did not refer explicitly to feminist issues such as gender equality, women’s rights, femininity and masculinity or to power relations between men and women and relations of domination and subordination until the 1970s. In our textual analysis of

the foreign policy declarations from the 1950s through the 1960s it is clear that state-centrism dominated the perspective on international politics. This in turn blinds foreign policy to a number of issues such as for example human and women rights, and gender equality that are regarded to be the responsibility of individual sovereign states. Feminist perspectives can be understood as present in the foreign policy discourse during this era mainly through ideas connected with pacifism. Thus, much of Swedish foreign policy in the 1950's were developed in the shadow of world war II, in the context of the cold war bipolarity, and the superpower arms race. Hence, disarmament, German reunification, current events such as on-going conflicts (Congo, Lebanon, Suez crisis, Hungary) as well as issues pertaining to the role of the UN in world affairs.

In 1965, the Swedish foreign policy discourse made a subtle break with state centrism. Ambassador Alva Myrdal was appointed to lead an expert commission on the apartheid system of South Africa, which focused on compliance with human rights and emphasized the security of individual rather than the security of the state. During this time, the Swedish government appointed Ambassador Alva Myrdal as the Swedish delegate to the UN disarmament conference taking an important step in making women present in foreign policy and international politics as she was the first woman holding such a prominent position within the UN-system. Apart from a brief mentioning of population growth as a problem for north/south relations by FM Östen Undén, and proposing family planning for the developing countries of the South women's situations, gender equality, marginalization of women in world affairs, gender hierarchies and gendered power relations were absent from the foreign policy discourse. Thus, until 1975 women were only present in the foreign policy declarations as individual women members of commissions or as ambassadors.

Women (as a signifier) were mentioned for the first time, together with a reference to the equality between men and women, by Foreign Minister Sten Andersson in the 1975 foreign policy declaration. The context for this reference was a compilation of some of the non-state centric, and perhaps more progressive, issues in international relations such as environment, human rights, racism and colonialism. Disarmament remained a key issue on the agenda in the 1970's, and Foreign Minister Karin Söder rhetorically linked disarmament with development.

With the end of the Cold War the 1990's foreign policy maintained a focus on disarmament, weapons export control, antipersonnel mines and demining, but it also began to escape the traditional state-centrism of international politics and issues pertaining to the internal affairs of states gained increased attention including intra-state wars, gross human rights violations, atrocities etc. With the violent break-up of Yugoslavia, women as victims of war became an issue in the foreign policy declaration of 1993 and 1994 by FM Margaretha af Ugglas who highlighted the situation of women in the Yugoslav wars by referring to the atrocities suffered by

women and systematic abuses of women. The wars in the Balkans were a main foreign policy concern during the 1990's and in 1999 FM Anna Lindh referred to women and children as fleeing refugees and as victims of war. This rhetorical device of connecting "womenandchildren" and of portraying them as victims is commonly used but may reproduce patriarchal structures and implies a marginalization of women's agency. The foreign policy discourse during the years of FM Lena Hjelm Wallen in the end of the 1990's continued the effort to more clearly merge a gender discourse with the existing pacifist discourse and she was explicit in expressing Sweden support for Aung Sang Suu Kui, human rights, democratization, freedom of expression and against oppression of women and highlight the importance of the 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing 1995.

In the mid 1990's the feminization of poverty also emerged as an issue. In the foreign policy declaration of 1996 it was stated that one fifth of the worlds population live in absolute poverty and 70% of them are women. Here, gender equality became a prioritized issue in foreign policy, which Foreign Minister Anna Lindh returned to in the foreign policy declaration of 2000 concluding that women were the majority of the worlds poor and they lacked capacity and opportunity to express their rights.

Between 2000 and 2008, women, often in connection with children (i.e. "womenandchildren"), were mentioned every year in relation to prioritized and topical issues on the foreign policy agenda such as human trafficking, sexual exploitation of children, child soldiers but also in broader terms referring to gender discrimination and inequality. In 2002 the ministry for foreign affairs used Lukas Modysson's movie "Lilja forever" about women trafficking to EU as a way of increasing awareness about human trafficking and to connect human trafficking with criminal networks, financing of terrorism etc. Only once the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda was well established and four years after the adoption of UNSCR 1325, in the 2004 foreign policy declaration did FM Laila Freiwalds provide rhetorical support for resolution 1325. Issues related to healthcare for "womenandchildren" in Afghanistan was also mentioned as were the discrimination of women which was seen as a hinder for development. Sexual and reproductive health and rights, backlash on these issues. Maternity care/health care.

In the years between 2005 and 2009, the WPS-agenda and the UNSCR 1325 became permanent items in the foreign policy discourse and the importance of engaging women in peace processes was frequently stressed in relation to on-going peace talks. Rarely however did the description of women move beyond women as victims of war. A more concrete step was taken when a National Action Plan for implementation1325 was presented. In 2008 FM Carl Bildt maintained the focus on UNSCR 1325 and the work to ensure UNSCR 1325 to be implemented. Bildt also brought up issues of human rights violations and sexual violence in Democratic

Republic of Congo (DRC) against women and girls and stated that it was imperative that this was addressed and that it motivated prioritizing UNSCR 1325, and the follow-up resolution 1820 which addressed sexual violence in conflict. Against this background, the Feminist Foreign Policy of 2015 was introduced, stating that the situation in the world demanded a feminist policy.

With the appointment of Margot Wallström as Foreign Minister, the rhetoric became more explicit in its references to feminism, gender issues, masculinities and femininities and gendered power relations. Wallström firmly believed in the need to involve women in peace processes, and worked to involve women in the Syrian Peace Talks to ensure a more sustainable peace. Furthermore, sexual and reproductive health and rights was given an even higher priority and the importance of new laws around the world to strengthen women's right in relation to unsafe abortion and unwanted pregnancies, to abandon the practice of female genital mutilation and to combat gender-based violence.

Which concrete 'feminist' measures are presented in the foreign policy speeches?

A few concrete measures were envisioned in the foreign policy declarations that reflected in one way or another a feminist perspective, such as the proposal in the 1961 for family planning in the global south in order to restrict population growth. In the 1970's, concrete measures such as a study investigating the link between disarmament and development were proposed. In the same vein, there were proposals on disarmament, envisioning how the defense and arms production could be converted into civilian production. Restrictions on weapons export, export control, support of the anti-personal mines ban, and by committing resources to demining efforts Swedish foreign policy rhetoric was translated into practical measures. Another concrete measure presented in the declarations was the ratification of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) regulating international trade in conventional arms in 2014/2015 and work to ensure its implementation globally.

As a member of the UN commission on women in 1988, Sweden began to more consistently promote the gender equality strategies that were developed at the Nairobi women conferences in 1985, and to work to ensure the implementation of these strategies.

A concrete measure to support the spread and compliance of human rights, democratization and to combat the oppression of women and exploitation of children, was the support given to the Raul Wallenberg Institute at Lund University and its human rights education for decision-makers and politicians from democratizing countries. Support was also given to the establishment of the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Table 2. *Feminist rhetoric and policy measures in the foreign policy declarations*

	Feminist rhetoric	Feminist policy measures
1950s	No feminist rhetoric, state-centrism dominates perspective	No feminist policy measures
1960s	Family planning for developing countries is mentioned	A proposal for family planning in the global south
1970s	Human rights come into focus, disarmament is a key issue, linked to development	Proposed study investigating disarmament-development link Proposals on disarmament
1980s	Focus on disarmament, weapons control, and demining	Promotion of gender equality strategies (Nairobi conference) Restriction on weapons export Support for mines ban
1990s	Women as victims of war (Balkans), “womenandchildren” Feminization of poverty	Human rights education to combat oppression of women and the exploitation of children Support for the establishment of the ICC Ratifying the agreement on disarmament of conventional weapons in Europe (CFE)
2000s	“womenandchildren” Trafficking, exploitation of children Maternity care/health care in Afghanistan, discrimination as a hinder for development UNSCR 1325	Support for convention on Human Trafficking NAP for implementation of 1325 Nordic centre for Gender in military operations Financial support to UNFPA and UNICEF
2010s	Explicit references to feminism, gender issues, and gendered power relations “womenandgirls” Involvement of women in peace processes Sexual and reproductive health is given priority Combat gender-based violence	Women’s situation in Afghanistan improved through civilian engagement Women’s mediator network Women take part in Syrian peace talks Appointment of EU representative for gender equality

Swedish concerns with human trafficking spurred the support for the development of an European Convention on Human Trafficking (adopted 2005). The Swedish National Action Plan (NAP) for implementation 1325 can also be seen as a concrete measure to increase gender equality and work against gender discrimination. As a consequence of the NAP, a Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations was

established to implement 1325 within the armed forces. Financial support to the UNFPA's and UNICEF's work on sexual reproductive health and rights also translated rhetoric into practice.

As Sweden adopted a feminist foreign policy in 2015 there was a change in the foreign policy discourse and explicit feminist issues gained increased attention. For example, FM Margot Wallström proposed in the foreign policy declaration of 2015 to appoint an EU representative for gender equality. With the on-going conflict in Syria and the fragile attempts at a peace process led Wallström to propose to involve women in peace processes, in accordance with the National Action Plan for UNSCR 1325. This proposal was followed by the establishment of a women mediator network in 2016.

Concluding remarks

We have here aimed to contribute to the literature on gender and foreign policy analysis by evaluating a claim that female foreign policy leaders make a difference, more specifically that having a female FM in a country should result in a more 'feminist' foreign policy agenda. We have evaluated this claim by analyzing the policy rhetoric of FMs in Sweden in their domestic foreign policy declarations, over 60 years, covering seven periods of office where the Foreign Ministry was headed by a woman. The results, when analyzing mentions of women in the declarations, and whether more 'feminist' policies are suggested, show that the gender of the FM seems to matter for the foreign policy agenda, especially if the female FM is a 'political heavyweight', and is working in a cabinet with a left-wing Prime Minister (PM) – in such situations, the presented foreign policy seems to be more 'feminist'. Hence, it may be easier for a female FM to push for a specific agenda, when she has favorable partisan setting and is in a strong position.

One major limitation of the analyses performed here is that they are based on very simple indicators of what constitutes a 'feminist' foreign policy agenda, focusing only on the mentioning of women, and on the policy measures introduced in the declaration. More in-depth analyses should be performed in order to get at whether a foreign policy agenda is really 'challenging patriarchal practices, hierarchies of dominance and subordination and asymmetrical power relations as well as the resilience of masculinities as a mode of making sense of global politics'. For example, by using discourse analysis to analyze the speeches that we have analyzed here should be advantageous and could give us a deeper understanding of whether the foreign policy declarations are clearly 'feminist' or not.

Another important limitation of the analyses presented here is that we are focusing on the rhetoric of foreign policy leaders rather than the actual policies that are implemented. We have here suggested that since the speeches analyzed here are of such central importance, which also gain a lot of media interest, can be seen as an indicator of the policies that a government will actually implement. However, future research should analyze more direct foreign policy output measures, and could for example analyze spending patterns (e.g. whether spending goes to organizations stressing women's rights), or other more direct output measures, such as the legislation passed in parliament.

It is also a limitation that we have here only studied the Swedish case over time, and that it is relatively difficult to make any general claims about the role of gender in foreign policy. Hence, future research should be based on comparative analyses, and one suggestion for future work is to analyze the speeches made in the UN General Assembly, using a similar approach as we do here, which would allow us to compare speeches across the gender of the FM, across countries, and over time.

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