Re-politicising the Gender-Security Nexus: Sweden’s Feminist Foreign Policy

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Abstract: Sweden’s feminist foreign policy is founded on the broad idea that gender equality is central to security. This article focuses on how the politicisation of this gender-security nexus is discursively articulated and practiced in the case of feminist foreign policy. The problematic is unpacked by analysing the politicisation of the women, peace and security agenda and global gender mainstreaming. To empirically illustrate the gender-security nexus more specifically, we analyse how these politicisation processes are reflected in Sweden’s support for global peace diplomacy and gender protection. The article concludes by offering three final remarks. First, Sweden’s feminist foreign policy is an expression of several, at times competing, forms of political rationality. Second, while the fluctuation between de-politicisation and re-politicisation of security may seem productive in terms of policy outcome it can also create contradictions and ambiguities in regards to feminist foreign policy practice. One such outcome is the tendency to conflate gender and women across a number of de-politicised policy initiatives launched by the Swedish government. Third, the re-politicisation and contestation of the gender-security nexus is likely to increase in the coming decades because of shifting global power configurations in the global world order.

Keywords: feminist foreign policy, re-politicisation, de-politicisation, WPS-agenda, gender mainstreaming, peace diplomacy, protection, Sweden, UNSCR 1325

Introduction

In 2014, the newly formed Swedish coalition government declared a radical policy change by launching a distinctively feminist foreign policy. In this article, we argue that this policy is founded on a gender-security nexus, which views gender equality as central to national and international security.¹ By addressing global gender(ed)
inequalities, discrimination and violence, Sweden is seeking to contribute to a more peaceful and secure world order. Moreover, this policy builds on Sweden’s internationalist foreign policy orientation, commitment to the advancement of global gender equality and support for UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on women, peace, security (WPS). This resolution was adopted in 2000 and outlines a policy agenda, which focuses on women’s representation in peace-making and peacekeeping processes, their inclusion as soldiers in national armed forces as well as global human rights and entitlements to gender-just protection in times of war and peace.

Sweden’s feminist foreign policy reflects a broad range of ongoing and diverse politicisation processes, which prevail in the broader WPS-agenda and within the practice of global gender mainstreaming. Hence, the aim of this article is three-fold: first, to assess the politicisation of the WPS-agenda and gender mainstreaming in global politics; second, to analyse the fluctuation between de-politicisation and re-politicisation in the framing and practice of Sweden’s feminist foreign policy; and, third, to investigate how such politicisation processes are expressed in Sweden’s support for global gender protection and peace diplomacy.

Adopting a similar approach to politicisation as presented in the introduction to this Special Issue (SI), we are examining how the gender-security nexus is articulated, contested and mobilised by diverse political actors and arenas. As such, the article critically analyses what happens politically when discourses and practices pertaining to the gender-security nexus are employed in the actual conduct of foreign policy. More specifically, we examine how the politicisation of gender justice and security are discursively articulated and practiced in the case of Sweden’s feminist foreign policy. Politicisation in the security field is here understood as a process whereby pressing issues ‘travel’ from one context or arena to another, and as such gain a higher level of political salience as well as being increasingly subjected to greater public contestation. As mentioned, Swedish feminist foreign policy is firmly based on a normative commitment to the WPS-framework, which transcends national borders and enjoys wide recognition among a growing number of countries worldwide. The politicisation and ‘travelling’ of global issues, we argue, can stimulate greater acceptance and recognition of political pluralism, which at the same time enables the expression of diverse ideological positions within policy areas. At the same time, the politicisation of a particular security issue, such as gender mainstreaming in peacebuilding, includes the presence of antagonisms and agonisms as well as competing power relations in national and international political processes. As the introductory article to this SI underlines, “controversy” is central to a politicisation perspective in the security field and to the understanding of what is defined as political. For instance, in our empirical case the adoption of a Swedish feminist foreign policy has given rise to diverse public debates both in Sweden and beyond because it challenges competing domestic and global policy initiatives. A
key position advanced in this article is also that a politicisation perspective should pay particular attention to parallel and interlinked processes of de-politicisation and re-politicisation. As such, distinct political fluctuations between a range of functions and power hierarchies across diverse arenas and societies can be identified. For instance, in the empirical analysis below, we unpack the gender-security nexus and show how such fluctuation between de- and re-politicisation processes takes place in the case of Sweden.

De-politicisation in the security field is closely related to the concept of securitisation, which implies the employment of exceptional language of threat and insecurity. Such processes tend to disfavour democratic, emancipatory and inclusive solutions to pressing security problems. De-securitisation, on the other hand, broadly refers to ‘the shifting of issues out of emergency mode and into the normal bargaining process of the political sphere’. However, as Browning and McDonald contend, what is considered ‘normal’ in politics can be highly contestable and depends on the language employed in constructing notions of security. Hence, different political logics of security are socially constructed within cultural, social and historical contexts, which generate multiple and, at times, competing interpretations of what constitutes appropriate security logics in foreign policy-making. As a consequence, the meaning of security shifts over time and across contexts, which is why it is important to pay attention to the fluctuation between de- and re-politicisation processes. For instance, politically controversial issues and events, such as the adoption of a feminist foreign policy, has resulted in heightened public attention amongst supporters and critics as a consequence of the re-politicisation of the gender-security nexus.

Yet, while de-politicisation is a rapidly expanding field of research less scholarship has focused on the parallel dynamics and processes of re-politicisation. Re-politicisation brings attention to the processes that enable and empower diverse political actors to move a security issue, for instance gender mainstreaming in the field of security, back to the public sphere for political contestation. As mentioned above, there is a dynamic interplay between de-politicisation and re-politicisation, which can enable the articulation of new policy positions and directions on a broad range of security issues. For instance, the shift towards a distinctively feminist foreign policy could be seen as an attempt to reinvoke and render visible deeply rooted pro-gender internationalist norms.

To conduct our case study, we employ an empirically-based discourse analysis of Swedish feminist foreign policy based on official policy documents, reports and statements issued by the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs. We have also drawn on a number of speeches by leading ministers and politicians, and interviews with

8 Buzan, Weaver & de Wilde, A New Framework, 29.
11 Ross Beveridge and Matthias Naumann, “Global norms, local contestation: Privatisation and de/politicisation in Berlin” Policy and Politics 42. no. 2 (2014): 275, 288
key diplomats as well as conducted participatory observation during meetings of the
Nordic mediation network.

The article is divided into four parts. The first focuses on the distinct politicisation
of the WPS-agenda and its implications within the realm of global security. The
second elaborates on the reasons why there has been so few counter-discourses,
which challenge and/or resist the global dispersion of the WPS-agenda. We propose
below that this can partly be explained by the dominance of the de-politicised and
technocratic practices of gender mainstreaming more broadly in national and global
institutions. This has resulted in restrained public deliberation and contestation of
political alternatives. The third part of the article provides an in-depth analysis of
the Swedish government’s attempt to re-politicise the global gender-security nexus
through its adoption of a distinctively feminist foreign policy. To explore this further,
we unpack two defining aspects of Sweden’s feminist foreign policy to date; gender-
just participation in peace diplomacy, and the protection of women’s rights and
integrity, both of which are central pillars of the wider WPS-agenda. The article
concludes by offering three final remarks. First, Sweden’s feminist foreign policy
builds on different variants of political rationality. Second, while the fluctuation
between de-politicisation and re-politicisation of the gender-security nexus might
seem compatible, it also creates contradictions and ambiguities in regards to concrete
policy discourse and practice. Third, the global re-politicisation of the gender-
security nexus is likely to increase in the coming decades because of the changing
power configurations in the global world order.

The politicisation of the WPS-agenda

When UNSCR 1325 was launched, the resolution’s ambition was to further the
international community’s broad commitment to the protection of women exposed
to violence and repression, and to increase their representation within national armed
forces and peace processes. To ensure the implementation of the resolution, a large
number of states adopted National Action Plans (NAP) that laid out the principles
and policy frames necessary to fulfil this goal. States, such as Australia, Canada,
Norway and Sweden, have gone further than most by framing their foreign and
security policies within the context of gender equality, security and peace. In this way,
they signal a political commitment that the WPS-agenda is an integral part of their
foreign policies. Moreover, the WPS-agenda has been sustained by the adoption of
additional resolutions, such as resolution 1960 in 2010 on sexual violence in conflict,
and resolution 2122 dating back to 2013, which aim to strengthen women’s role
in all stages of conflict prevention. Underpinning the WPS-agenda is the idea that
women’s empowerment and involvement in peace negotiations and peacekeeping
missions enhance the prospects for long lasting peace and security.

13 Laura Shepherd, “Making war safe for women? National Action Plans and the militarisation of the Women,
14 Karin Aggestam & Annika Bergman Rosamond, “Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy in the Making: Ethics,
However, feminist scholars, such as Cynthia Enloe, doubt the ability of the military to accommodate the knowledge and ideas that women may bring to peace-making since the norms of hegemonic masculinity is so pronounced within most military structures. This argument is also present in feminist scholarship of the WPS-agenda. For instance, Nicola Pratt and Sophie Richer-Devroe argue that the WPS-agenda is rooted in the processes of militarism, whereas Soumita Basu points to its association with western imperialism. Moreover, according to Laura Shepherd, the WPS-agenda employs an understanding of gender that is ‘largely synonymous with biological sex and, further, reproduce logics of identity that characterized women as fragile, passive, and in need of protection and construction of security that locate the responsibility of protection firmly in the hands of elite political actors in the international system.’ She therefore warns that the WPS-agenda contains militarising tendencies and highlights how ‘Cora Weiss, co-drafter of what became UN Security Council Resolution 1325, noted in 2011 that the purpose of eliminating conflict-related sexualised violence must not be to “make war safe for women”’. Indeed, the promotion of women’s presence in the armed forces and military missions are seen by some scholars as a militarising act, which sustains women’s position in war and conflict.

Several feminist scholars therefore argue that the WPS-agenda ought to focus on the demilitarisation of society as well as the advancement of an anti-militarist global politics of peace. Here, Natalie Hudson encourages us to ‘ask ourselves how the application of this security framework affects policy and practice for these non-traditional security issues. In other words, does the security framework really help bring global attention to issues and groups of people that are normally marginalised? Has it meant more resources and more involvement by state and non-state actors? Or has the politicisation resulted in narrow, self-interested, and even militaristic responses to complex social problems?’

Obviously, these are complex questions as states and non-state actors vary in their perceptions and articulations of what ought to be the priorities of the WPS-agenda and how best to implement its core contents. Political actors also contest the constitutive links between gender equality, international peace and security.

18 Shepherd, “Making War Safe”.
19 Shepherd “Sex, Security”; Pratt and Richter-Devroe “Introduction: Critically Examining UNSCR”
20 Soumita Basu, “The Global South Writes 1325”
23 Shepherd, “Making War Safe”
Still, we argue that the launching of the WPS-agenda has given an opening for the political contestation of orthodox security politics and traditional diplomatic practices in favour of feminist approaches to global politics. Moreover, the WPS-agenda has been central to the normative shift of promoting global gender equality and the widening of women’s representation in global security politics and diplomacy. Such a discursive shift in security can contribute to ‘making war safe for women.’ As a result, there is today a variety of political discourses present in national and international debates on the WPS-agenda. More precisely, this provides opportunities to combine new policy mechanisms and arenas for collaboration between non-military and military actors, which challenge and contest the use of militaristic language and practice. Yet, despite these processes, the WPS-agenda has often been framed in de-politicised language, which is a contention that we elaborate further on below.

De-politicisation and global gender mainstreaming

As noted in the introduction to this SI, arena-shifting is an important element in politicisation. Hence, we argue that the UNSCR 1325 provides for such an arena-shift through its emphasis on inclusion and enhancement of women’s wider political participation in the field of security. Gender mainstreaming, as a central norm, emerged in the early 1990s with the Vienna Declaration on Human Rights recognising women’s rights as human rights and inspired by the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 1995. Since then the international community has witnessed a widespread adoption of gender mainstreaming as a key norm governing international institutions and global governance. It is interesting to note that nearly all UN bodies and agencies have come to formally endorse gender mainstreaming as a ‘methodology’ and there is today a broad consensus on this norm among UN member states. As in the case of the normative contents of the WPS-agenda, gender mainstreaming has faced surprisingly little resistance and contestation amongst the world’s leaders and top diplomats. We suggest that this reflects a dominant de-politicised and consensual discursive understanding of gender mainstreaming and the WPS-agenda. Even within potentially more controversial policy areas, such as UN military peace operations, there appears to be little antagonism and contestation of gender mainstreaming.

Indeed, a technical and expert-led approach to global gender mainstreaming has been a key overarching political rationale underpinning the efforts by the UN and

25 Shepherd “Making War Safe”.
26 Shepherd 2016 “Making War Safe”.
its member states to improve the institutions and workings of global governance. Thus, gender mainstreaming is justified on the basis of its instrumentality and ability to improve efficiency, rather than its normative commitment to gender equality and feminist transformation of security politics. As a result, the implementation of gender mainstreaming is often ‘light’ and highly fragmented.30 Here Mary Daly posits that though gender mainstreaming is a concept that is rapidly dispersed across the globe, it is not without contestation.31

Hence, global governance of gender mainstreaming is often defined by technocratic and de-politicised approaches that leave little room for political deliberation, contestation and debates surrounding such policy frameworks. Here the key question is whether, and to what extent, the WPS-agenda runs the risk of losing its political and feminist momentum on global gender issues, as UN agencies, bureaucrats and diplomats appear to favour technocratic approaches, which result in solutions dominated by technology, economics and science.32 Hilary Charlesworth notes that ‘as gender becomes mainstreamed, institutionally respectable, and more fundable, the area can be taken over by statisticians and economists who see gender as an “interesting statistical variable” but not a defining one.’33 Moreover, gender mainstreaming tends to generate de-politicised outcomes, which focuses more on representation in the shape of the broadening women’s participation in peace-making processes, rather than seriously challenging prevalent gendered asymmetric power relations and structures in global politics.

Hence, the tendency to de-politicise gender mainstreaming and its importance for gender-just security needs to be critically explored. This involves asking questions about the consequences of such de-politicised and uncontested understandings of gender mainstreaming and equality in promoting global peace and security. Jacqui True notes that gender mainstreaming ‘may detract from and indeed serve to depoliticize gender equality goals and outcomes.’34 Similarly, Jansson and Eduards posit that the widespread adoption of the WPS-agenda, which by definition favours women’ security and peace, risks de-politicising the political core of global feminism,35 in particular feminist attempts to challenge the global tendency to equate gender with women alone. This is a tendency across a range of key WPS-related documents, which downplay the relationality of gender identities, gendered power relations and intersectional categories, such as class, religion, sex, race and geographical location.36 Moreover, masculine identities and their part of the gendered dynamics of international conflicts are often left untouched, which reinforces the de-politicised character of the WPS-agenda.37 Hence, the gender-security nexus tends to

31 Daly “Gender Mainstreaming”, 434.
33 Charlesworth, “Not Waving but Drowning”, 17.
36 See Shepherd “Making War Safe”.
37 Charlesworth, “Not Waving”, 16.
be understood either as the promotion of women’s rights for military reasons or as a
way to legitimise ‘just’ war for the purpose of protecting women in conflict zones.\textsuperscript{38}

So while rhetorically there is a contemporary widespread consensus on global
gender mainstreaming, the implementation of the WPS-agenda and related National
Action Plans (NAPS), which have been adopted by 74 countries to date, are still
lacking political impetus and implementation in large parts. In this context, UN
Under-Secretary-General Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka has contended that

‘...there remains a crippling gap between the ambition of our commitments and actual political
and financial support. We struggle to bridge the declared intent of international policy-
making and the reality of domestic action in the many corners of the world where resolution
1325 is most needed.’\textsuperscript{39}

Hence, there is an inconsistency between the high level of political support for
the inclusion of gender norms in peacekeeping operations and global mediation
processes within the UN, and states’ often tardy approach to the implementation
of 1325 in national foreign policy-making.\textsuperscript{40} In sum, global discourses on gender
mainstreaming still lack a transformative political framework, which can form
the basis for thoroughgoing scrutiny of prevailing gendered power structures and
inequalities. What is more, there is insufficient analysis of gender inequality as a
structural problem and as an impediment to global political change. The launch of
Sweden’s feminist foreign policy could therefore be seen as one such attempt to
re-politicise the gender-security nexus in global politics, which is the subject of our
discussion below.

\textit{Feminist foreign policy and the re-politicisation of the
gender-security nexus}

A key contention pursued in this part of the article is that Sweden’s adoption of a
distinctively feminist foreign policy in 2014 can be seen as an attempt to re-politicise
the gender-security nexus in global politics. Such an attempt, we argue, was made
possible by domestically rooted pro-gender values associated with the country’s
pursuit of state feminism at home and abroad since the 1970s. As the Swedish
foreign minister stated in 2014 ‘it’s time to become a little braver in foreign policy. I
think feminism is a good term. It is about standing against the systematic and global
subordination of women.’\textsuperscript{41} Her ambition, and that of the Swedish government, is
rooted in the grand ambition of becoming the ‘strongest voice for gender equality
and full employment of human rights for all women and girls’.\textsuperscript{42} We argue that this
is an effort to strengthen and re-politicise Sweden’s ongoing feminist commitment to

\textsuperscript{38} Jansson and Eduards “The Politics of gender”, 600.
\textsuperscript{40} Shepherd, “Making War Safe”.
\textsuperscript{41} Jenny Nordberg, “Who’s Afraid of a Feminist Foreign Policy?” New Yorker, April 15, (2015)
broad notions of global gender justice, peace and security, which serve as platforms for Swedish foreign policy.43

As mentioned above, while scholars have offered a wide array of critical analyses of the characteristics, processes and effects of de-politicisation across policy sectors they have delivered less insight into the processes of re-politicisation, in particular its political articulation of the gender-security nexus. Hence, little scholarly effort has been made to understand domestic and international factors, which trigger the re-politicisation of a particular security issue, and where and how such policy change might take place. Re-politicisation therefore provides productive ground for studying such mobilisation processes whereby political actors either re invoke existing norms, values and decision-making powers as well as their capacities to reframe and render a policy issue visible, or seek new routes to such change.44 Moreover, reframing and unveiling security issues can enable public debates and contestation by shifting a particular issue to the centre of a variety of political arenas. For instance, the launch of a feminist foreign policy has gained large-scale global and domestic attention. By way of illustration, the Swedish-European civil society based organisation for global development, CONCORD, has made several critical interventions to contest the contradictory policy of Sweden in regards to arm trade, which according to CONCORD is inconsistent with a feminist foreign policy.45

Sweden’s feminist foreign policy is furthermore distinct from de-politicised global understandings of gender mainstreaming and justice, which tend to dominate contemporary international discourses. In particular, Swedish feminist foreign policy explicitly spells out that gender equality is central to politically-charged, but peaceful transformations of the international security structure. It also employs a critical approach to the eradication of prevailing gendered power hierarchies and international institutions in global politics. These explicit ambitions have in turn triggered global and domestic contestations in regards to the normative and feminist contents and practices of Sweden’s foreign policy, a point we shall return to below. We propose here that feminist foreign policy is informed both by an ethical commitment,46 as well as by pragmatism, both of which trigger contradictions and expose an inherent tension and fluctuation between securitisation and de-politicisation, on the one hand, and feminist attempts to politicise the gender-security nexus, on the other hand.

Sweden’s feminist foreign policy rests on a strong commitment to women’s representation, rights and resources. Representation focuses on women’s participation and influence in all forms of decision-making, specifically in regards to peace processes. The category of rights centres on the contention that women’s rights are human rights, particularly in regards to the protection of women exposed to sexual and gender-based violence and other forms of gender(ed) subordination. The third category aims at the re-allocation of resources to promote a more gender-sensitive and equitable re-distribution of global income and natural resources that specifically contribute to the emancipation of women and girls.47 As mentioned

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44 Beveridge and Naumann, “Global Norms”.
45 Concord, How Feminist is Sweden Foreign Policy? (Stockholm: Concord, 2016).
47 Regeringskansliet, Exempel på vad Sveriges feministiska utrikespolitik har bidragit till (Regeringskansliet:
before, Sweden’s feminist foreign policy signals a policy shift, which draws upon a longstanding embedded self-narrative of a democratic and peace loving state, defined by, amongst other things, ‘gender cosmopolitanism’ and the protection of women and other marginalised groups beyond borders. This self-narrative is strongly associated with the Social Democratic Party, which dominated Swedish politics for most of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century. Sweden’s historical foreign policy orientation as a moral superpower, committed to gender equality, is also intimately linked to the legacy of the Swedish welfare state and its co-constitutive sense of obligation to the needs and wants of people at home and abroad. However, this narrative has been somewhat tarnished in recent years by rising anti-immigration sentiments and restrictions to Swedish immigration and refugee policy. Some of these policies have had gender(ed) consequences with changes to Swedish immigration law making it difficult for women refugees, in particular, to enter Sweden leaving them stranded in refugee camps in the Middle East. The re-politicisation of the gender-security nexus is also reflected in the country’s participation in the ISAF-led intervention in Afghanistan. Sweden’s military engagement in Afghanistan was shaped by its explicit desire to form relations with local women in the hope of expanding their legal, economic and political rights and bodily integrity. To this effect the Swedish armed forces employed women soldiers in dialogical roles in Afghanistan.

At the same time, the global re-politicisation of the gender-security nexus is paralleled with the de-politicisation of the WPS-agenda and gender mainstreaming as well as moves towards militarism in global politics. Though Sweden’s feminist foreign policy is located within these intertwined processes, it also seeks to promote human security, which leads to critical questions surrounding women’s inclusion in discourses and practices of security. The normative ideal of gender-just inclusion is firmly embedded within Sweden’s feminist foreign policy and the WPS-agenda. What is more, the ideal of promoting inclusive and gender-just notions of human security resonates normatively with the foreign policies pursued by Australia, Norway and Canada, all of which have added an explicit gender element to their foreign policies and provisions of development assistance.

At the same time, it is important to note that Sweden’s feminist foreign policy has been developing incrementally, in particular by focusing on international agenda-setting, mobilisation and normative pro-gender entrepreneurship. During the electoral period 2014-2018, a small team at the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, led by Ann Bernes, was instrumental in coordinating and advancing the mainstreaming of all new policy initiatives so as to ensure that they were in line with...
the ethics of feminist foreign policy.\textsuperscript{53} Moreover, Margot Wallström’s leadership cannot be underestimated – the foreign minister herself has been seen as one of the central drivers behind the country’s adoption and pursuit of feminist foreign policy.\textsuperscript{54} Sweden’s 2018 global showcase initiative: the Stockholm Forum on Gender Equality, is indicative of its strong commitment to the WPS-agenda. This event gathered a large number of global gender experts, scholars, activists, and politicians in order to intensify international commitments to gender equality, peace and security.\textsuperscript{55} The ethical ethos of the conference is in line with the discourses and practices of Sweden’s feminist foreign policy with the country’s government noting that

‘...more rights, representation, and resources for women and girls means more peace, security, and prosperity for the world. A feminist foreign policy is the way forward. With this conference, we create a possibility for grassroots and high-level participants from all over the globe to meet, share knowledge, and inspire political leaders’\textsuperscript{56}

However, at the time of writing this article, it is uncertain whether the next Swedish government will remain as committed to the political logic of a feminist foreign and security policy. In what follows below, we analyse the ways in which the Swedish government has sought to realise its feminist objectives, with focus on women’s roles in peace-making processes and within the field of gender protection.

\textit{Re-politicising gender-just peace diplomacy}

The Swedish government has been exceptionally active in regards to women’s inclusion and participation in peace processes and to this effect has initiated a broad range of proposals which aim to re-design the character of local and global peace negotiations. This can clearly be viewed as an attempt of arena-shifting, as discussed in the introduction of the SI. An overarching question guiding this work is how women organisations can be included and supported in the broader peace processes, an ambition that is, to all intents and purposes, political. However, peace negotiations generally are highly militarised with little opportunity for women to make their voices heard. It is interesting to observe here that the Swedish government’s efforts to mobilise for gender inclusion in peace negotiations builds on a similar rationale as expressed in the US ‘Hilary doctrine”, which stated at the time of the Obama administration that women’s security is intimately linked to national and international security.\textsuperscript{57}

Because peace negotiations are more often than not secret and exclusive, women’s organisations have restricted political access to the formal negotiation process. The number of women negotiators and mediators actually present in these closed networks of negotiators only amounts to 9% and 2.5% amongst chief mediators.\textsuperscript{58} Hence, the enhancement of women’s representation in peace processes and presence at the

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{53} Interview, December 2015, Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs.
  \item \textsuperscript{54} Interview, November 2018, Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs.
  \item \textsuperscript{55} Available at http://genderequalworld.com/
  \item \textsuperscript{56} Government Offices of Sweden “Feminist Foreign Policy”, 1.
  \item \textsuperscript{57} Valerie Hudson, \textit{The Hillary Doctrine: Sex and American Foreign Policy}. (New York: Colombia University Press, 2015).
  \item \textsuperscript{58} UN Women, “Facts and figures: Leadership and Political Representation.” 2015, available at www.unwomen.org
\end{itemize}
peace table is central to Swedish feminist foreign policy since the inclusion of more women in key decisions, in particular on the ground, assumes positively to impact the overall design of peace diplomacy. This effort, we argue, is an explicit Swedish attempt to mobilise global policies towards the inclusion of women’s knowledge and political activities in peacebuilding. To this end Sweden has ‘taken action to increase women’s representation and participation in the discussion, negotiation, drafting, interpretation and implementation of resolutions and key documents on disarmament and non-proliferation.’ Peace mediation has been particularly singled out as the ‘weapon of inclusion’ since chief mediators are seen as playing a central role in securing women’s participation and empowerment in peace-making. As part of such efforts of re-politicisation and of arena-shifting of negotiation, a Swedish mediation network was launched in 2015 to address the systematic underrepresentation of women in peace-making processes. This network coordinates its activities with the Nordic and Global South networks of women mediators. The Swedish network is politically committed to women’s meaningful participation in peace processes and seeks to embed it within international law, human rights and the rule of law more broadly. The network also builds on the assumption that women’s participation in peace processes will increase the likelihood that peace agreements will be reached and sustained. In this context, the Swedish government frequently refers to a fourth ‘R’ – *Reality check*, a position that is inspired by policy-relevant research that claims a positive correlation between inclusive peace processes and the sustainability of peace agreements.

Yet, most of these initiatives build on an underlying assumption about gender and women, which reflects a distinct expression of political rationality. Right-based arguments are utilised that pertain to women’s increased representation in peace processes as a matter of fairness. Yet, these arguments also mirror broader de-politicised global strategies of simply ‘counting’ women and ‘adding’ them to peace negotiations, without questioning the militarised infrastructure and power dynamics that underpin such negotiations. Rather than politically contesting prevalent gendered power structures and hegemonic masculinities, women’s inclusion in peace processes is often constituted within language of ‘smart’ peace diplomacy and efficiency, and as such reducing the political dynamics of the process. Moreover, gender is frequently conflated with women rather than problematised within the context of intersectionality. Here Margot Wallström states that ‘women’s representation is not just a question of fairness; it is a matter of effectiveness and of increasing the probability of a lasting peace agreement.’

Such an instrumental framing is also present in the global campaign under the hashtag ‘#more women, more peace’ that

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60 Ibid, 8.
the Swedish government is pursuing as part of its feminist foreign policy. Likewise, this distinct framing is visible in the national contexts of Canada, Norway, and Australia, and within many of the UN institutions. But to assume such a close link between peace and women risks essentialising women as ‘natural’ peacebuilders and peaceful agents, which reinforces traditional gender norms and de-politicises local peacebuilding efforts. Moreover, such constructions reflect the prevalence of the ‘women-peace hypothesis,’ which represents an idealised version of femininity whereby the inclusion of women is assumed to generate positive outcomes. Though the adoption of a distinctively feminist foreign policy is an exercise in re-politicisation, the tendency to assume that the inclusion of women in peace processes alone ensures security risks reducing the WPS-agenda to a de-politicised act of adding women to policy initiatives rather than questioning and contesting the gendered political power logics underpinning them.\textsuperscript{65}

However, recently published foreign policy documents indicate that the current Swedish government is incrementally developing a greater awareness of the intersectional dynamics which underpin the gender-security nexus. There is also a growing recognition of gendered power structures in general, as well as an articulated ambition to combat ‘destructive masculine norms’ to encourage a more positive engagement and role-taking of men in the quest for gender equality.\textsuperscript{66} This is for instance illustrated by the launching of the ‘#HeForShe’ campaign, which is pursued in tandem with UN Women.\textsuperscript{67}

Re-politicising gender just protection

Protecting the members of a political community from insecurity, expressed in such things as poverty, violence, displacement and social deprivation sits at the centre of most modern states, and Sweden is no different in this regard.\textsuperscript{68} As mentioned, Swedish self-narrative rests on a sense of co-constitutive obligation to the welfare of one’s own citizens and those of other nations, expressed in comparably high levels of budget commitment to both domestic welfare and care sectors and overseas development assistance beyond borders.\textsuperscript{69} This ethical ambition is highly political and the global dedication to the eradication of such violence is echoed in the central ambitions of Swedish feminist foreign policy. This includes unmasking the damaging effects of patriarchy and militarised masculinity on women’s security and bodily integrity.\textsuperscript{70} Here Foreign Minister Wallström notes that ‘(w)omen across the world are being overlooked when it comes to resources, representation, and rights ... (a)nd this is the simple reason we are pursuing a feminist foreign policy with


\textsuperscript{66} See for instance, The Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Swedish foreign action plan for feminist foreign policy 2015-2018 including focus area for 2017;

\textsuperscript{67} “HeForShe-campaign” available at www.un.women.se

\textsuperscript{68} Catarina Kinnvall, “Feeling ontologically (in)secure: States, traumas and the governing of gendered space”, Cooperation and Conflict, 52, no. 1. (2017)


\textsuperscript{70} Ibid.
full force across the world.’ Hence, protecting the rights and security of women worldwide is in line with the country’s overarching commitment to the WPS-agenda. Sweden’s national action plan on feminist foreign policy for the period 2015-2018 is also a testament to this claim. The national action plan commits Sweden firmly to the protection of women migrants and refugees as well as the victims of sexual violence in conflict.

The move towards the politicisation of protection, as part of feminist foreign policy, is intimately linked to Margot Wallström’s personal dedication to gender justice across borders. Under her leadership Sweden has adopted a political activist stance on the promotion of women’s human rights and the eradication of sexual violence in conflict, having herself served as the first UN special representative on sexual violence in conflict. This in turn appears to have provided legitimacy to Sweden’s efforts to promote and re-politicise gender just protection and security globally.

The heightened politicisation of gender-just protection by Sweden and other states, we argue, is an effort to re-politicise the gender-security nexus beyond borders. By maintaining a high profile within UN agencies, most recently within the Security Council as a non-permanent member, Sweden has sought to promote its feminist message of protecting women and girls (in particular) from the harmful effects of gender-based violence as a weapon of war and/or as an expression of power in intimate relations. Recently, the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs has sought to locate such commitments within the global combat of extremism by reaffirming its support for the combat of ‘the gender-related and sexual violence of terrorist groups by pushing these issues in international antiterrorism forums and by supporting actors, including civil society organisations, that are working to address violent extremism, radicalisation, recruitment and destructive masculinities.’

In so doing the Ministry for Foreign Affairs shows few qualms about raising and mobilising political activities to resolve women’s hardship and exposure to sexual violence. At the same time, Sweden’s commitment to women exposed to sexual violence is also firmly located within militarism. This is likely to attract public contestation and antagonism and, in the final analysis, might contribute to a global politicisation of protection beyond borders.

Another part of the WPS-framework where Sweden has been politically active is in the quest to add more women to its national armed forces and to international operations, based on assumptions that their presence and dialogical abilities are key to the offering of protection of women in conflict zones and areas struck by poverty. Though still engaged in the politicisation of global gender protection, Sweden has recently shown signs of prioritising the protection and security of its own borders. This is a government-led response to perceived notions of insecurity affecting the

73 Ibid.
75 Bergman Rosamond and Kronsell “Cosmopolitan Militaries”.
nation as a result of military movements in neighbouring regions. Such discourses constitute Russia as the main cause of instability in the Baltic Sea region and, as such, a threat to Sweden’s immediate and long term peace and security. This in turn has served to legitimise Sweden’s militarisation of national borders, at the expense of gender-just protection beyond borders. What is more, security practices of the Cold War have been reinvoked with a leaflet titled *If Crisis or War comes* being sent out to all households in Sweden, advising them on how to prepare for war and disaster and what safety equipment to purchase and what foods to stockpile in case of conflict and war. As such, the securitisation of the nation and its population challenges Sweden’s sense of cosmopolitan responsibility to distant others, in particular women and children. Critics argue that the current employment of these political discourses, and the turn towards militarism in neighbouring regions are inconsistent with the political and gender-just contents of feminist foreign policy. Most importantly, it tells us that the politics of protection, a key component of feminist foreign policy is situated within fluctuating processes of de-politicization and re-politicisation.

**Conclusion**

Sweden’s radical shift towards adopting an explicitly feminist foreign policy is both unprecedented and path-breaking. At the same time, this shift is firmly located within Sweden’s support for UNSCR 1325 as well as its longstanding commitment to global governance of gender mainstreaming. The move towards a feminist foreign policy builds on Sweden’s self-identity as ‘good’ internationalist state, which is committed to gender equality at home and abroad. This tradition, we argue, also provides the impetus to re-politicise the gender-security nexus as a framework for feminist foreign policy. Hence, in this article we have analysed how political discourses and practices pertaining to the gender-security nexus are employed in the conduct of Swedish feminist foreign policy. More specifically, we have unpacked how the fluctuations between de-politicisation and re-politicisation in the security field are played out in the Swedish case. By way of conclusion, three final remarks can be made. First, feminist foreign policy draws on several (and at times competing) forms of political rationality. On the one hand, the UNSEC 1325 has successfully politicised and pushed the WPS-framework to the top of the global policy agenda. Yet, global gender mainstreaming, which is distinguished by de-politicised frameworks and technocratic practices, has been widely adopted by international institutions with surprisingly little political contestation and resistance, though the costs of the massive gap between political rhetoric and practical implementation has encountered some criticism. The employment of a distinctively feminist framing of Sweden’s foreign policy indicates an attempt and readiness to re-politicise the gender-security nexus by building on historical practices as well as adding a new stronger emphasis to the links between gender equality and political and transformative global security change.

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76 Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency “If Crisis or War Comes” Stockholm: Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, 2018.
Second, while the fluctuations between de-politicisation and re-politicisation of security may seem productive in terms of policy outcome, they can create contradictions and ambiguities in regards to policy-making and practice. One such outcome is the tendency to conflate gender and women across a number of de-politicised policy initiatives launched by the Swedish government. This is particularly evident in the context of women’s participation in peace processes and within the area of gender just protection, both of which are central pillars of Sweden’s feminist foreign policy.

Third, we conclude that the re-politicisation of the gender-security nexus will most likely increase in the coming decades because of changing power configurations in the global world order. The WPS-agenda and global gender mainstreaming, more broadly, are in many ways central to the normative components of the contemporary liberal world order – an order that is increasingly challenged by militarism, extremism and natural disasters. Our position here is that such development may increase antagonism in global politics with far-reaching bearing on the global framing of the gender-security nexus and the quest for the materialisation of feminist foreign policy worldwide.

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