



LUND
UNIVERSITY

**FACULTY
OF SOCIAL
SCIENCES**

What Happened to the Feminist Policy?

A Feminist Foreign Policy Analysis of Sweden's Former Feminist Foreign Policy

By: Axel Selin

Abstract

Sweden's adoption of a feminist foreign policy in 2014 was the first of its kind, marking a significant shift in how it would conduct its foreign policy. Since then, the effect feminist foreign policies have on feminist discourse has been a growing field of study. This thesis adds to this by examining the relationship between actors, foreign policy, and feminist discourse. By combining feminist international relations theory, foreign policy analysis, and critical discourse analysis, the thesis analyses the annual declarations of three Swedish foreign ministers - Margot Wallström, Ann Linde, and Tobias Billström. Together with the theoretical framework, central themes of agency-structure and change-continuity are used to uncover the shifts in feminist discourse over time. The thesis concludes that through a complex interaction of agency and structure, Margot Wallström and Ann Linde broadened what feminist discourse entailed, whilst Tobias Billström contested it.

Keywords: feminist foreign policy, gender, discourse analysis, international relations

Word Count: 15,459

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 1. Introduction..... | 6 |
| 1.1 Research aims and question..... | 7 |
| 2. Previous Research..... | 8 |
| 2.1 Agency and Structure within Foreign Policy Change..... | 9 |
| 2.2 Feminist Foreign Policy Research..... | 10 |
| 3. Theoretical Framework..... | 12 |
| 3.1 Constructing a Theoretical Framework..... | 12 |
| 3.1.1 Engendering FPA..... | 13 |
| 3.1.2 Other FFPA Frameworks..... | 14 |
| 3.1.3 Change and Continuity..... | 15 |
| 3.1.4 Agency-structure..... | 16 |
| 3.1.5 Leadership..... | 17 |
| 3.1.6 Policy Entrepreneurship..... | 17 |
| 3.1.7 Foreign Policy Outcome and Practice..... | 18 |
| 3.2 Feminist Discourse..... | 19 |
| 3.2.1 Feminist international relations..... | 19 |
| 3.2.2 Gender and Power..... | 20 |
| 3.3 Moving Forward..... | 21 |
| 4. Research Design and Methodology..... | 21 |
| 4.1 Qualitative Research Design..... | 22 |
| 4.2 Critical Discourse Analysis..... | 22 |
| 4.3 Analysing gender norms in Sweden’s FFP: A combination of CDA and FFPA..... | 24 |
| 4.4 Case Study: Sweden’s FFP..... | 24 |
| 4.5 Data Selection and Collection..... | 25 |
| 4.6 Discussion on Limitations, Reflexivity and Benefits..... | 26 |
| 5. Analysis..... | 27 |
| 5.1 The Importance of Foreign Policy Declarations..... | 27 |
| 5.2 The Role of Margot Wallström (2014-2019)..... | 27 |
| 5.2.1 Establishing a feminist foreign policy, 2015-2016..... | 28 |
| 5.2.2 Consolidating the FFP, 2017-2019..... | 31 |
| 5.2.3 Concluding Wallströms Tenure..... | 34 |
| 5.3 The Role of Ann Linde..... | 35 |
| 5.3.1 A FFP Met with International Challenges, 2020-2022..... | 35 |
| 5.3.2 Concluding Linde’s Tenure..... | 38 |
| 5.4 The Role of Tobias Billström..... | 38 |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 5.4.1 The Removal of Sweden’s Feminist Foreign Policy, 2022-2024..... | 39 |
| 5.4.2 Conclusion..... | 42 |
| 6. Discussion..... | 42 |
| 6.1 The effect each minister had on the evolution of feminist discourse..... | 42 |
| 6.2 Changes in foreign policy outcomes and Sweden’s self-perception..... | 44 |
| 6.3 Agency- structure dynamics..... | 45 |
| 6.4 Key Policymakers and Feminist Foreign Policy Analysis..... | 46 |
| 7. Conclusion..... | 46 |
| 8. Bibliography..... | 48 |

1. Introduction

With the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1325 (now SCR 1325) in 2000, the United Nations set the stage for seeing peace and security issues through a gendered lens. Backed by UN member states, women civil society organisations, and countless other activists and organisations, it was the first Security Council resolution to acknowledge the relationship between women and conflict/ peace (DPPA 2024). Since then, the international community has seen significant positive impacts in these areas by putting them on global and domestic agendas. The resolution has heightened equal participation in peace processes, introduced national action plans for implementing SCR 1325, and increased the involvement of women in the judiciary and politics (UN News 2023; UN Women 2022). Following this landmark resolution, 14 years later, Sweden would introduce the first-ever foreign policy focused on a gendered perspective. Sweden's Feminist Foreign Policy (now FFP) would build on SCR 1325 and other related policies to further challenge traditional power structures. Until 2014, the WPS agenda was increasingly recognised and mainstreamed, but Sweden's FFP was a strategic advancement by integrating gender equality as a core principle of its foreign policy. Having a *feminist* foreign policy meant expanding from the confines of gendering development or humanitarian aid, which were hitherto the traditional ways of integrating the WPS agenda (Aggestam and Rosamond 2018). At the time of writing, the effect of Sweden's FFP was documented as successful by national and international scholars, and it has also influenced the adoption and development of feminist foreign policies in 16 countries (EBA 2023; UN Women ND).

The importance of foreign policy in setting discourse and narratives is also essential. Aside from showcasing a country's priorities and position in the international arena, foreign policy also challenges traditional structures and global perceptions and sets discourse (Mccartney 2019; Zhang 2012; Horton 2021). As such, FFP plays a large part in challenging and redefining traditional narratives on gender, which Sweden did by mainstreaming women's perspectives throughout the foreign policy machinery. As several countries have now adopted an FFP, it becomes essential to understand how feminist discourse shapes and changes foreign policy.

Whilst the implementation of feminist foreign policies is progressively increasing, Sweden was also the first to remove its feminist foreign policy in October 2022 (HRW 2022). The removal was mainly due to a government change, where political leadership transferred from a left to a right-winged coalition. Whilst research shows that foreign policy change and evolution are anything but sticky, the evolution from a feminist frontrunner to dismantling the policy orientation is of interest. By understanding the evolution of the feminist discourse in Sweden's FFP, this research will yield insights into what Feminist foreign policies look like in practice. The effect of agency, structure, change and continuity, are all central to the analysis. Research focusing on feminist foreign policy change is also crucial to analyse said policies' impact and sustainability and acknowledge their positive effects.

1.1 Research Aims and Questions

The aim of this thesis is to explore the impact feminist foreign policies have on feminist discourse. By integrating feminist foreign policy analysis and an actor-centric perspective, it also yields insights into the effect political elites have on setting international discourse and norms. As many countries follow suit, this is also a novel research field. I hope this research illuminates this new trend and aids in explaining its underlying mechanisms. Moreover, by combining foreign policy analysis and feminist international relations theory, new insights can be made into what affects foreign policy change. To enable this analysis, critical discourse analysis is used in combination with a feminist foreign policy analysis-inspired theoretical framework. The analysis will be conducted on Sweden's foreign policy declarations and focus on how Sweden's foreign ministers, Margot Wallström, Ann Linde, and Tobias Billströms, affect feminist discourse. The research question for the thesis is: How have key policymakers influenced the evolution of feminist discourse in Sweden's foreign policy declarations from 2014 to 2024?

2. Previous Research

Previous research in foreign policy analysis (FPA) is a useful starting point to establish central themes for this research. In Gustavsson's doctoral dissertation, he outlines the historical timeline and theoretical history of FPA and applies it to the domestic Swedish decision to join the European Community. His use of FPA focuses on domestic factors that influence international outcomes (ibid.). Moreover, Gustavsson establishes the roots of FPA. Snyder, Bruck, and Sapin's work in 1954 began establishing an understanding of change in International Relations (IR) as also agency-driven (in Gustavsson 1998: 16). This added nuance to the previous view as international factors were only important insofar as domestic actors acted on them. For instance, it illuminates how the WPS agenda is only important insofar as Margot Wallström (former foreign minister) acted on it to cement Sweden's Feminist Foreign Policy. It explains how change is state-centric and very much influenced by agency. This understanding of FPA is also quite established, as several authors demarcate FPA from IR by introducing an agency-structure debate (ibid.; Hudson 2005; Carlsnaes 1992; Friedman and Starr 1997). Not every author places such weight on agency in influencing structure and change. Hudson, however, emphasises the importance of taking both into account, and not strictly relying on agency or structure in explaining foreign policy change (Hudson 2005: 1-5). However, since Feminist foreign policy analysis does (as explained below), it is also the focus of this thesis' earlier work.

Gustavsson also elaborates on previous FPA research and places them into three categories: checklist, structural constraints, and cyclical models (Gustavsson 1998: 21). Checklist FPA works by analysing background factors, then they outline cognitive and decision-making factors, and how these three factors affect foreign policy change (idem: 19). Structural constraint FPA looks at structure, and how it puts pressure on change (idem: 19-20). Lastly, cyclical FPA looks at recurrent patterns and how they influence change (idem: 20). Gustavsson's own framework looks at international and domestic structural influences, cognitive factors, and the decision-making process (idem: 22-25). Of interest for this theoretical framework, again being guided by Feminist Foreign Policy Analysis, is the acceptance of structure but focus on agency. As such, the checklist, cyclical, and Gustavsson's own framework give a logic of change that informs the thesis to look at structural international and domestic factors, the cognitive

individual, and the actual foreign policy change. As such, Gustavsson's framework largely included structural conditions, political decision-making, and the presence of a crisis as explanatory factors of change (idem: 22-25).

2.1 Agency and Structure within Foreign Policy Change

One central theme ascertained from FPA is the agency-structure debate, which Gustavsson explained as solely influencing the individual decision-maker (1998: 25). But who and what is agency and structure? And how exactly do they influence one another? Carlsnaes sketches a more dynamic interplay between agency and structure, which is not so different from Gustavsson's (1993: 254). In Carlsnaes, there are three dimensions which lead to foreign policy change; the intentional, dispositional, and structural dimension. The intentional dimension is the choice and preference of political decision-makers, whilst disposition is the perceptions and values of an individual. In some sense, this can be broader than Gustavsson's "cognitive individual" (ibid.). Finally, the structural dimensions are institutions and "objective" conditions. Whilst different, it is commonly agreed that both *agency* and *structure* are symbiotic. Whilst other scholars have different typologies for foreign policy change, Gustavsson's and Carlsnaes' are useful to show a general picture of how it works. Overall, Carlsnaes' framework is metatheoretical in that it lacks the specificity of Gustavssons. However, it showcases that a holistic analysis of foreign policy change needs to look at these three dimensions, as structure influences cognition, and cognition influences individual action.

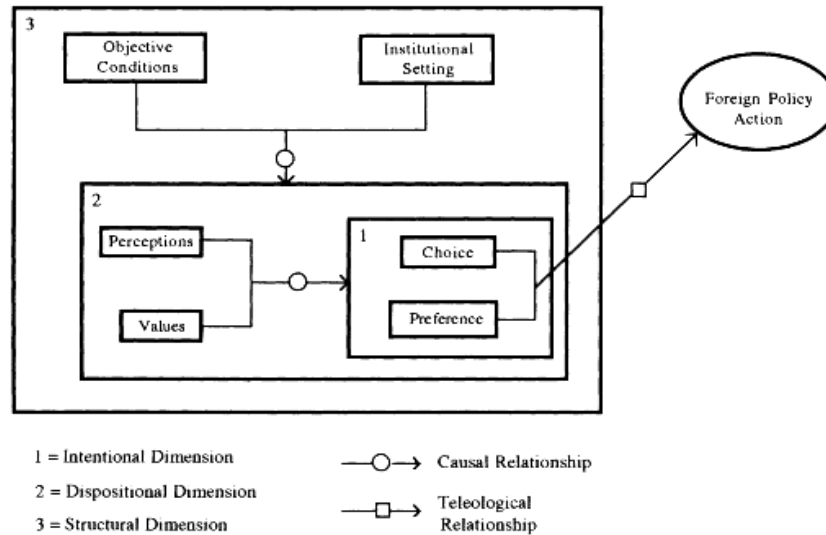


Figure 1: Carlsnaes agency-structure relationship (1992: 254).

2.2 Feminist Foreign Policy Research

Karin Aggestam, with several co-authors, has published several papers discussing feminist Foreign Policy, both Sweden's FFP, and creating theoretical frameworks to study FFP (Aggestam and Rosamond 2019, Aggestam and Kronsell 2018, Aggestam and Rosamond 2016). Firstly, Aggestam and Rosamond discuss the normative and ethical concerns of FFP, which lay the groundwork for researching this topic (2016). This includes viewing Sweden's FFP as challenging and renegotiating power hierarchies and gendered institutions through a gendered lens (idem: 323). Thus, the FFP, through norm-creation, challenges the status quo of entrenched patriarchal institutions. As the authors also write, the FFP's guiding principles, the three R's (the guiding principles for Sweden's FFP), Representation, Rights, and Reallocation, are a way to navigate these power hierarchies and gendered institutions (idem: 324).

Moreover, Aggestam begins discussing the concepts of cosmopolitanism, empathetic cooperation, and ethics of care as core ideologies which reinforce Sweden's FFP (idem: 326). This is further developed by Rosamond's research, which discusses gender cosmopolitanism (2020). Rosamond argues that the FFP is entrenched in a world-view which values everyone's equal rights, regardless of location (idem: 2). The FFP is then spread through state feminism,

which, although contested by market feminism (which can be seen as a competing gendered institution), allows for small states to promote or reinforce new ideas within international society (Tryggestad 2014: 464 in Rosamond 2020: 4). As such, Sweden asserted certain norms upon the international community, which were grounded in the belief that these norms should apply to everyone. Rosamond also elaborates that the gender cosmopolitan framework works to “get closer to non-Western experiences” that the Swedish FFP seeks to empower (idem: 5). Moreover, the MFA has moved towards acknowledging intersectional approaches and that gender cosmopolitanism is not universal - but that this may differ in practice (idem: 9).

The idea of moral righteousness in assuming your norms should be universally applied, which can be seen as central to Sweden’s FFP, is critiqued by Robinson as a form of domination (2019). Robinson argues that ideas of gender cosmopolitanism or ethics of care, which are based on universal human rights or justice, should not have fixed principles as they simply cement Western liberal notions of it (idem: 14). Furthermore, the author critiques espousing an FFP with fixed principles, as it “[constitutes] ... a patriarchal binary which associates masculinity with universality and objectivity, silencing alternatives or dismissing them as immature” (ibid.). The fear is that other forms of feminist Foreign policy may be subverted for the Swedish version, creating norms in other countries which undermine local forms of knowledge. This critique of gender cosmopolitanism is, of course, not as relevant with the removal of the label (unless found in the political discourse). However, it becomes relevant when seeing how current development policy navigates power hierarchies.

Aggestam and Rosamond also discuss the gender and security nexus, which they argue is central to the feminist foreign policy (2018: 44). Here, gender equality is seen as “central to national and international security” (idem: 30). Moreover, they write how politicisation is seen both pushing and maintaining the feminist foreign policy, as it is in this way that Sweden’s FFP is discursively constructed (idem: 31). It is by politicising and re-politicising certain elements through Sweden’s FFP that the policy asserts itself, and also shows what values Sweden wants to assert. Moreover, it shows what feminist discourse Sweden wants to focus on, potentially illuminating discourse that until then was unlinked to feminist discourse and foreign policy. The authors find that Swedish FFP draws on several ideologies which at times compete with each other, which can, for

instance, be evidenced by Sweden's arms trade (idem: 44). As will be discussed later, the relationship between advocating for feminist “values” but selling arms is a prime example of the *change and continuity* that exists within foreign policy. Moreover, Aggestam and Rosamond find that gender mainstreaming is largely de-politicised, leading to implementation gaps due to a lack of steering. This is especially relevant as gender mainstreaming is an important aspect of feminist discourse. As this research showcases, it is lacking, and so may certain aspects of feminist discourse.

When viewing the gender-security nexus through the lens of feminist IR, it allows one to examine how security is constructed as a patriarchal institution, which is being discursively re-negotiated by Sweden’s FFP - again an example of the cycle of politicising and re-politicising. However, the author's findings that many security aspects are de-politicised show how re-negotiating it may be challenging. This could lead to certain discourses not “sticking”, as traditional power structures may have already normalised what the FFP may want to change. As such, the gender-security nexus can be used in this research to show *how* the FFP was removed.

3. Theoretical Framework

This theoretical framework seeks to develop a *theory of change* (Gustavsson 1998) in order to analyse the evolution of feminist discourse in foreign policy declarations. Whilst parsimonious, the framework will enable an analysis of foreign policy change through discourse analysis whilst adding the theoretical contributions from feminist scholarship to sensitise the “lens”. As the thesis seeks to understand feminist discourse and foreign policy change, the culmination of this in academia is referred to as feminist foreign policy analysis. This field of research has several noteworthy scholars, but this framework will focus on Aggestam and True’s academic contributions in creating an FFP analysis framework (2020). This chapter will begin by explaining feminist foreign policy analysis and then shift to conceptualising the relevant concepts. Later, feminist IR is introduced, as well as conceptualisations of *gender* and *power*.

3.1 Constructing a Theoretical Framework

Theory is pivotal in knowledge production as it affects the conceptual framework, method, research question, and subsequent findings (Collins and Stockton 2018: 8; Maxwell 2012). This framework will help us understand foreign policy change (evolution) and use feminist international relations theory to conceptualise and understand the discourse on feminist principles. As foreign policy change and feminist IR theory are two very broad fields, the framework will narrow them down by focusing on feminist foreign policy analysis (FFPA). This involves combining the structural and agential discussions from FPA (Gustavsson 1998; Carlsnaes 1993) with the focus on patriarchy and gender from feminist IR (Aggestam et al. 2018). This framework will thus be suited to analyse changes in foreign policy, focusing on feminist discourse.

Aggestam and True offer a comparative framework to analyse the change and continuity of pro-gender norms in foreign policy (2020). By combining feminist international relations and foreign policy analysis, they gender and otherwise gender-blind field advancing a novel framework for gendered foreign policy change. Their academic contribution will be used as a springboard for this research due to their detailed work bridging the two fields. By combining the two fields, they suggest the following concepts to focus on in gendered policy analyses: *power*, *gender*, *leadership*, *practice*, *norm diffusion*, and *foreign policy outcome*. Together, these concepts also form the overarching discussion on change-continuity and agency-structure.

3.1.1 Engendering FPA

International feminist theory and foreign policy analysis “rarely engage with one another” (Aggestam and True 2020:143). Aggestam and True’s Framework on Feminist Foreign Policy Analysis (FFPA) seeks to understand the change and continuity in pro-gender norms, and they gender the agency-structure debate to do that. This involves accepting the “structural and hierarchical principles of patriarchy” (idem: 145) that can be seen to influence all levels of FP change. Moreover, they argue that combining feminist IR theory with FPA can lead to a better understanding of *change and continuity* (ibid.). However, there are dissimilarities between the two fields in that FPA is more mid-level oriented, looking more at decision-making, whilst

feminist IR looks at multiple actors using several interdisciplinary theories on gender, power and patriarchy (idem: 150). Yet, since they are at different “levels”, combining the fields complements theoretical development. Inserting feminist theory complicates mainstream foreign policy change theory and makes it intersectional, acknowledging the impact gender and traditional structures have on *change and continuity*. Moreover, this framework, alongside other FFPA frameworks, benefits from including a feminist analysis in analysing feminist foreign policies, seeing how many of the policies seek to make visible what this theoretical fusion aspires to as well.

Regardless, Aggestam and True’s framework will serve as this thesis’ theoretical springboard, especially in their advancement of how to use FFPA. This includes looking at women’s foreign policy leadership, which, in the case of Sweden, feminist foreign policy is highly relevant. This is due to Margot Wallström (former foreign minister) being seen as the main pioneer of the policy (ibid.; Swedin 2019). Moreover, it includes looking at the *change* and *continuity* of pro-gender foreign policy norms, which the feminist policy itself has undergone (Aggestam and True 2020: 150). Whilst this form of analysis would be better suited for research looking into what type of feminism the foreign policy espoused, this research can formulate it as the set of feminist policies (feminist discourse) that were implemented.

3.1.2 Other FFPA Frameworks

FFPA has also been used to analyse the change and continuity of pro-gender foreign policy norms. This includes Thomson’s research, which analysed Sweden and Canada’s feminist foreign policies, specifically looking at what feminism means for both countries (2020: 12). For Sweden, Thomson writes that the feminist foreign policy was a continuation of domestic and international commitments, signalling a *continuity* of fighting against gender inequality. In contrast, Canada’s feminist foreign policy took poverty as a central problem, in which feminist policies can aid in solving it (ibid.). This indicates that whilst a foreign policy can be “feminist”, the implementation of it differs by context. As will be discussed further below, it also informs us to which degree feminist discourse and *feminist transformative principles* are implemented. Thomson also highlights that the type of feminism in feminist foreign policy is still being set. Parisi uses FFPA to analyse the change and continuity in pro-gender norms in Canada’s feminist

foreign policy (2020). Using feminist critical policy analysis, they show how Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy is a continuation of neoliberal feminism, in which the overall goal of poverty reduction through economic growth runs the risk of reinforcing an essentialist view of gender - which "exacerbate[s] inequality" (idem: 15). Through her case study, Parisi links a feminist foreign policy framework to primarily an IR-centred analysis, drawing structural and ideological conclusions from her discourse analysis.

Applications of FFPA have predominantly been IR-centred or comparative, meaning they focus on global politics and the differences between countries. This thesis framework is similar but differs in its focus on feminist discourse and case-study approach. Focusing solely on Sweden's FFP allows for a deeper analysis of one phenomenon, showcasing the relationship between FFPA evolution and feminist discourse. However, this does not mean that this framework can only be applied to Sweden's foreign policy declarations; instead, it can be applied to a wide range of foreign policy documents in different contexts. As such, the practical application of FFPA is to view foreign policy through a gendered lens, which this framework reflects. The framework, FFPA, does this by conceptualising mainstream FPA concepts with notions of *gender* and *power*. This allows for a feminist re-reading of the effects *leadership*, *policy entrepreneurship*, and *foreign policy outcomes* have on foreign policy change. Whilst this is useful for this thesis' case study, the outcomes of FFPA analysis may hopefully aid in understanding the complicated reality of foreign policy.

3.1.3 Change and Continuity

Change and continuity intersect with each of FFPA concepts and are integral to understanding gender norms in foreign policy change (idem: 159). Therefore, it is useful to begin by conceptualising it.

As was mentioned by Gustavsson, one strand of foreign policy analysis looked at cyclical factors, which are the recurrent patterns that facilitate (or keep) change (Gustavsson 1998: 20). These factors can, for instance, be economic cycles, political leadership changes and international power dynamic shifts. While these factors are important to analyse foreign policy change effectively, their relationship with change and continuity is not static. For instance, whilst

political leadership can change, the policies from previous leaders may remain continuous. Landsberg's research on post-apartheid South Africa sought to understand this dynamic and to see whether post-apartheid brought "about real change or whether continuities in foreign policy stubbornly persisted" (2013:62). Their analysis shows how continuity and change are very difficult to expect, and that promised change led to continuity, whilst change occurred when continuity was expected (idem: 70). Firstly, this indicates that change and continuity are very difficult to prophesize. Secondly, it indicates that unplanned change can happen momentarily, whilst planned change can fade out into continuity. To complicate the relationship more, one can envision change and continuity not as binary oppositions but as processes that can happen simultaneously. Subotic's research on state "autobiographies" and policy change showcases how a state's narrative can remain continuous whilst still making foreign policy changes (Subotic 2015: 1). Whilst complicating the relationship between change and continuity, it is important to see them as dynamic forces. This research adds depth to understanding gender norms, as certain norms may change whilst others remain stable. However, a dynamic theory of change and continuity also aids in the broader perspective. For example, it can be used to understand Sweden's *continuous* discourse on cosmopolitanism, equal rights, and liberal feminism being drawn upon to exact *change*.

3.1.4 Agency-structure

FFPA is heavily inspired by FPA, and an agency-structure debate has unfolded for decades. Of interest for this research is the priority given to agency among several FPA scholars (Hudson 2005, Carlsnaes 1993; Friedman and Starr 1997). *Agency* is defined as the ability of actors to enact change within the constraints of structures. Specifically, it is the agency of the foreign policy elite to affect change rather than change solely being explained by systemic forces or institutions. Therefore, many scholars prioritise agency as a variable, for instance, through cognitive and decision-making factors (Gustavsson 1998: 19-21; Carlsnaes 1993). This can include personal beliefs, perceptions, and other biases which influence political decisions (Hudson 2005). However, other foreign policy scholars, often realists, highlight that due to the anarchic nature of the international system, individual preferences are nullified in the face of a state's survival (Waltz 2010; Mearsheimer 2001). This view of agency accredits explanatory power to structure, which ultimately influences foreign policy. *Structure*, in a non-realist

definition, is defined as a social phenomenon which distributes knowledge and is influenced by social, cultural, and historical factors (Wendt 1999: 20). As previous research highlights the importance of agency in Sweden's FFP, this research will give explanatory power to the foreign policy elite in affecting foreign policy change.

However, the extent to which agency explains change vis-a-vis structure is difficult to state. Gustavsson and Carlsnaes, whilst both accredit change to agency, do not give the same explanatory power to agency (1998; 1993). For Gustavsson, the "cognitive individual" is the agency variable, whilst, for Carlsnaes, both the "intentional" and "dispositional" dimensions are agency-related (1998: 25, 1993). For scholars like Waltz, structure becomes the primary variable (2010). To narrow it for the purposes of this framework, the guiding hand of FFPA and discourse analysis will, as mentioned, focus on agency as the determining factor in foreign policy change. Alexander Wendt's famous title, "Anarchy is what states make of it", is thus the ethos and is well suited to this paper's constructivist approach, as will be discussed in the methodology section (1992).

3.1.5 Leadership

Another central concept is *leadership*, which is not common in FPA research but is central to FFPA (Aggestam and True 2020). Definitions of leadership are numerous, but the basic understanding is that it is an agent of change who can structure or restructure a situation (Bass and Stogdill 1990: 19-20 in Preston 2010: 2). The impact a leader can have is determined by their environment (structural constraints), the position of the leader (for instance government officials vis-a-vis non-government officials), and the personal qualities the leader possesses (personality, style, etc.) (Preston 2010: 2). Leadership is an important conceptualisation, as previous research indicates the importance of Margot Wallström in creating and maintaining Sweden's feminist foreign policy. Moreover, the leadership change from Wallström to Ann Linde and Tobias Billström can show the effect of leadership on policy. Leadership is also situated in the agency-structure debate, where agency is prioritised. As this framework also builds on FFPA, the analysis of leadership needs to recognise how men and women use their gender differently (ibid.). The use of gender includes seeing how women and men "perform and behave in gendered ways, deploying gender images, language, tropes, and actions and how gendered

structures pertaining to institutions and states influence and shape foreign policy processes and decisions” (Aggestam and True 2020: 152). Smith argues that including a gendered analysis of decision-makers is key in FPA, as without it, we would not understand how foreign policy decisions are made (2020). This is further evidenced by research showing leaders use masculine traits regardless of gender (Genovese 1993). Feminist literature on the use of gender is linked to the concept of gender performativity, which is an enactment of one’s gender. This enactment is also a reproduction of gender binaries and is thus linked to power and the negotiation of gender (Butler 2009: i). As such, gender, power, and leadership are all interlinked concepts and will be viewed in such a way. It would be difficult to isolate one from another.

3.1.6 Policy Entrepreneurship

Another concept which can be introduced into this interlinkage is *policy entrepreneurship*, which can help explain and build this theory of change. Remembering the importance of leadership, a policy entrepreneur can be viewed as a state agent who creates and challenges norms through their leadership/ behaviour/ policy change (Davies and True 2017). IR theory usually emphasises policy entrepreneurs as non-state actors, but as Aggestam and True emphasise, this actor can also be within a state (2020: 152-153). This is because they can leverage their identity, position, and status as politicians of the people/ state to create and challenge norms (Davies and True 2017). When linked to FFPA, policy entrepreneurship looks at how gender norms and feminist principles are integrated and contested within foreign policies. For instance, it can help the research in analysing what Wallström established and how these norms changed after she left her role as foreign minister. This will also build on *leadership* as whilst that focuses on the agents themselves, *policy entrepreneurship* focuses on the policies enacted by leaders. However, it may be important not to accredit the policy entrepreneur too much influence, as other research highlights how new policies often emerge at the margins (bottom-up) (Towns 2012). Towns argues that the operation of norms is correlated to a state's social hierarchy, thus opening up for bottom-up policy change in states with weaker social hierarchies (2012: 179). However, previous research on Sweden’s feminist foreign policy shows how the country's high social standing results in a cosmopolitan approach to policy (Rosamond 2020). Policy entrepreneurship is also more useful than concepts such as norm diffusion, as established research shows the importance

of political leadership in Sweden's FFP. As such, *policy entrepreneurship* is a building block on top of leadership, which allows for an analysis of a leader and the policies they implement.

3.1.7 Foreign Policy Outcome and Practice

Whilst the previous section focused on policies as agent-driven, policies can also be affected by structure. By theorising the national role conception of the state, that is, how the state views itself, it allows for an analysis of enabling conditions for feminist discourse (Aggestam and True 2020: 153). Research highlights how a country's perception of itself significantly influences its role in the international system - and affects foreign policy outcomes (Holsti 1970). This perception can include seeing "yourself" as a leader, balancer or mediator and can thus explain why certain foreign policy outcomes happen (ibid.). In Sweden's case, it can also manifest in seeing yourself as a leader in a certain area, such as gender. The country's gender cosmopolitanism is of interest here and can further explain the window of opportunity that the country had to promote feminist discourse internationally (Rosamond 2020). This itself can be seen by Sweden being the first country to establish an FFP. An explanatory factor for the extent of feminist discourse is the degree of democracy in a country, which is positively linked with equal gender norms, as it sees an increase in women's political participation and perspectives (Bashevkin 2014 in Aggestam and True 2020: 153). Certain policies may also stick more in certain spheres than others and are of interest. Are, for instance, pro-gender norms in the foreign policy articulated in relation to humanitarian and development aid more than trade? (ibid.). Finally, coalition building and international networks are examples of state practices that can reinforce or give credibility to foreign policy outcomes (ibid.). It also discursively shows the degree of international support for a topic, which for gender has been established through decades of gender mainstreaming. Overall, there are many factors, both structural and agency-related, that can affect gender norms in foreign policy. This research will focus on a state's self-perception, democracy, the "sticking" of policies in certain areas, and international networks.

3.2 Feminist Discourse

So far, the theoretical framework has included FFPA and FPA but has left an important part out: conceptualising feminist discourse. As hinted, the framework will build on feminist international

relations theory to make visible the gendered perspective of international politics that can easily be missed (Enloe 1989: 1).

3.2.1 Feminist international relations

By acknowledging the lack of gendered analyses in international relations, feminist international relations add to mainstream IR theories by advocating for gender as a central IR analysis category (Tickner 2001). Tickner outlines how you can apply a gendered analysis to global issues, policy-making and security paradigms, which makes it diverge from mainstream IR's statist boundaries (idem: 125). As has already been shown in the choice of FFPA and choice of research question (feminist discourse), feminist IR's approach to international relations lends to new questions being asked and, to some extent, seeing states differently (ibid.). It has also influenced the focus on agency-driven explanations, such as the priority of *agency* over *structure* and *leadership*, stemming from feminist IR and its value on actors, communication, and agent knowledge (idem: 126).

3.2.2 Gender and Power

Gender can be defined in several ways. For the purposes of this research and analysis, the use of gender will be linked to power, structures, and identity, and as such, cannot be delimited to sex, legal gender, or self-defined gender (Lindqvist et al. 2021: 333). Instead, gender will be understood as a social construction in which "norm-related behaviours and gender expressions" occur (ibid.). This allows gender to be intersectional, as other concepts like *power* and *leadership* are affected by norm-related behaviours and gender expressions. Gender is also important for this research as it relates to the unit of analysis, feminist discourse. Aggestam and True list three different ways in which gender norms can be studied: 1) *gender representation*, 2) *gender mainstreaming*, and 3) *feminist transformative principles* (2020: 151). *Gender representation* involves descriptive and substantive representation and is an international priority as showcased by the WPS agenda. Moreover, it was a substantive part of Sweden's FFP, as the policy centred around three "R's" (Fearon 2017). These were rights, representation, and resources, which were three foundational pillars of the strategy (ibid.). Some scholars argue it should go beyond simply adding more women to a field, as it is not transformative enough (Enloe 2014). *Gender mainstreaming* is the embeddedness of gender equality norms within international institutions

and, as such, greatly impacts the discourse that affects feminist work (Aggestam and True 2020: 151). Gender mainstreaming can be found in discourse that consolidates or promotes gender equality (as framed by the FFP, WPS and others). In this research, it becomes evident in the longitudinal research. For instance, by analysing what gendered discourses are *continuous* and therefore more embedded. Feminist *transformative principles* involve a critical analysis of foreign policy actions as situated within patriarchal structures and gendered relations (ibid.). This looks at policies which are critical to traditional and male-dominated structures and labels them as transformative. For instance, the WPS agenda is an example of a feminist transformative resolution because it is the first instance of global recognition of women's effect on peace and security.

Akin to gender is *power*, which in feminist scholarship differs in its understanding of power as control (Prugl 2016). Instead, power is seen as the power over something (domination) and the power to do (personal empowerment) (Yoder and Kahn 1992: 382). This conceptualisation allows this research to explore how power operates at different levels and for different goals, whether it may be Margot Wallström's personal power in setting the FFP agenda or the influence of international structures like the WPS agenda in supporting Sweden's FFP. Power is also related to the agency-structure relationship, as power can manifest itself in both aspects. Whilst an actor can have both power to do, and over something, so can institutional structures implement policies but also set certain discursive norms. As such, for this framework, power is not only found in the "strength" a certain leader may have but also in, for instance, Sweden's discursive "strength" to establish certain norms. This intersectional view of power is in contrast to the view of power as the physical characteristics of a state, such as a state's military or economy. Mainstream IR also sees the international community as anarchic and conflict-ridden (Morgenthau 1973: 13-15, which, in contrast to feminist IR, opens up for cooperation and "mutual enablement" in the international system (Tickner 2014).

3.3 Moving Forward

Having equipped this theoretical framework with the metatheoretical debates on agency-structure and change-continuity and having defined central concepts to FFPA like *gender*, *power*, *leadership*, *policy entrepreneurship*, and *foreign policy outcomes*, these will serve in the analysis

as key components. The goal of this framework has been to draft a theory of change that can analyse the evolution of Sweden's feminist foreign policy and build a lens that most appropriately analyses it. This research also uses critical discourse analysis (CDA). Both CDA and this framework utilise poststructuralism and thus share several ontological and epistemological assumptions; which will be elaborated in the next section.

4. Research Design and Methodology

This section will explain the qualitative research design and ontological lens. It will also discuss the data selection, collection, and generation, as well as elaborate on the case study and method of data analysis. It will conclude with discussing limitations, ethical considerations, and reflexivity.

The goal is to equip the research to answer the research question: How have key policymakers influenced the evolution of feminist discourse in Sweden's foreign policy declarations from 2014 to 2024?

4.1 Qualitative Research Design

The theoretical framework above equipped this research with an analytical lens influenced by Feminist Foreign Policy Analysis (FFPA), which is also rooted in social constructionism. Social constructionism sees the world as discursively constructed with no objective truths and knowledge as created through social processes (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002: 5). What this means for the research (and thus research design) is that the "truth" of Sweden's FFP is constructed and given meaning through social processes. It is not simply that it existed in an objective reality but that knowledge construction and social processes gave it meaning. Social constructionism also undergirds the thesis' theory, especially in the conceptualisations of concepts like *gender* and *power*, as it is through the interaction of agents and structures that meaning is created. Finally, by the methods and theory sharing ontological and epistemological grounds, they further complement one another and allow for a sharper analysis.

4.2 Critical Discourse Analysis

One methodological tool used by social constructionist research to generate robust data is critical discourse analysis (CDA). It has many strands, but this research will use Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999). CDA has several features which distinguish it from other social constructionist approaches. Firstly, whatever is non-discursive (social practices, structures) is affected by discursive practices. Discursive practices, which are practices that produce and consume discourse, contribute to the constitution of the social world (idem: 60; Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999: 4). Secondly, the social world also affects discursive practice. This makes discourse and “non-discourse” dialectic in that they influence one another. This central understanding of discourse is important, as it not only helps us to examine the interplay between agency and structure but also gives a deeper understanding of how, for instance, structure affected the key policymakers’ discourse on gender norms. Furthermore, this research will not use other social constructionist approaches due to their focus on either 1) everything as a discourse or 2) psychological approaches (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002: 24, 117). These foci are problematic due to the importance of institutions, such as WPS, or Sweden’s state cosmopolitanism, and would thus remove established explanations for Sweden’s foreign policy change.

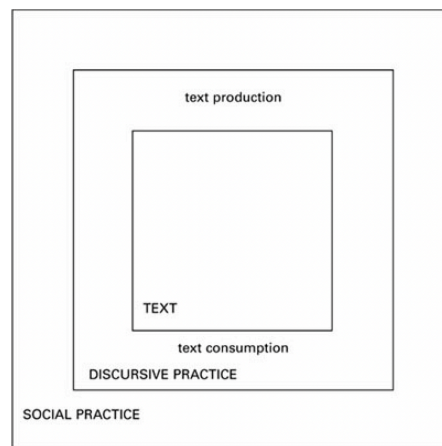


Figure 2: Non-discursive and discursive relationships (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002: 69)

As shown in Figure 1, CDA has three central aspects: 1) text, 2) discursive practice, and 3) social practice (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999: 25-27). Text looks at the formal features of a discourse, the specific language use, grammar, and syntax of a text (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002: 69). Discursive practice is the production and consumption of texts. How do the texts draw on existing discourses, and how do the receivers of texts apply discourses? (ibid.). Finally, social practice looks at whether the discursive practice reproduces or restructures the overarching discourse (ibid.). This overarching discourse is understood in CDA to be the *order of discourse*, which is the sum of all discourses in a specific social domain (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002: 71; Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999: 114). For this research the order of discourse would be Sweden's FFP. Further, to understand what discourses within an order of discourse take precedence, that is, are *hegemonic*, requires understanding CDA's perspective on *ideology*. Ideology is defined as constructions of meaning that produce, reproduce, or transform to affect domination (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002: 69). If an ideology is hegemonic, it means it has considerable power to effect or keep change (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999: 47). If you want to change an order of discourse that is hegemonic, it involves *creative discursive practices*, which are new, trend-breaking, discourses that challenge the hegemonic ones (idem: 73). Moreover, the aspect of social practice also includes a non-discursive dimension. Some non-discursive elements are commonly understood as economic, physical, and structural factors (idem: 70). CDA requires there to be a theory in order to make sense of the non-discursive dimension. For this research, both FFPA and feminist IR make sense of these structures.

4.3 Analysing gender norms in Sweden's FFP: A combination of CDA and FFPA

As this paper uses CDA to apply the theoretical framework, it is a novel approach which will require flexibility and reiteration. Certain concepts like *foreign policy outcomes* will be most pronounced in the textual dimension, whilst others may find themselves to be important in all dimensions. As such, the extent to which this theoretical framework intersects with CDA is through its nuanced understanding of discursive and social practice and its relationship with FFPA. This will be further discussed in the discussion section.

4.4 Case Study: Sweden's FFP

The choice of a case study is that it allows for a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of phenomena (Yin 2009; Stake 1995). As the study of feminist discourse is also entirely contextual, case studies allow for an analysis of how context affects outcomes (Stake 1995). Furthermore, it can allow the research to have a real-world impact, as the findings of this research can be used to assess the effect a feminist foreign policy has on specific norms. This is especially true as many countries are developing their own FFP. However, the generalizability of the findings is hampered due to the context specificity of case studies (Yin 2009), which limits the transferability of the findings. Since the foreign policy declarations are actor-specific and specific to a Swedish context, the feminist discourse will differ from other case studies. However, the findings can be applied to similar cases, such as the other countries employing a feminist foreign policy. The degree of generalisability here does depend on what type of feminist policy it is; as indicated earlier, different countries had their own version of it. Case studies also run the risk of over-simplifying the context and that the theoretical framework does not capture reality (Eisenhardt 1989). This research mitigates that by building a framework based on established research and being specific on what is being analysed (feminist discourse). Moreover, by focusing on the foreign policy declarations, the scope is narrow enough to capture what Sweden wanted and did say about its FFP.

4.5 Data Selection and Collection

The primary source of data will be the government's foreign policy declarations (Utrikesdeklarationerna in Swedish), which are held annually and once per year. This will be what I conduct the critical discourse analysis on. As such, the declarations function to showcase Sweden's foreign policy. These speeches are held by the current government and foreign minister and thus will effectively show Sweden's foreign policy evolution. As it is a central declaration for the government, it is also a useful source to track changes in feminist foreign policy and feminist discourse. The time frame will be the entire duration of the feminist foreign policy, from 2014 to 2022, and the two years following. Due to Margot Wallström's first declaration taking place in 2015, that will be the first declaration (even though the FFP officially started in 2014). The research will also include the latest change (as of writing) of government and Tobias

Billström's (current foreign minister) foreign policy declarations. In total there will be 10 foreign policy declarations analysed. As previous literature indicates Wallström's centrality to the policy, her resignation in 2019 will serve as the "middle-point" of the time frame, and also when a new political leader, Ann Linde, becomes the new foreign minister. Whilst not the focus of the research, the difference in gender norms due to the leadership shift will be an interesting insight. The purpose of this time frame is to allow for an analysis of the foreign policies evolution and to measure the effect, over time, of the FFP on feminist discourse.

Additional data will be important to complement the primary source. This will include interviews and articles related to the FFP, Margot Wallström, Ann Linde, and Tobias Billström. The declarations will be analysed using the theoretical framework and structured according to the year. This is so that the analysis follows the same logic as the research question, and thus chronologically. The additional data will be supplementary and used primarily to support and avoid over-simplification.

The sampling strategy is purposeful, and focuses on a critical case to analyse how feminist discourse shapes and is shaped by foreign policy. It also allows the research to specifically examine the evolution of feminist discourse and how each foreign minister influenced and changed the discourse. Whilst the findings from this case study are context-specific, the theoretical framework and methodology could be adapted to other studies that look at feminist foreign policies. As foreign policy declarations are common among countries, the material could also be similar. As such, a comparative approach for future research is viable. Finally, the foreign policy declarations are all written in Swedish and will be translated by the author. Whilst this may lead to some context being lost in translation, I believe analysing the source material in its original language may yield a deeper analysis.

4.6 Discussion on Limitations, Reflexivity and Benefits

The subjective nature of CDA means that my bias as a researcher will affect the knowledge production. However, in relation to my reflexivity, I see my positionality as a strength in this research. This is due to nature being situational and embodied and not existing in an objective reality (Haraway 2016). What this means is that through my specific contribution as an author,

my perspectives on the research influence the outcomes. However, it is by combining academic and non-academic work, with all different perspectives, that knowledge is produced. Through my knowledge production of this topic, I contribute to the “web of knowledge” existing on Sweden’s FFP and on feminist discourse in general.

A limitation of the data selection method is the reality that many foreign policy changes happen behind “closed doors.” While I can access the publicly available data, it is difficult to obtain sensitive or unrecorded discussions that affected Sweden’s FFP. This will remain a constraining factor. For instance, whatever is stated in the foreign policy declarations is meticulously planned and executed and is presumably a culmination of different perspectives which are hard to track. However, the benefit of publicly available documents is that there are few ethical considerations. As the data is produced on and by political leaders/ public agents, the integrity of subjects is not required for me to maintain. Instead, I am analysing exactly what the ministers decided to focus on, making the statements more attributable to what Sweden’s foreign minister indeed did want to portray.

5. Analysis

The following analysis will look at each foreign minister's incumbency (Margot Wallström 2014-2019, Ann Linde 2019-2022, Tobias Billström 2022-present), and analyse it using CDA and by applying the theoretical framework as a lens. As mentioned, the purpose is to keep the structure chronological, as the research question asks about key policymakers' effects on the *evolution* of feminist discourse. Moreover, by structuring the analysis according to the foreign ministers, the onus is given to agency and political leadership in setting foreign policy discourse. This will also allow for the analysis to track changes in feminist discourse by leadership. As such, the goal is to chronologically assess the change and continuity of feminist discourse by each minister from 2014 to 2024.

5.1 The Importance of Foreign Policy Declarations

The foreign policy declarations, released yearly by the Swedish government, are an opportunity for the government's foreign minister to sketch, establish, and describe the international agenda.

They often list the challenges Sweden faces, argue for strategic and operative priorities, and name important contributions Sweden has made in the past and upcoming years. The material also holds theoretical relevance, as it is a platform to showcase any *foreign policy outcomes*, an opportunity to showcase one's *policy entrepreneurship*, and states one's impact on upholding or making *change*. As it is also a part of a minister's speech, it opens up for CDA, looking at the grammar, syntax, and other textual elements. As the speech is held by the minister in question, it is also inherently actor-centric. It allows for an analysis to see how individuals respond to international crises, such as COVID-19 or the invasion of Ukraine. Although they are speaking for the Swedish government, the preface to any foreign policy declaration is the minister's name, thus attributing the declaration to them.

5.2 The Role of Margot Wallström (2014-2019)

Margot Wallström has a long history in politics. She has served the Swedish government in several roles, such as the Minister for youth, women, and consumer affairs and minister of social affairs (CFFP 2022). She has also worked for the UN, being the first UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict (ibid.). She has also done other work, including as an EU commissioner. Throughout her Swedish political career, she has worked for the Swedish left-wing party, Socialdemokraterna.

During her role as Sweden's foreign minister from 2014 to 2019, she was pivotal in shaping what would become known as Sweden's feminist foreign policy. Her period as foreign minister showcased several key initiatives and a specific discourse of gender cosmopolitanism that underscored Sweden's feminist foreign policy. As previous research indicates, the centrality of policies to one actor can hamper the longevity of policies; as if they leave, no one is left to keep the policy intact. This will be further explored in the discussion section below.

5.2.1 Establishing a feminist foreign policy, 2015-2016

The first foreign policy declaration speech marked a drastic change from previous foreign policies worldwide. Sweden became the first country to establish a feminist foreign policy, with a female minister espousing it. This was important for two reasons: the impact this change had on international structures and a female minister's impact in implementing it; linking to

leadership, gender, and power. Regarding *change* and *continuity*, Wallström repeatedly referenced the impact of Sweden's FFP on the international community during her tenure. This included examples of the effect of the FFP: the placement of gender equality experts in the UN and heightening the gender representation of women in Syria (Utrikesdeklaration 2016: 2). Relevant to kick-starting an FFP is also Wallströms identity as a woman, and her leveraging her position as foreign minister to challenge international gendered structures. Redefining Sweden's foreign policy is itself an example of the effect her leadership had on the policy, but also that linking international peace and development to women's condition effectively restructures gendered relations. As will be analysed below, it is also an example of the *transformative* nature of the FFP. This is as it is transformative to the extent that it is a *feminist* foreign policy, whereas the policies themselves were quite mainstreamed - having been decades since the inception of WPS.

Agency, Structure, and Leadership

Wallström also made it clear, in her foreign declaration from 2015, that her personal qualities would impact the policies. Having worked with women's rights for decades, especially in the capacity as a UN representative on Sexual Violence, she highlighted how important this policy was in the light of the WPS agenda's 15-year anniversary (Utrikesdeklarationen 2015). This ties into utilising her *agency* and *leadership* to set the FFP agenda. Of note is the symbolic importance of referencing an anniversary of the WPS agenda, which she has not only worked with personally but in phrasing together with a feminist foreign policy "now [being] formed" (idem: 7). Wallström also reinforced the importance of mitigating sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), something Sweden "for decades, ...has been setting the tone ... to" (idem: 3). This is also something she worked with herself from 2010-2014 (CFFP 2022). By giving credence to international institutions and structures that she has worked for/ with, Wallström establishes a personal connection for foreign policy change. Moreover, it illustrates how the agency-structure relationship plays out in practice, where, in this situation, the structure enabled the minister to advance the FFP.

Policy Entrepreneurship and Foreign Policy Outcomes

Foreign policy declarations, as mentioned, signal the norms you want to upkeep to the international community, which is also inherently linked to *policy entrepreneurship* and *foreign policy outcomes*. In her speech, Wallström drew on existing pro-gendered discourses to cement her discourse as hegemonic within the larger *order of discourse*. By “[continuing] the work to counter impunity for gender-based violence” (ibid.), she is effectively validating an existing discourse but also tying that with Swedish policy. Whilst it is not new that Sweden is a pro-gender country, linking this with Swedish foreign policy heightens the ambition of the pro-gendered discourse. As theory indicates, this entrepreneurship and outcome stick best if linked to international structures and an agent, something which Wallström is attempting in the first foreign policy declaration. Wallström continues this diffusion of feminist policies in the 2016 foreign policy declaration, where she highlights Sweden’s role in promoting their policies at the EU and UN (2016: 2). Wallström stated that “during 2015, Sweden contributed to the EU appointing a high-level advisor for gender equality, and to the formation of a female mediator network” (ibid.). Sticking the policy to an institution solidifies the *outcome of foreign policy*. Moreover, it discursively reinforces and gives credibility to the Swedish policy. This is done by showcasing that Sweden has already implemented advisors and a network. The change in discourse and what discourses “stuck” are discussed in the discussion section.

Gender Representation, Gender Mainstreaming and Feminist Transformative Principles

Evidently, pro-gender discourse is then present in the first declaration. But as the theory on “gender” informs, there are several levels to what type of feminist discourse is articulated. This can focus on *gender representation*, *gender mainstreaming*, or *feminist transformative principles*. In the first declaration, Wallström touches on all levels, continually referencing how Sweden will ensure women's rights and representation are acted upon and hints toward structural changes (idem: 7). In terms of *mainstreaming*, Wallström showcases this by arguing that “a feminist foreign policy must permeate the entire work of the foreign administration” (ibid.). However, as outlined in the theory, the *transformative principles* stipulate a direct confrontation with patriarchal structures and gendered relations is required. Whilst Wallström does address structural changes, there is no mention of patriarchal structures. One conclusion to draw from this is that it would deviate from the existing discourse at that time on gender equality and

feminism. Whilst the term “patriarchy” was not as popular, it was indeed mentioned in UN-level documents, such as from UN Women (2016). Regardless, Wallström does state the negative effect structures can have on women, which is foundational for recognising patriarchal structures.

Feminist Discourse

Feminist discourse is thus most apparent at the first two levels and leaves the *transformative* level mostly unmentioned. The content being espoused in the first foreign policy declaration relation is thus centred on 1) understanding women's rights as human rights, 2) issues concerning SRHR, 3) women as important actors in conflict resolution, and 4) women as important actors for democracy (Utrikesdeklarationen 2015). In the 2016 declaration, Wallström does broaden the scope of the FFP also to include “a broader view on security” (Utrikesdeklarationen 2016: 1). This includes applying the FFP to issues on terror, climate, migration, pandemics, and human trafficking (ibid.). Being the year after the FFP’s inception, this broadening indicates the encompassing take Wallström wants from the FFP. It also broadens what the feminist discourse can be about, which in and of itself is an example of an *intersectional* approach to gender. Discursively, this restructures what the previous order of discourse on FFP encompassed, moving from a more traditional application of women to foreign policy to also seeing women as a part of global security.

5.2.2 Consolidating the FFP, 2017-2019

Moving on from the inception of the FFP, this part of the analysis will focus on the remainder of Wallström’s foreign policy declarations. Having set the stage for the FFP, the next three years saw Wallström consolidating the FFP and the feminist discourse's global reach through institutionalisation.

Agency, Structure, and Leadership

In contrast to establishing the FFP, Wallström would continually navigate and use her *agency* and *leadership* to respond to international challenges in the next three years. This, in turn, would also mould the flexibility of the FFP, as instead of being tied to women in peace and conflict as it was in 2015, it started encompassing more fields (which already started in 2016). As agency is

restricted by one's position and structures, Wallström seemingly tried to fit the FFP within EU institutions in order for the policy to enact more change. By integrating the feminist policy in other institutions, she is able to make the policy more lasting - removing the possibility of the policy disappearing after her tenure ends. This is showcased by placing the burden of migration policies on the EU and advocating for a "sustainable European asylum system" (Utrikesdeklarationen 2017: 2). Discursively, Wallström would also be much more assertive in the latter years, as compared to the first two. This includes moving beyond using words like "aiding" and "will be" to action-oriented language like "we act" and "with full force" in relation to the effect of the FFP (Utrikesdeklarationen 2016: 2; Utrikesdeklarationen 2015: 5; Utrikesdeklarationen 2019: 4;). This showcases how Wallström, as a leader and agent, chose to navigate the FFP in response to international challenges like the 2015 migration wave in Sweden. It also shows a *change* in how she views the FFP, going from plan to inception discursively, which gives credibility to Sweden's policy. As such, Wallström, in the face of international challenges, sought to integrate the FFP into EU institutions by standing firm on its usefulness.

Policy Entrepreneurship and Foreign Policy Outcomes

Regarding *policy entrepreneurship* and *foreign policy outcomes*, Wallström continued to advocate for the policy outcomes the FFP contributed to and further expanded what FFP encapsulated from 2017-2019. Firstly, Wallström, referencing the global movement "Me Too", restated the relevance and global need for an FFP (Utrikesdeklarationen 2018: 4). With "Full force, worldwide", Wallström reminded the international community of the effects the FFP had in countries like Saudi Arabia, Iran, Rwanda, Syria, Afghanistan, and more (ibid.). This shows how the policy's definitive impact *changed* from the foundational discourse in the 2015-2016 declarations. Moreover, by creating international networks, Wallström is stating the tangible outcomes of the foreign policy. This effect, which Wallström also makes sure to comment on, is that it portrays Sweden as leading in feminist policy. By proudly stating, "These are some examples of our feminist foreign policy. And we see how countries follow suit." (Utrikesdeklarationen 2018: 4), Wallström is putting Sweden at the forefront of the feminist policy march, amassing several countries as followers. Secondly, in relation to *policy entrepreneurship*, Wallström is slowly incorporating the FFP into international institutions;

effectively attempting to normalise the discourse. Beginning with the gendered perspective on peace, conflict resolution, and security in 2015-2016, Wallström then expanded it to include international development in 2018 (Utrikesdeklarationen 2018: 4). This is, however, partly expected as feminist discourse is usually present when discussing humanitarian and development aid (Aggestam and True 2020: 153).

Gender Representation, Gender Mainstreaming and Feminist Transformative Principles

Regarding the type of feminist discourse, Wallström keeps it in line with the previous declarations. For *gender representation*, it is no surprise that it appears several times in all of the declarations, which, as mentioned, is a pivotal aspect of the FFP. For example, Wallström said feminist foreign policy is intrinsically about gendering “peace, security, and sustainable development” (Utrikesdeklarationen 2017: 6). Furthermore, a central aspect of the FFP has always been to *gender mainstream*, which in the 2017-2019 declarations, Wallström repeatedly did. This is evident in Wallström stating the UN general secretary “supports our ambition” (ibid.). It is also reinforced by Wallström's ambition to be a leading nation in agenda 2030, and that “all policy areas must contribute to a sustainable and fair world” (ibid.). As previously mentioned, the addition of gendering development aid was also mainstreamed in these declarations, which primarily involved making sure women were represented in conflict resolution (Utrikesdeklarationen 2018: 6-7). As such, Wallström made a concerted effort to integrate Sweden's policies into international institutions so that, ultimately, the *structure* could influence *agency* within the international community. Finally, there were barely any new additions in the 2017-2019 declarations, which aspired to transform traditional structures. Wallström mentioned a need for UN reform and that Sweden wanted to transform it due to being a “UN-critical friend” (Utrikesdeklarationen 2017: 6). Similar to 2015-2016, there is no pronounced want to forego liberal feminism. As such, these declarations focused on mainstreaming the now-present FFP, which Sweden also took advantage of as a member of the UN Security Council (Utrikesdeklarationen 2019: 7).

Feminist Discourse

Similar to the first two declarations, the declarations from 2017-2019 focused on *feminist discourse* related to international forums, gender equality, and women's global empowerment.

The policies from previous years are continually referenced, with several examples of what Sweden has done. This itself is important discursively, as the reproduction of the order of discourse is required for this hegemonic discourse to sustain itself. Had Wallström omitted “success stories”, it would’ve presumably been harder to make the FFP stick. However, the feminist discourse also shows the collective impact the FFP has, ranging from education programs for women in Saudi Arabia to social debates about fathers in Rwanda (Utrikesdeklarationen 2018: 4). It is made to show the systemic effect Sweden’s FFP is meant to have, which Wallström effectively does. In relation to this, the declaration from 2019 (and also Wallström's last) focused on showcasing how Sweden’s FFP was spreading internationally to other countries, new networks, and new audiences. It shows how Wallström, year by year, through referencing projects and global reach, wanted to spread feminist discourse globally.

5.2.3 Concluding Wallströms Tenure

Margot Wallström’s period as foreign minister from 2014-2019 was pivotal for Swedish politics and the international community. By leveraging her agency as foreign minister and her background working for women's rights, she established the world's first feminist foreign policy. The 2015 declaration was the first of its kind, where Wallström discursively linked women's conditions to international peace and development - framing it as a prerequisite. This declaration laid the normative foundation for future declarations, which Wallström would later build on to hegemonise her feminist discourse.

Throughout the declarations, Wallström's discourse centred on *mainstreaming* and *representing* women in various policies, projects, and countries. This feminist discourse was *transformative* to the extent that feminist discourse found its way into an FFP, but the analysis also showcased how the discourse stopped short of fundamentally changing patriarchal structures. However, by showcasing *policy entrepreneurship*, Wallström was able to affect policy change through Swedish and international institutions - effectively challenging the previous status quo on feminist discourse. The later declarations focused on the *foreign policy outcomes* of the FFP, discursively showing what policies had been implemented and what was sticking. This was also shown through the numerous projects and networks that Wallström mentioned. It shows the

change in foreign policy discourse from asserting to solidifying, a move by Wallström to prolong the FFP even after new *leadership* took place.

As such, Wallströms utilised both agency and structure to effect foreign policy change. By 2019, she had built a foundation for the FFP and attempted to cement it to remain continuous. The next section will analyse Ann Linde's effect on the feminist foreign policy, using the same concepts as in the previous section. As the analysis continues chronologically, more room will be given to the change and continuity between policies as well - to see each minister's impact on feminist discourse.

5.3 The Role of Ann Linde

Ann Linde has also had a long political career in Sweden and abroad. She has had several ministerial posts, including as the minister for foreign trade and minister for Nordic cooperation (Riksdagen 2024). She has also been a longstanding member of the Social Democrats, working as their international secretary for 13 years.

In 2019, she succeeded Wallström as foreign minister. During her tenure until 2022, she inherited feminist foreign policy and continued many of its policies. Her tenure was marked by several global challenges, one of which was COVID-19, which stood out in its severity and global reach. The section below will analyse her ability to navigate these international challenges and their effect on feminist discourse.

5.3.1 *A FFP Met with International Challenges, 2020-2022*

Agency, Structure, and Leadership

As the new foreign minister, Ann Linde had to navigate complex international challenges and structures whilst trying to effect change in her new role. As such, her declarations focused on discourse that pushed for diplomacy, collaboration, and equitable solutions to global problems. In her first speech, Linde made it apparent that these international challenges, which include "The conflicts, climate crisis and refugee flows of recent years" (Utrikesdeklarationen 2020: 1) would constrain her ability as an agent. As the world is "becoming more unpredictable - and ... getting closer" (ibid), the discourse is shifting towards reactiveness. However, like Wallström,

she emphasises a discourse of cooperation and solidarity in the face of a more unpredictable world (ibid.). By standing firm on the feasibility of Sweden's FFP, Linde also mimicked how Wallström used her agency vis-a-vis complicated international structures - a strategy that sees both embedding the FFP through institutionalisation. Linde repeated Wallström's active phrasing by stating that "in this day and age, it is more important than in a long time to pursue a feminist foreign policy" (Utrikesdeklarationen 2021: 2). Moreover, Linde showcased this institutionalisation through Sweden's COVID-19 policies, which had discursively been linked to feminist discourse years prior. Here, the minister advocated for "fair and global access to vaccines against COVID-19. Through [the] EU..." (idem: 1). By arguing for equitable healthcare access and making sure it's done through the EU, Linde is both continuing feminist discourse from previous declarations, and making sure to stick it in structures. However, regarding her reactive and pragmatic tone, Linde's leadership is still more focused on navigating structures - which is also a constraining factor for agency. This could also be due to Sweden facing more challenges at this time, and perhaps Wallström would have acted similarly, but this is a noteworthy change.

Policy Entrepreneurship and Foreign Policy Outcomes

Linde's agency and leadership seeped into what the declarations did in relation to *policy entrepreneurship* and *foreign policy outcomes*, showing a progression from the foundation Wallström built. Regarding Linde's ability to create or challenge new norms, her ability to apply feminist discourse to climate and healthcare further broadens FFP's agenda. This is evident by her focus on "[Swedish] leadership through a climate diplomacy that invites other countries to higher ambitions" (Utrikesdeklarationen 2021: 5). However, there is a lack of new norms being asserted, which correlates with Linde's more reactive leadership. Instead, the discourse, as mentioned, is focused on collaboration and solidarity in a world facing a democratic recession. This was discussed in theory, where more democratic countries usually see greater norms supporting gender equality (Aggestam and True 2020: 153). Regarding *foreign policy outcomes*, Sweden continued to see itself as the front-runner in feminist policies, with Linde referencing how "several other countries have now followed Sweden's example" (Utrikesdeklarationen 2021: 3). This is a repeating discourse in both Wallström and Linde's declarations. Linde also stated Sweden's involvement in other structures, such as networks and coalitions. This includes larger

institutions like the UN, EU, NATO and OSSE, as well as other international forums (Utrikesdeklarationen 2020:5; Utrikesdeklarationen 2021: 1, 2; Utrikesdeklarationen 2022: 1). Linde thus ensured the continuation of the FFP through leveraging these institutions. As such, Linde showed *continuity* in Sweden's self-image as a feminist policy leader and continued to integrate the policies into international structures. The large change from the ministers is thus Linde's reactive leadership, in which she attempted to place the FFP in international responses to challenges like COVID-19 and climate change.

Gender Representation, Gender Mainstreaming and Feminist Transformative Principles

In relation to *gender representation, mainstreaming, and feminist transformative principles*, Linde's discourse is noticeably lessened compared to Wallström. While Linde still maintains a feminist foreign policy, it is given equal space to other priorities. This is evident when Linde states that "Human rights, democracy and equality are prioritised issues in Sweden's Africa policy, but so are migration and trade." (Utrikesdeklarationen 2020: 11). In comparison to Wallström's discourse that FFP should be applied equally Lind frames equality equally as important as trade in Sweden's Africa policy. However, Linde also asserts that Sweden wants to create a feminist EU trade policy. As such, Linde is applying feminist discourse more so to Sweden's vicinity (EU), rather than the global reach which Wallström espoused. It is a mixture of *change* and *continuity* that shows continuous work towards EU "reform" but change towards global "reform". Moreover, it may be a reaction to the increased "gender inequality" (Utrikesdeklarationen 2022: 7) in the world. This structural constraint thus leads to discourse that limits the reach of feminist discourse to Sweden's vicinity. This effectively restricts the scope of *feminist transformative principles* to Sweden's vicinity, but it is further hampered by the fact that Linde has not made any structural critique. As such, those *transformative principles* were only initiated by Wallström as a form of *change* and, to some extent, made *continuous* by Linde. The real addition made by Linde is thus in the form of *mainstreaming* gender into new areas, as has been discussed on the previous page. By reacting to COVID-19, and arguing how it has reduced the improvements made in women's and children's health and equality, she linked feminist discourse with health discourse (Utrikesdeklarationen 2022: 3). As such, Linde's integration of gender principles continued on from previous declarations, with slight changes.

Feminist Discourse

Ann Linde's feminist discourse was, therefore, a culmination of previous declarations but met with a changing international landscape and the need for reaffirmations. Throughout her three foreign policy declarations, the attention shifted from a strong FFP focus in previous years to a focus on EU solidarity, agenda 2030, climate change, democratisation, and health rights (Utrikesdeklarationen 2020, 2021, 2022). It results in the feminist discourse taking less place within the order of discourse, and that feminist discourse being less tied to certain themes. As hegemonic discourses require reaffirmation, as Wallström did by highlighting successful feminist policies, it lessens the impact of the FFP. However, Linde reaffirmed the continual work on SRHR and Agenda 2030.

5.3.2 Concluding Linde's Tenure

Ann Linde's tenure as foreign minister, as viewed in her declarations from 2020-2022, shows a mixture of *change* and *continuity* in relation to the paper's concepts. Whilst she effectively used her *agency* and *leadership* to affect change internationally, the *transformative* discourse from previous declarations was missing. Instead, much more focus was put on international challenges, which were now also "closer" to Sweden with COVID-19 and Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Whilst it is impossible to state what Wallström would have done differently had she been met with the same challenges, Linde gave more agency to structure than Wallström did. This is due to Wallström remaining "steadfast" and trying to integrate Sweden's FFP regardless of Sweden's international challenges from 2015 to 2019.

Linde, however, somewhat successfully continued the legacy of the FFP. By continually restating its importance in each year's declaration, she made it clear it was still a priority for the Swedish government. This also helped cement Sweden as a front-runner for FFP, seeing as more countries were developing their own FFP by the year. The gradual inclusion of health rights and climate change also spread the feminist discourse to new areas. It reveals that the FFP can be moulded by an agent to serve their needs, even if the structures can be challenging. It also shows how Linde was challenging norms on an international scale, being a *policy entrepreneur* in her own right, by tackling health rights and climate change through a feminist lens.

5.4 The Role of Tobias Billström

Tobias Billström has had a long career in Swedish politics, beginning with participating in the Moderates (Moderaterna in Swedish) Youth Association in 1993. Since then, he has stayed within the party and worked in several positions, but with a focus on foreign politics, security questions, and international law (Regeringen 2022). He worked at the regional level for Moderaterna in Malmö, Sweden, and also as minister for migrations, and minister for the labour market (ibid).

In 2022, under the new right-wing government, Billström became the Swedish government's foreign minister. Notable for the context of this thesis is that the government removed the label “feminism” from its foreign policy, and is thus a drastic change from previous years' feminist discourse, declarations, and overall foreign policy orientation. When asked why the label was removed, Billström argued that “the use of the concept of feminism in foreign policy has led to ethics obscuring the content of politics” (Riksdagen 2023). Billström also stated that gender equality remains a core component of Swedish policies and politics (ibid.). As such, this upcoming analysis of Billström’s declaration will unsurprisingly feature less feminist discourse. Therefore, the analysis will focus on how the feminist discourse changed from previous years and still evaluate how Billström, as an agent and leader, affected the evolution of feminist discourse.

5.4.1 *The Removal of Sweden’s Feminist Foreign Policy, 2022-2024*

Agency, Structure, and Leadership

By focusing on pragmatism, international structures, and reactive discourse, Billström navigates institutional structures and international challenges through a mix of *changes* and *continuous* discourse. Firstly, Billström's capacity as a foreign minister means his ability to effect change is similar to that of Wallström and Linde; however, his way of affecting that *change* shows a different relation with *structure*. Whereas Wallström restructured international norms through feminist norm-setting, Billström accepts the premise of the current geopolitical climate and restructures the foreign policy to target that. Whilst Wallström was global and innovative, Billström was regional and security-oriented (Utrikesdeklarationen 2023; Utrikesdeklarationen

2024). However, the ability of either actor to change the foreign policy discourse so drastically is a testament to their power as agents vis-a-vis structure. Regarding Billström's regional focus, it is through a focus on Nordic cooperation, aid towards Ukraine, and belief in NATO that he orients the foreign policy discourse (Utrikesdeklarationen 2023: 2-4). This sets the order of discourse of Sweden's foreign policy to be about security, crisis management, and regional stability. Moreover, Billström uses his agency to draw on the *continuous* advocacy for EU and UN institutions, but instead of describing them as feminist (such as Linde's advocacy for a feminist trade policy), institutions are meant to aid in Sweden resolving geopolitical challenges (Utrikesdeklarationen 2023: 3-4). As such, Billström's *leadership* and *agency*, as shown in the declarations, reveal that he has a different "type" of *agency* usage than his predecessors. This is further amplified by his using structures to restructure the discourse towards a regional and more security-oriented foreign policy.

Policy Entrepreneurship and Foreign Policy Outcomes

Billström leverages his considerable agency to shift and create new norms for Sweden's foreign policy. This shows in the lack of feminist discourse in both years' declarations and the restructured focus on security and defence. The move away from feminist discourse, or at least the amount of feminist discourse present, also challenges the established norms by Wallström and Linde. Firstly, it impacts the *outcome of foreign policy*, as Sweden's self-image as a global leader in feminist policy is lessened. This has discursive and practical effects, as Sweden's ability to influence feminist discourse in international structures may be hampered, as well as the number of gendered projects may decrease. This is further reinforced by Billström's omission when he states what Sweden is leading in is "business freedom, innovation and competitiveness" (Utrikesdeklarationen 2023: 4). In previous declarations, this would usually include anything related to work on gender equality or women's rights. By focusing on market-related discourse, Billström is changing the order of discourse related to Sweden's foreign policy, infusing it with "new" terminology that he seeks to make hegemonic. Therefore, this focus, alongside alliances and collective security (Utrikesdeklarationen 2024: 2-3), attempts to make these new policies stick. Another way to make policies stick and become hegemonic is through institutionalisation, which Billström does by focusing on regional cooperation. Scandinavian, Nordic, and Eastern European alliances are all labelled as pivotal for this new security and defence discourse

(Utrikesdeklarationen 2023: 4). Aside from these *changes*, Billström does continue the feminist discourse on EU climate politics, SRHR, and gender representation (Utrikesdeklarationen 2023: 5, 8; Utrikesdeklarationen 2024: 13, 16).

Gender Representation, Gender Mainstreaming and Feminist Transformative Principles

Billström's gendered lens throughout his two policy declarations lacks the *transformative* nature of previous declarations and instead ties a gendered lens to the discourse on security and defence (Utrikesdeklarationen 2023; Utrikesdeklarationen 2024). Regarding *representation* and *mainstreaming*, they are not standalone priorities but rather used to accentuate the need for a foreign policy shift. It is evident that when women's rights, or a gendered lens, is mentioned, it is related to crisis response, development aid, and humanitarian aid. For instance, women's SRHR is often related to the situation in Ukraine or "including Afghanistan" (Utrikesdeklarationen 2023: 8; Utrikesdeklarationen 2024: 13). The omission of a "feminist" foreign policy is now also reworded to a "strategic gender equality work in aid and foreign policy" (Idem: 8). This negatively affects the overall feminist discourse, which will be discussed below, but also backtracks previous years of mainstreaming. By omitting gendered lenses on topics like climate change and trade, it is a discursive attempt to reconstruct this order of discourse. It signals deprioritisation, and when "Sweden is in a new era" (Utrikesdeklarationen 2023: 2), it is an era with gendered lenses only occurring in discourse related to women's sexual violence. As the minister and government change is recent, this discourse's *mainstreaming* effect will take time. Finally, there is no comment on the structural barriers to women's rights, representation, and resources, which did appear to some extent in previous declarations. As such, Billström's discourse on gendered topics significantly shifted from previous years. Whilst he did maintain the importance of women and children in relation to SRHR, this was often where the discussion began in previous years.

Feminist Discourse

Overall, the feminist discourse of the latest declarations shows a tension between pragmatism and ideological focus, with Billström staying away from norm-setting feminist (or gendered) discourse. The discourse is instead placed within topics related to humanitarian crises and development aid, which is arguably the traditional place for women's rights to be discussed.

There is a *continuous* focus on human rights and democracy as pivotal (Utrikesdeklarationen 2023: 8), but there is no link between that and a gendered lens. The same goes with climate diplomacy and trade, which has now lost its “feminist” label from Linde’s declarations. The type of feminist discourse, as the previous section made clear, is thus one focused less on norm-setting and removes any transformative ideological component. As such, feminist discourse is now related to SRHR and “women's and girls’ rights and possibilities” (Utrikesdeklarationen 2023: 9).

5.4.2 Conclusion

The change of minister marked a drastic pivot in feminist discourse, as Billström leveraged his position to restructure the order of discourse and mainstream different topics. By using international challenges to his advantage, he pressed on the need for security and defence as a justification for discursive restructuring. Seeing as the discourse was very different from previous years, it also indicates he navigated the structures well, leveraging them to create and challenge norms. Billström also reconstructed what Sweden was a “leader” in, which did not include gender equality but trade-related themes. To make this new discourse stick, Billström continued the strategies from his predecessors and leveraged international institutions, like the EU and UN, to institutionalise his policies. But the scope of institutionalisation was also more regional, as Billström continued to emphasise the nordic-baltic cooperations as a necessary geopolitical shift.

6. Discussion

The preceding analysis applied the FFPA framework and metatheoretical discussion on change and continuity and analysed each foreign minister's foreign policy declaration from 2015 to 2024. The research question was: How have key policymakers influenced the evolution of feminist discourse in Sweden's foreign policy declarations from 2014 to 2024? By applying the theoretical framework, the analysis yielded insights into the ministers, discourse, and foreign policy change. The overarching themes of change-continuity, agency-structure, and other theoretical concepts will now be discussed and answered in relation to the research question.

Most importantly, each minister's effect on feminist discourse as agents of change will be answered.

6.1 The effect each minister had on the evolution of feminist discourse

Each minister had a different effect on feminist discourse. Firstly, Wallström's effect on feminist discourse, through launching and campaigning for the feminist foreign policy, is tremendous. By leveraging her background in working for gender equality, she created a *creative discursive practice* which transformed Swedish foreign policy practice (CFFP 2022). Whilst her actual feminist discourse was itself not new or trend-setting, it is within the context of a foreign policy that it was *creative*. Moving on from the traditional linkages (such as SRHR and women in conflict), feminist discourse emerged in new spheres. This included gendered perspectives on democracy, security, migration and pandemics (Utrikesdeklarationen 2015; Utrikesdeklarationen 2016; Utrikesdeklarationen 2017). To make the feminist discourse she introduced stick, Wallström tried to institutionalise it. This meant appointing gender equality experts in both the EU and UN (Utrikesdeklarationen 2016: 2) and establishing female mediator networks (ibid.). As shown in the analysis, these were also ways to increase gender representation and gender mainstream. However, there were limits to her feminist discourse in regard to structural critique (feminist transformative principles). Whilst she does talk about systemic barriers affecting women, she does not mention that these barriers can be "patriarchal". Perhaps (and tying into the agency-structure discussion below) that would have been trying to reform structure too much. Regardless, her feminist discourse does wish to reform institutional structures, and her intersectional approach to this discourse does make it transformative.

Linde's effect on feminist discourse was mostly a continuation of previous years but lacked her predecessor's norm-setting and transformative nature. This makes her effect on feminist discourse a blend between *change* and *continuity*. Due to international challenges like COVID-19, Linde focused her discourse on the immediate crises, which gave more agency to structures rather than trying to change them. Despite this, and in contrast to Billström, Linde upheld the feminist discourse and expanded it to health rights and climate change, where she advocated for equal vaccine rights (Utrikesdeklarationen 2021: 5). It also shows how both gender representation and mainstreaming were important aspects of her leadership. However, the focus

on immediate challenges meant that deeper, structural critiques were unmentioned. It indicates a tamer feminist discourse, presumably due to structural influences, or that she did not want to make the policy as transformative. As such, Linde shows that even if you do come from the same party, the effect leadership has on policy change is great.

Billström's declarations embody what *creative discursive practice* looks like in practice. By de-emphasizing the feminist label and arguing that “the use of the concept of feminism in foreign policy has led to ethics obscuring the content of politics” (Riksdagen 2023), the content was instead centred on security, defence, regionalisation, and international challenges. Billström did show continuity in feminist discourse when discussing SRHR, especially in regions like Ukraine and Afghanistan (Utrikesdeklarationen 2023: 8; Utrikesdeklarationen 2024: 13), but they were placed within humanitarian and developmental aid discourse. Instead of feminist discourse standing by itself and being mainstreamed in other spheres, it was to be mainstreamed into a few specific spheres. It resulted in a lack of gender mainstreaming and gender representation. Whilst not the focus of this analysis, his political ideology certainly influenced this change and indicates how feminist discourse is, within the larger order of discourse of Swedish politics, a contested discourse that different parties are trying to infuse with different meanings.

6.2 Changes in foreign policy outcomes and Sweden's self-perception

The change in feminist discourse also affects how Sweden views itself and how it is perceived. Billström did not say Sweden was leading in feminist politics, as previous ministers stated. Instead, Billström stated Sweden was leading in “business freedom, innovation and competitiveness” (Utrikesdeklarationen 2023: 4). As such, feminist discourse lost its hegemony and ideological impact in this creative discourse. This was in contrast to Sweden's self-image as a feminist leader, which was continuous during Wallström and Linde's tenures. Aside from institutionalisation, the self-perception was upheld through policy entrepreneurship, which was a key factor in all of the ministers' discourses. Whilst Linde and Wallström focused on spreading the FFP discourse globally, Billström restructured it and spread it regionally. The importance of policy entrepreneurship and its effect on Sweden's self-perception, is how it creates and spreads meaning-making. If you want to create foreign policy change, meaning-making allows you to control discourse and establish hegemonic discourses. As hegemonic discourse can establish

ideologies, which can then influence the structure, Sweden's feminist policy also has wide-ranging effects.

Sweden's image as a leader in feminist policies is therefore being challenged. Whilst a creative discourse does not itself dislodge previous hegemonic discourses, a new government and foreign minister's impact on an order of discourse is large. Through foreign policy outcomes, the new foreign policy will implement changes that are less in line with previous feminist discourse. This results in an image of Sweden backtracking from its previous leadership, leaving space for other countries to lead in feminist policies. Further, Swedish leadership in feminist networks and organisations may be hampered, as other countries with FFPs may feel better suited to lead those spaces. Whilst research has shown Sweden's feminist discourse led to more gender-equal work, new research showing the effect of the label's removal can be very insightful (EBA 2023). Can a government which still proclaims itself to work for gender equality maintain the same feminist output as a country with a feminist foreign policy?

6.3 Agency- structure dynamics

The analysis also showcased the interaction between agency and structure and how each key policymaker navigated that complex relationship. As written, agency is the ability of an actor to enact change within structural constraints, whilst structures are defined as social phenomena which distribute knowledge and are influenced by social, cultural, and historical factors. Within the analysis, structures were broad and ranged from the international community to international challenges, but also the order of discourse itself. As such, it complicates what an agent is affected by and what they can affect. Wallström, who stood firm in launching and institutionalising the FFP, restructured both discourse and institutions. Linde took a middle ground, whereas she did institutionalise feminist discourse, she didn't restructure institutions or discourse to affect change. Instead, she leveraged existing structures. Finally, Billström had a similar amount of power in his agency as Wallström did, seeing as he restructured both institutions and discourse through the declarations (for instance, by joining NATO, regional focus, and removing FFP). The difference lies in his approach to "revert" structures to traditional views of tackling feminist discourse instead of Wallström's norm-setting approach. As such, the effect agency has on structure is indeed tremendous, but requires more research to understand the limits agents can

have on structure and the amount of restructuring a structure can take. For instance, whilst Wallström had effectively mainstreamed and consolidated the FFP through her own agency and that of Linde's, the FFP was still revoked by Billström. It speaks to a Swedish foreign policy which is easily moulded, but that does not imply it is without limits.

6.4 Key Policymakers and Feminist Foreign Policy Analysis

Whilst the discussion thus far has centred around the concepts of FFPA, it is also useful to discuss the results of using the FFPA concepts themselves. This is especially useful considering Aggestam and True's (2020) comparative framework influenced many of the concepts of this paper. Firstly, the results from Wallström's analysis showcase the usefulness of conceptualising political leadership in creating foreign policy change. As they both institutionalised the feminist discourse as policy entrepreneurs, it corroborates Aggestam and True's focus on women's foreign policy leadership (Aggestam and True 2020: 150). Secondly, the urgency given to structures from FPA scholarship (but not as urgent as Waltz (2010)) illuminated the international challenges both Linde and Billström faced in establishing feminist discourse. As "structure influences cognition, and cognition influences individual action", influenced by both Gustavsson and Carlsnaes (1998; 1992), it gives agency to structure. However, the help of FFPA also helps to maintain the focus on agency in affecting change, as individual actors in affecting foreign policy change are acknowledged. Finally, Billström's tenure marked a significant shift in foreign policy, which agrees with general FPA research on how leadership affects foreign policy outcomes. Therefore, the conclusion of this research highlights how the combination of feminist international relations and foreign policy analysis is not only feasible but complementary. Where Feminist IR contributes to intersectional and gendered-structural analysis, FPA functions as a middle-range theory to map out the steps of foreign policy change. Combined with CDA, it gives the tools to explain how, for instance, an order of discourse affects structure.

7. Conclusion

Sweden's feminist foreign policy was groundbreaking when first introduced in 2014. Being the first foreign policy explicitly labelled "feminist", its impact on Sweden and the international community was significant. Having inspired several other countries to implement their own

feminist policies, Sweden suddenly removed the label in 2022. This thesis has focused on understanding the evolution of feminist foreign policy during and after its removal by analysing Sweden's foreign policy declarations. The research reveals the complex dynamics of policy change, change and continuity, and the relationship between agency and structure.

Using feminist foreign policy analysis, this thesis finds that gendering foreign policy analysis is crucial to understanding foreign policy change. By focusing the analysis on Margot Wallström, Ann Linde, and Tobias Billström, the interplay between agency and structure is made visible to explore each foreign minister's impact on feminist discourse. The research finds that Margot Wallström played a considerable role in advancing and maintaining Sweden's feminist foreign policy and, through creating, challenging, and restructuring norms and institutions, broadened Sweden's feminist discourse. By employing critical discourse analysis, it is also shown that Wallström hegemonised her discourse through restructuring institutions.

Ann Linde maintained Wallström's feminist foreign policy in the face of international challenges such as COVID-19. By focusing on structural challenges, she was less transformative yet broadened feminist discourse to include new themes, such as a gendered perspective on health rights and climate change. As a result, her leadership showcased a blend of change and continuity in relation to feminist discourse. Finally, Tobias Billström's tenure marked a significant shift in feminist discourse, as he emphasised regionalisation, security, and defence. Instead, feminist discourse was placed within the themes of humanitarian and development aid instead of being standalone pillars of Sweden's foreign policy. The analysis shows the effect this has on Sweden's self-image and exemplifies the effect agents can have on structure.

This thesis restricted itself to only analysing the evolution of feminist discourse, and the foreign policy declarations of each minister. As such, there are opportunities for future research. Since foreign policy change is also affected by external factors, such as geopolitical shifts and international trends like populism, these are confounding factors that may affect policymakers. Other internal factors, such as internal debates or personal beliefs, may influence policymakers but are also difficult to access or know. If included, it can broaden the analysis to give a more nuanced depiction of what influences foreign policy change. Regarding feminist discourse, other

fields of feminist perspectives or postcolonialism can bring different lenses to analyse foreign policy declarations. For example, research focusing on power structures and foreign policy change.

8. Bibliography

Aggestam, K. and True, J. (2020). Gendering Foreign Policy: A Comparative Framework for Analysis. *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 16, pp.143-162.

Aggestam, K., Rosamond, A., & Kronsell, A. (2018). Theorising feminist foreign policy. *International Relations*, 33, pp.23-39.

Carlsnaes, W. (1992). The Agency-Structure Problem in Foreign Policy Analysis. *International Studies Quarterly*, 36, pp.245-270.

Carlsnaes, W. (1993). 'On Analysing the Dynamics of Foreign Policy Change: A Critique and Reconceptualization'. *Cooperation and Conflict*, 28(1), pp.5-30.

CFFP (2022). The Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy (2022) CFFP. Available at: <https://centreforfeministforeignpolicy.org/portfolio-item/margot-wallstroem/> (Accessed: 12 May 2024).

Chouliaraki, L. and Fairclough, N. (1999). *Discourse in Late Modernity*. Edinburgh University Press.

Collins, C. S., & Stockton, C. M. (2018). The Central Role of Theory in Qualitative Research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 17(1).

Crowe, S., Cresswell, K., Robertson, A., Huby, G., Avery, A. & Sheikh, A. (2011). The case study approach. *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, 11, p.100.

Davies, S.E., & True, J. (2017). Norm Entrepreneurship in Foreign Policy: William Hague and the Prevention of Sexual Violence in Conflict. *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 13(3), pp.701–721.

EBA (2023). More Than a Label, Less Than a Revolution: Sweden's Feminist Foreign Policy (no date). EBA. Available at: <https://eba.se/en/reports/more-than-a-label-less-than-a-revolution-swedens-feminist-foreign-policy/20636/> (Accessed: 4 May 2024).

Eisenhardt, K.M. (1989). Building theories from case study research. *Academy of Management Review*, 14(4), pp.532-550.

Enloe, C. (2014). *Bananas, beaches and bases: Making feminist sense of international politics*. University of California Press.

Enloe, C. (2014). Gender Makes the World Go Round: Where Are the Women? In *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (2nd ed., pp.1–36). University of California Press.

Fearon, M. (2017). Originally published on Policy Options December 8, 2017 (2021). The three 'r's' of feminist foreign policy. *Policy Options*. Available at: [https://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/december-2017/the-three-rs-of-feminist-foreign-policy/#:~:text=The%20Swedish%20policy%20can%20be,women%20are%20addressed%2C%20Delahanty%20said](https://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/december-2017/the-three-rs-of-feminist-foreign-policy/#:~:text=The%20Swedish%20policy%20can%20be,women%20are%20addressed%2C%20Delahanty%20said.). (Accessed: 5 May 2024).

Flyvbjerg, B. (2006). Five misunderstandings about case-study research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 12(2), pp.219-245.

Friedman, G., & Starr, H. (1997). *Agency, Structure and International Politics: From Ontology to Empirical Inquiry*.

Genovese, M.A. ed. (1993). *Women as Political Leaders*. Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage Publications.

Government Offices of Sweden (2019). Minister for Foreign Affairs Margot Wallström's speeches 2014-2019. [PDF]. Available at: <https://www.government.se/contentassets/a5c4d536d95d4151abd2d8ef58a84b12/minister-for-foreign-affairs-margot-wallstrom-speeches-2014-2019.pdf>

Gustavsson, J. (1998). The Politics of Foreign Policy Change: Explaining the Swedish Reorientation on EC Membership. *Lund Political Studies*, 105.

Haraway, D. (2016). 'Situated Knowledges: the Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective'. In *Space, Gender, Knowledge: Feminist Readings* (pp.53-72). Routledge.

Holsti, K.J. (1970). National role conceptions in the study of foreign policy. *International Studies Quarterly*, 14(3), pp.233-309.

Horton, B. (2021). *Greatness and decline: national identity and British foreign policy*. OUP Academic. Available at: <https://academic.oup.com/ia/article-abstract/97/5/1643/6363981?redirectedFrom=fulltext> (Accessed: 4 May 2024).

HRW (2022). Sweden's New Government Abandons Feminist Foreign Policy (2022). Human Rights Watch. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/10/31/swedens-new-government-abandons-feminist-foreign-policy> (Accessed: 4 May 2024).

Jørgensen, M., & Phillips, L. (2002). *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*. SAGE.

Landsberg, C. (2013). Continuity and change in the foreign policies of South Africa's De Klerk and Mandela governments, 1989–1999. *Africa Review*, 5, pp.61-72.

Maxwell, J.A. (2012). *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*. Sage Publications, Inc., Thousand Oaks, CA.

Mccartney, P. T. (2019). How Foreign Policy Shapes American National Identity. OUP Academic. Available at: <https://academic.oup.com/psq/article-abstract/134/4/675/6848476?redirectedFrom=fulltext> (Accessed: 4 May 2024).

Mearsheimer, J.J. (2001). The Tragedy of Great Power Politics. WW Norton & Company.

Morgenthau, H.J. (1973). Politics Among Nations.

Parisi, L. (2020). Canada's New Feminist International Assistance Policy: Business as Usual?. Foreign Policy Analysis, 0, pp.1-28.

Preston, T. (2010). Leadership and Foreign Policy Analysis. In Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies.

Prügl, E. (2016). How to Wield Feminist Power. In: The Politics of Feminist Knowledge Transfer. Gender and Politics. Palgrave Macmillan, London.

Regeringen (2022). CV Tobias Billström (no date). Regeringskansliet. Available at: <https://www.regeringen.se/sveriges-regering/utrikesdepartementet/tobias-billstrom/cv-tobias-billstrom/> (Accessed: 2 May 2024).

Riksdagen (2023). Avskaffandet av den feministiska utrikespolitiken (Interpellationsdebatt 29 september 2023) (no date). Sveriges riksdag. Available at: https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/webb-tv/video/interpellationsdebatt/avskaffandet-av-den-feministiska-utrikespolitiken-_hb108/ (Accessed: 2 May 2024).

Riksdagen (2024). Ann Linde (S) (no date). Ann Linde (S) | Sveriges riksdag. Available at: https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/ledamoter-och-partier/ledamot/ann-linde_908c814e-d988-4e03-af5a-9ce8b1237433/ (Accessed: 1 May 2024).

Rosamond, A. (2020). Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy and “Gender Cosmopolitanism”. *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 16(2), pp.217–235.

Smith, K.E. (2020). Missing in Analysis: Women in Foreign Policy–Making. *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 16(1), pp.130–141.

Stake, R.E. (1995). *The Art of Case Study Research*. Sage.

Subotić, J. (2015). Narrative, Ontological Security, and Foreign Policy Change. *Foreign Policy Analysis*.

Swedin, D. (2019). Margot Wallström är en feministisk hjälte. *Aftonbladet*. Available at: <https://www.aftonbladet.se/ledare/a/vQb01m/margot-wallstrom-ar-en-feministisk-hjalte> (Accessed: 25 February 2023).

Thomson, J. (2020). What's Feminist about Feminist Foreign Policy? Sweden's and Canada's Foreign Policy Agendas. *International Studies Perspectives*, 0, pp.1-14.

Tickner, J.A. (2001). *Gendering World Politics: Issues and Approaches in the Post-Cold War Era*. Columbia University Press.

Tickner, J.A. (2014). 'Hans Morgenthau's Principles of Political Realism: A Feminist Reformulation 1988'. *A Feminist Voyage through International Relations*. Oxford Studies in Gender and International Relations. Oxford Academic, 16 Apr. 2014.

Towns, A.E. (2012). Norms and Social Hierarchies

: Understanding International Policy Diffusion “From Below.” *International Organization*, 66(2), pp.179-209.

UN News (2023). Explainer: Why women's role in sustaining peace is more critical than ever | UN News (no date). United Nations. Available at: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/10/1142762> (Accessed: 20 Apr 2024).

UN Women (2016). Gender Equality and Sustainable Development (no date). UN Women. Available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2016/DPS-Gender-equality-sustainable-development.pdf> (Accessed: 1 May 2024).

UN Women (2022). Facts and Figures: Women, Peace, and Security (2022). UN Women – Headquarters. Available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security/facts-and-figures> (Accessed: 4 May 2024).

UN Women (ND). Brief: Feminist Foreign Policies (no date). UN Women. Available at: https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-09/Brief-Feminist-foreign-policies-en_0.pdf#:~:text=URL%3A%20https%3A%20//www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022 (Accessed: 25 Apr 2024).

United Nations. (no date). Gender, Women, Peace and Security | Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. United Nations. Available at: <https://dppa.un.org/en/women-peace-and-security> (Accessed: 4 May 2024).

Waltz, K.N. (2010). *Theory of International Politics*. Waveland Press.

Wendt, A. (1992). Anarchy is what states make of it: the social construction of power politics. *International Organization*, 46(2), pp.391-425.

Wendt, A. (1999). *Social Theory of International Politics* (Vol. 67). Cambridge University Press.

Yin, R.K. (2009). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (Vol. 5). Sage.

Yoder, J.D. & Kahn, A.S. (1992). Toward a Feminist Understanding of Women and Power. pp.381–388.

Zhang, C. (2012). International Coverage, Foreign Policy, and National Image: Exploring the Complexities of Media Coverage, Public Opinion, and Presidential Agenda. Available at: <https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/viewFile/1424/684#:~:text=URL%3A%20https%3A%20//ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/viewFile/1424/684%0AVisible%3A%200%25> (Accessed: 4 May 2024).