

# Radical Democracy Practice with Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy

— The Case of Diplomatic Crisis between Sweden and Saudi Arabia —

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## Introduction

Sweden has one of the most comprehensive welfare systems in the world. Based on egalitarianism and universalism, the Swedish welfare system has been developed and a great extent of gender equality has been achieved as a part of the social-democratic welfare system (Esping-Andersen, 1990). Now Sweden plays an influential role in the world regarding gender issues as it was ranked in the top 5 most gender-equal countries in 2021 according to the World Economic Forum.<sup>1)</sup> Gender roles have been closely linked with the welfare system, and the meaning of welfare also has changed as gender equality has been re-examined. Especially after the 1970s, which was the period characterised by the second-wave feminist movement in the world, the Swedish welfare system altered women's earnings to match those of men. Sweden was based on a more egalitarian social system as it had an agrarian tradition and late industrialisation compared to other countries. However, the Swedish welfare system has also had a male-breadwinner/housewife model until the 1960s, similar to the system in other countries (Naumann, 2005). Since the second-wave feminist movement, feminists have demanded public childcare, as a central remark in modern welfare states, to be able to participate in the labour market on the same level as men (Randall, 1996). The Swedish welfare system has reduced and arguably eliminated gender hierarchy and has facilitated women's participation and citizenship in the economic and social environment. Feminist lobbyists in Swedish parties and unions contributed to remaking the welfare system and have succeeded in achieving a high extent of gender equality in Sweden after the 1970s (Sainsbury, 2009). While there remain some gender gaps, there is no doubt that Sweden is one of the most advanced countries in the world.

In 2014, Social Democratic Party and Green Party established the coalition government known as red-green government and started to identify itself as a "feminist government". The government says following:

Sweden has the first feminist government in the world. This means that gender equality is central to the government's priorities in decision-making and resource allocation. A feminist

government ensures that a gender equality perspective is brought into policy-making on a broad front, both nationally and internationally. Women and men must have the same power to shape society and their own lives. This is a human right and a matter of democracy and justice.<sup>2)</sup>

After the announcement of the feminist government by Stefan Löfven, a politician of Social Democratic Party and served as prime minister (2014–21), Feminist Foreign Policy (hereafter cited as FFP) was introduced by Margot Elisabeth Wallström, who is also Social Democratic politician and served as the Minister for Foreign Affairs (2014–19). FFP, the subject of this paper, has an ambition “for change to strengthen the rights, representation, and resources of all women and girls”.<sup>3)</sup> The concept of FFP was formulated by both the domestic and international actors. In 1995, a strategy of promoting gender-equal policies internationally, which called gender mainstreaming, was established at the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women in Beijing (UN, 2002). Five years after, the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 established the “women, peace, and security(WPS)” agenda (Lazzarou & Zamfir, 2021). At the same time, FFP is linked with domestic gender equality policy in Sweden as typified by The Swedish Gender Equality Act in 1979. Through these steps, the Swedish Social Democratic government launched FFP for the first time in the world.

## Literature Review

FFP is a comparatively recent policy, so there is little research yet. Aggestam and Bergman-Rosamond, however, undoubtedly made a great contribution to the study of FFP. According to their study (2016, p. 323), FFP is valued for two reasons: FFP has the power to improve political situations “from a broadly consensual orientation of gender mainstreaming toward more controversial politics, and specifically toward those that explicitly seek to renegotiate and challenge power hierarchies and gendered institutions that hitherto defined global institutions and foreign and security policies”, and “contains a normative reorientation of foreign policy that is guided by an ethically informed framework based on broad cosmopolitan norms of global justice and peace”. These functions of re-politicisation of inequality and formulation of ethics-based foreign policy show the nexus between ethics and politics based on the gender equality norm.

As a smart power to affect international politics, FFP is influential to redefine the norm concerning security from feminist point of view (Aggestam & Bergman-Rosamond, 2019). FFP “was an indication of Sweden’s long-standing ambition to be a normative force on world politics and was to serve as a model for others to follow” (Sundström & Elgström, 2019, p. 1). At the same time, these commitments toward FFP spread the feminist values in EU, and EU member states relatively have a positive impression in that FFP affects Swedish politics (Ibid). Bergman-Rosamond (2020) defined it as “Gender Cosmopolitanism” in two perspectives: from domestic politics, which is defined as state

feminism, and from international politics, whose characteristics have had norms that externalized beyond borders in that FFP could relate to Swedish political history and cosmopolitanism. What is important there was challenging conventional foreign policy, which has been occupied by masculine norms and logic. Their studies contributed to making the ideology of FFP clear and pointed out the difficulty of balancing domestic policy and normative diplomacy. This radical diplomacy based on ethics to achieve gender equality all over the world incentivizes research of politics, international relations, and policy analysis. Accordingly, since its launch, FFP has gotten attention both domestically and internationally.

While recognizing the great significance of a possible feminist diplomacy to be a matter of international affairs and theoretically working to clarify its essence, FFP also can be identified as the traditional diplomatic approach of Social Democratic Party in Sweden. According to Bergman-Rosamond (2007), Social Democratic Party, which has been dominant in Swedish politics, has connected the country's domestic welfare policies to international commitment to well-being for all women and girls. However, there are few discussions to reveal in what ways FFP relates to domestic politics in empirical research, and to explore the possibility of FFP combined with further welfare politics and democracy.

By examining the significance of the feminist diplomacy proclaimed by Social Democrats in 2014, when they returned to power, this study reveals how supposedly irrational choices were made in policies shaping the Swedish welfare state, in terms of how the ideology of feminism functions in the political arena as a spoken text. As evident from earlier studies, FFP is not just public diplomacy to exercise soft power whereby humanitarian image is enhanced internationally, but also embarks on a course of action that Social Democratic Party administers gender equality for cross-border women and girls as smart power. This paper will reveal the debates that were facilitated when Sweden, which has simultaneously promoted domestic gender equality and socialism-based welfare state, advocated the transnational gender equality ideals which the FFP aims for. After identifying these debates, this paper will also point out that FFP has the potential to become a radical democracy. In order to explore this interrelation between welfare state, gender equality and democracy, this paper consists of four parts.

Firstly, this paper analyses how FFP works in political decisions with the example of the process of abolishing the military cooperation between Sweden and Saudi Arabia in the winter of 2015. Margot Wallström's criticism of the Saudi Arabian dictatorship's human rights violations was a threshold of the diplomatic matter. After her remark, the relationship between Sweden and Saudi Arabia fluctuated. On 8 March 2015, Sweden spoke to the public not to extend the Memorandum of Understanding with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on military cooperation.<sup>4</sup> In this process, until the end of the memorandum, the mass media and members of parliament disagreed with the expansion of it

because Saudi Arabia suppressed women's rights, while a part of the members of government, including the prime minister, Stefan Löfven, wanted to continue the memorandum because they wanted to promote trade with Middle Eastern countries.

Secondly, it is pointed out that Social Democratic Party faced a dilemma about whether to pursue feminist foreign policy or existing domestic policy and diplomacy (Aggestam & Bergman-Rosamond, 2016; 2018, Aggestam, Bergman-Rosamond & Kronsell, 2019, Bergman-Rosamond, 2007; 2020). When the government pursued both domestic interests and international peace-making based on feminist ideology, the Swedish self-image contradicted the internationally perceived image (Aggestam & Bergman-Rosamond, 2016). Theoretically, this dilemma was represented as conflicts between "militarism and feminism" (Ibid) as well as "warfare and welfare" (Berton, 2005), and "pragmatism and idealism" (Aggestam, Bergman-Rosamond & Kronsell, 2019). It should be pointed out that Social Democratic Party has often stood on the edge of these two aspects historically. Specifically, it sprang from the era when Olof Palme was then prime minister and regarded as a charismatic leader in active foreign policy in Sweden. It can be found that the Swedish media and Margot Wallström are intertwined with the history of the previous foreign policy with Wallström's claims about FFP. Namely, FFP plays a role in a part of Social Democratic identity as a "legacy" of Olof Palme, which is described as universalism (Bergman-Rosamond, 2020). This paper deepens theoretical understanding of FFP through empirical research and definition of feminism, and examines whether FFP has addressed these dilemmas where Social Democratic Party has been caught.

Thirdly, it maintains that FFP does not only promote international gender equality but also challenges domestic welfare politics. The issue such as arms export is involved in both domestic and international politics. If the government wanted to stress international peace based on the ambition of FFP, the practice affects other countries as well as other parties in Sweden. The effect of FFP on domestic politics helps Social Democratic government have critical viewpoints and ask itself "welfare for whom?". This section examines how FFP improves Swedish politics' norms to become more ethical and reveal that FFP leads the government to advocate that welfare state is not only for women and girls but also for all people at home and abroad as gaining welfare is defined as human rights. This paper redefines Swedish welfare state not only as a social democratic one to supply welfare systems domestically, but also as a transnational feminism to guarantee human rights of welfare in a broad sense.

Finally, this section explores the possibilities of radical democracy through the practice of FFP by Social Democratic Party. Radical democracy is a struggle for hegemony in the political arena, based on anti-essentialism. It does not seek to achieve consensus through deliberation, but to understand the adversarial nature of the debate, to argue on the basis of "the consensus that consensus will never be reached" (Yamamoto, 2020), and to win the hegemony of the moment. The normative foreign

policy of FFP has led to the rise of feminism in the hegemonic struggle. While some recent studies have focused on far-right parties with exclusionist tendencies, there is a few research about new politics that could be seen as countervailing forces such as FFP. Understanding the process by which feminist discourse has become hegemonic will help us to see how ideas can contribute to the real world.

### **Methodology**

This paper attempts to incorporate studies of welfare states and democracy. In comparative welfare state studies, new institutional theory and power resource theory are dominant. According to Tamura (2006, pp. 97–98), the new institutional theory focuses on domestic institutions and organisations, and the power structure of parties, especially the political party in charge of the government. On the other hand, power resource theory perceives inequality as class conflict or struggle within a class. Approaching the power balance between parties, institutions, or classes, these theories contribute to clarifying how the welfare state was established and has been developed. Power resource theory, however, reinforces an individual within a class, and new institutional theory defines individuals as passive actors (Ibid, p. 97). Institution and classes partly constitute the identity of individuals, and it could explain generous characteristics of individuals. Nevertheless, besides class, an individual has various identities concerning nationality, race and gender, thus it is uncertain what part of identity determines voting behaviour, social movement and dominant benefits.

In contrast with mainstreaming research method of welfare state studies, the following approach is employed in post-Marxist, poststructuralist discourse theory, namely political discourse theory (PDT), which is first associated with Ernest Laclau. It stands in the position of post-Marxism “as the process of reappropriation of an intellectual tradition, as well as the process of going beyond it” (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001[1985], p. 4). It referred to Marxist theories, whilst it attempted to eliminate class reductionism and historical materialism, thinking with and against Marx. He and his co-worker Chantal Mouffe shared three main ideas, “Hegemony”, “Articulation”, and “contingency”. Hegemony is the key idea of Antonio Gramsci. A social group wins ideology struggle, so that its values will be dominant. This paper describes hegemony as a dominant ideology in political and social spheres. By accepting and criticising the theory of “Hegemony”, they evaluate its potential as hegemony closely related to establishing ideals and norms, not only political relationships (Yamamoto, 2009). When individuals connect each other through ideal and normative words, texts, or actions regardless of class, this function is called for “articulation” (Ibid, p. 88). From an anti-essentialist perspective, the subject of individuals is open to choices and freedom, and these identities are fluid (Howarth, 2013, p. 314). Whenever one identity connects different others, they found “contingency”, not inevitability. According to the interview with Laclau, “the essential point is that there are no obvious forms of

universality that can replace the notion of identity”.<sup>5)</sup> Their theoretical approach is “to focus the analysis on the semantic action of hegemonic politics itself, to position discourse as a concept to analyse it, and to conceive radical democracy based on theoretical examination (Yamakoshi, 2012, p. 91, translated)”.

The theory, however, does not have any principles as discourse analysis (Jacobs, 2018). After Laclau introduced radical hegemony theory based on post-Marxism, Essex school establishes his theory as a practical discourse analysis by broadening the comprehension of struggle from the limitations of class struggle, and PDT made it possible to explain the dynamics of political system transformation with the concept of discourse struggle (Shimizu, 2017). Note that if this discourse theory is utilised, it does not have been formulated as a practical analysis procedure, and there is a risk of it being a superficial methodology based on theory and abstraction, so PDT is treated as “a potential ontological infrastructure” (Jacobs, 2018). However, admitting the absence of detail and established practical method in PDT, this paper applies this discourse analysis theory because it attempts to grasp the ideology based on feminism in the domestic political sphere. Following the discourse analysis method of Shu Shimizu (2017), this paper adopts Problematisation Analysis to construct a “story line”, then inquires whether these discourses can result in a hegemony.

In line with the method, this paper describes how the diplomatic issues were discussed within the government and the parliament after FFP was launched. Especially here, the diplomatic crisis between Sweden and Saudi Arabia in 2015 is dealt with. This section aims to figure out how people, who obtain different identities and belong to different parties, have supported feminist ideology in the political sphere. This paper analyses texts from speech materials, opinion pieces on the government’s official site, records of meetings of the parliament from January to May in 2015 as well as Swedish news sites and newspapers of four: *DAGENS NYHETER*, *SVENSKA DAGBLADET*, *Expressen* and *AFTONBLADET*. The former two are daily newspapers published in Stockholm and read by people widely online. The latter two are nationwide evening newspapers in Sweden. These four resources stand on different ideologies from independent liberal to social-democratic.

While the study uses an analytical approach, it will relocate FFP as an indication of radical democracy which has the potential to change societal inequality caused and accelerated by neoliberalism or liberal conservatism. Laclau and Mouffe emphasise that there is a necessity of creating an alternative of the Left. This “new” Left is not against opposite ideologies, but reconstruct a new hegemony as a counter to critique and dismantle existing dominant ideas which will make people hard to imagine anything other than the current world, and it is distinct that the Left “can only consist of locating itself fully in the field of the democratic revolution and expanding the chains of equivalents between the different struggles against oppression” (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001[1985], p. 176). Additionally, Laclau and Mouffe assert that Social Democracy can be a component of the new left, not Social Democracy

creates new left (Ibid). Hence, FFP can be seen as a practical example of radical democracy because FFP develops its ideas by various actors like international organisations and Margot Wallström and it leads Social Democratic Party toward normative policy-making directions. In that the Swedish red-green coalition government attempts to transform the prior policies regarded as immoral in terms of feminism transnationally, gender equality could be a key concept to fill the gap between Sweden's self-perceived identity and public policy machinery under the influences of neoliberalism (Rosamond, 2020). Therefore, to the extent that Social Democrats have promoted FFP, it possesses the power to hold hegemony over neoliberalism, which has been spread since the 1990s and oriented the world to welfare reduction, by the discourse articulation for the new left, then to constitute radical democracy.

### **1. Problematisation: Diplomatic Crisis between Sweden and Saudi Arabia by FFP**

Before demonstrating the main subject, we will depict facts about what happened between Sweden and Saudi Arabia and construct a series of narratives. On 9 January 2015, Wallström tweeted about Raif Badawi, a Saudi Arabian human rights activist and blogger. At that time, he received the first 50 lashes in public as a part of the punishment of 10 years in prison and 1000 lashes because he insulted Islam online. Wallström held that "this attempt ought to be stopped and made the assessment that it was almost medieval methods".<sup>6)</sup> On a completely different issue, the parliament faced the question of whether to extend the memorandum of military cooperation with Saudi Arabia related to "defence material, technical maintenance, technology transfer, research and development and exchange of expertise in the fields of repair and military medical services" by Saudi Arabia during the period of 2005–2015.<sup>7)</sup> Swedish prime minister, Stefan Löfven, initially declaring that he would extend it, faced opposition from Wallström, who advocated to renegotiate the memorandum.<sup>8)</sup> Eventually, the extension of the memorandum with Saudi Arabia was stopped on 8 March 2015. On the day before Stefan Löfven announced the decision to the public, Saudi Arabia cancelled a speech Wallström would have given as a guest at the Arab League's meeting in the Egyptian capital Cairo.<sup>9)</sup> Before the Ministry of Foreign Affairs formally notified the ambassador that Sweden intended to terminate the military cooperation agreement with Saudi Arabia, it recalled its ambassador because of Wallström's and Sweden's open criticism regarding human rights in Saudi Arabia.<sup>10)</sup> Islamic Conference Organization (OIC) also criticised Margot Wallström for interfering in Saudi Arabia's affairs and humiliating the country's "social norms, legal systems, and political institutions".<sup>11)</sup> In the context of these circumstances, Saudi Arabia had stopped all new business visas for Swedish travellers, with the United Arab Emirates following suit.<sup>12)</sup> The series of matters was recognised as "Saudi Affair (Saudiaffären)".<sup>13)</sup> This paper mainly focuses on Swedish domestic politics and does not examine discourse and actions after the end of the memorandum.

Two discussions are being created at the same time in these series of flows. The first thing to note is retaliation from Saudi Arabia for criticism of its internal affairs by the Foreign Minister. The other is whether the military agreement lasts or not. How were these different matters discussed simultaneously? Through the discussion on foreign policy debate, which was held on 11 February 2015, this study attempts to clarify the connection between the incident of punishment imposed on the Saudi Arabian human rights activist which Wallström criticised, and the matter of the memorandum with Saudi Arabia.

According to records of foreign policy debate in the Swedish parliament (Sveriges Riksdag),<sup>14)</sup> Hans Linde, who is a member of the left party, asked Wallström in what way a military cooperation agreement with Saudi Arabia contributed to a feminist foreign policy. To this, she answered following:

It is obvious that the policy in Saudi Arabia is far from a feminist policy. Above all, women's rights are being violated. They are not even allowed to drive. It whips bloggers, and you have a royal family with absolute power. ... We have also said that we will review the memorandum of understanding with Saudi Arabia, and that work is currently underway in the Government Offices (translated).

Then Maria Weimer, a member of the Liberal People's Party, asked her to follow:

What about the fate of Raif Badawi, the opposition blogger, who criticised Saudi Arabia's leadership on the Internet, and who has now been sentenced to a thousand lashes? Is the fate of Raif Badawi also the fate of the government? In that case, the cooperation agreement with Saudi Arabia should be terminated and arms exports stopped, and it should not be renegotiated, as we have heard in this House (translated).

This debate connected the issue of the punishment of the blogger which Wallström criticised on Twitter, with FFP practice. The member of the Liberal People's Party, which has an ideology centre-right, criticised her because she cannot pursue FFP in the case of Saudi Arabia, which is an "undemocratic" country. Here, there are strong nexus between gender equality and democracy. They emphasised on upholding FFP in discussion of stopping the agreement of Saudi Arabia because Saudi Arabia "violates women's rights", "whips bloggers" and allows a royal family to have "absolute power".

Among the Swedish media, there were mostly positive comments about FFP itself, and there are the same discourses about military agreement. They demanded Social Democratic Party to breaking



the agreement and concerning about cracks within the Green Party, which had originally supported pacifism.<sup>15)</sup> Furthermore, they forecasted that FFP was “not a non-binding package that a tired social democracy can lend to the remnants of its idealism”,<sup>16)</sup> and the abolishing of that cooperation was “an important step for Swedish feminist foreign policy that stands up for human rights in all situations”.<sup>17)</sup> In addition, another article in *AFTONBLADET* stated, “Saudi Arabia is a pure dictatorship characterized by deep patriarchal oppression and strong military power. If the Saudi agreement is extended, it means that Sweden puts economic interests before women’s rights.”<sup>18)</sup> In another debate article in *AFTONBLADET*, nine Swedish artists said that the government ought to stop the military agreement and they emphasised Sweden’s credibility in the gender equality issue by pursuing the principle of FFP practically.<sup>19)</sup> They also remarked on the incident which Margot Wallström criticised, “Saudi Arabia is one of the world’s cruellest dictatorships and one of the world’s worst countries for women to live in. It has legislation with medieval punishments such as public flogging, amputation and beheading.” Wallström’s criticism against Saudi Arabia could be said to have affected the attitudes toward military cooperation among other actors.

## 2. Hegemonic Struggle: The Conflict between Realism and Idealism

Social Democratic Party, as a result, followed FFP’s aspiration. It decided to limit arms exports to dictatorships, and it had a consensus with Green Party to control arms export strictly towards non-democratic countries.<sup>20)</sup> SSU, which is Social Democratic Party’s youth association, expressed this diplomatic crisis as the struggle for human rights and democracy, and praised the government’s decision.<sup>21)</sup> These members who stand on idealism and wanted to pursue FFP could move forward with what they sought to. However, until this conclusion is reached, there are also criticisms against the government action. This section analyses who stood against the government and what discourses they used. In addition, it points out that the government also has different opinions, and this difference reflects the dilemma, which Social Democratic Party has faced.

In the parliament in 17, April 2015, some members of Moderate Party, asked Mikael Damberg, the business and innovation minister and a member of Social Democratic Party, about the government’s export strategy for the Middle East.<sup>22)</sup> Lars Hjalmered, one of members in Moderate Party, said following:

In trade policy, there are moral aspects. For my party and its colleagues in the Alliance, it is clear that human rights are a mainstay. ... But one must still clearly realise that we cannot lock out countries just because they do not adopt to democracy in exactly the same way as Sweden.

... Do we prepare to trade with countries that do not fully share our views on human rights and

freedoms? I think we stay trading to benefit Swedish jobs and companies. In the long run, it also benefits human freedoms and rights in other parts of the world. About munitions exports, even if it is another regulation which is affected, we must conduct trade because it is important from the perspective of defense and security policy related to Sweden (translated).

He addressed continuing trade prior to morals to gain proficiency of business, defense and security for Sweden. He also remarked that “freedom and rights” could be achieved by trading even if a country is not democratic. Additionally, in the article of *AFTONBLADET*, the former minister of defense Karin Enström spoke about the government’s responsibility for Saudi Arabia:

It is serious if the voice of Sweden is stopped or weakened. There is a risk of burning relations with the countries in the region. First, Margot Wallström was not allowed to come to Israel and now her speech is stopped.<sup>23)</sup>

She focused on the freedom of speech as the party members emphasised, and she pointed out that Sweden had to make a connection to talk with as many countries as possible without diplomatic crisis. From these, the first hegemonic struggle appears; the conflict between freedom and democracy.

Furthermore, Stefan Löfven, the prime minister, and the former representative of the trade union before becoming prime minister, wanted to renegotiate the memorandum with Saudi Arabia, not abandon it. If Sweden abolished the memorandum, it would be possible that Sweden affected commerce and trade with Saudi Arabia. He had been in tension to get the opinion of workers who were his traditional supporters. For example, on 6 March 2015, *DAGENS NYHETER* introduced the argument done by heavy business representatives.<sup>24)</sup> They insisted that “trade is a fundamental human activity and one of the foundations of our civilization.”

In this series of discussions about FFP, Margot Wallström was often associated with Olof Palme’s foreign policy. The beginning can be seen in Wallström’s interview article. In an article published on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website on 17, November 2014, Margot Wallström talked about new diplomacy, Sweden’s international role and leadership, and role models. She said in the interview, “My awakening came when I realized that caring does matter. And when Olof Palme showed that you could have a dream of changing the world. That was the great inspiration.”<sup>25)</sup> Wallström belonged to Social Democratic Party youth organization while Palme was in office, during which she was politically inspired by his passion. In the article of *Expressen*, there is a description about the ideology that Margot Wallström relied on considering the history of Olof Palme’s practices.<sup>26)</sup> Olof Palme promoted “moral superpower”, as one of the ideologists, in foreign policy after the mid-1960s, during which Swedish foreign policy was characterized by realism and then politicians kept a low profile and

avoided provocative statements and other things that could threaten security and exports. Palme is evaluated as a staunch idealist/activist and Wallström seemed to join this tradition rather than a realpolitiker. In contrast, in another article of *DAGENS NYHETER*, Olof Palme emerged as a symbol of the inner tension of Social Democratic Party between realism and idealism.<sup>27)</sup> The former was neutrality policies combined with informal security cooperation with the United States during the Cold War, and the latter was active pacifistic foreign policy, which was led by Olof Palme. According to these articles, Social Democratic Party's performances with the gap between realism and idealism has been connected to Olof Palme. Moreover, *AFTONBLADET* said in the article titled "Money stands against ideals", FFP was not a superficial label solely for the purpose of improving and enhancing Swedish "good" national image, but a binding concept.<sup>28)</sup> It explained that Social Democratic Party established the welfare state by export including arms with an example of Olof Palme's scandal and addressed that "the government must choose between export money or feminist credibility (translated)."

From these articles, it can be seen that the dilemma between realism and idealism exists and between labourers and feminists; it is also the internal dilemma of Social Democratic Party. Olof Palme was brought up as a person who advocated international peace against realpolitik, while he was also described as a realpolitiker who benefited the Swedish economic foundation of the welfare state with export. The bilateral character of Olof Palme will be illustrated both "legacy" and "results of the compromise" for Social Democratic Party. On the other hand, the government was required not only to use FFP for public relations, but also to form domestic policy in a feminist way to overcome the dilemma that Olof Palme could not even conquer. Here, it can be found that FFP is the foreign policy driven by the growing international importance of feminism and is also associated with the history of social democracy in the country.

### **3. Articulation by FFP and Expansion of Welfare State'**

What emerges from this dilemma came about as two answers within Social Democratic Party to the question, "the welfare for whom?". It protects economical situations based on the welfare state, and both international and self-images based on the gender-equal society. When Damberg, the minister of business and innovation, dealt with export issues and diplomatic crisis of Saudi Arabia, he spoke as following:

As a country, Sweden is strongly dependent on our trade with the outside world. Exports correspond to almost half of Sweden's GDP, but imports and foreign investment in Sweden are also important prerequisites for employment and welfare (translated, emphasis added).

For us, human rights are women's rights, not just workers' rights. However, many workers are women, and in labour markets around the world, women often have the worst conditions and circumstances. It is therefore not unimportant to have workers' conditions when we talk about human rights, including from a gender equality or feminist perspective (translated, emphasis added).<sup>29)</sup>

The former remark represents the opinion of labourers and moderate party. They insisted on the economic proficiency from trading and freedom. Additionally, Damberg articulates labourers' rights to women's rights because women are also labourers, and protection of labourers leads to protect domestic women.

Labourers, the traditional supporters of Social Democratic Party, wanted to continue exporting arms to retain their beneficiaries in the issue of the memorandum with Saudi Arabia, while Social Democratic Party had to promote feminist diplomacy to ensure women and girls' rights internationally from a feminist point of view, or to show the FFP practice and hence get credibility from other countries. These have been regarded as compatible with Social Democratic Party's dilemma between warfare and welfare, and the pursuit of women's rights has great potential to channel labourer into feminist approach. This is because women's rights are connected to the rights of workers. FFP is not an idealism that cannot be joined at all, as Margot Wallström truly tried acting with this ambition. FFP has the power to gather other ideologies because the resonance of the concept of FFP has spread to the ruling and opposition parties including the centre-right Liberal People's Party, and even international organizations. As a result, Social Democratic Party has had to think about always acting as a feminist government, rather than pursuing only domestic welfare.

The idea of promoting gender equality globally was due to the fact that Sweden has created its identity built on great welfare that promotes gender equality compared to other countries. Then, it became possible to introspectively consider whether the idea could be applied to the actual politics of the country in carrying out feminist diplomacy. Here, from the question of "the welfare for whom", which is the dilemma of Social Democratic Party mentioned in the previous paragraph, appears.

The welfare state has the inherent problem that it does not build a new system that overcomes neoliberalism and chauvinism, but rather protects the vested interests of each and does not fundamentally change the current disparity (Garland, 2016; Milanovic, 2019). As can be seen from the problem, the social-democratic welfare state, which is a characteristic of Nordic welfare states, could not defy the rise of neoliberalism only by modifying the welfare system, but went through the middle-way in a compromise between egalitarianism and neoliberalism.

On the other hand, FFP has a radical concept of promoting gender equality in the world, with Swedish identity of the universal equality of men and women cultivated by its welfare state. Although

it is a revisional change in the current international affairs, France, Canada, and Mexico followed suit to resonate with the idea of FFP. Compared to social democratic welfare state, FFP has strong normative claims and the power of making hegemony against neoliberalism. Both the recent Swedish welfare state and FFP are rooted in gender equality, so the idea of FFP may lead to the transformation of welfare state and overcome the problem that the characteristics of the welfare state itself were revisionism. As Rosamond (2021) said, Swedish self-narrative based on gender equality formed universalism and gender cosmopolitanism beyond its border. In this context, the identity based on gender equality expands the meaning of welfare and it contains the well-being of people abroad in addition to welfare systems supplied at home. Therefore, FFP has a possibility to connect domestic policy to international well-being for women and girls.

#### 4. The Burgeoning Radical Democracy?

In response to the question “welfare for whom?”, the philosophy and practice of FFP offer the possibility of providing welfare that transcends national borders. This means that welfare state is no longer welfare “state”. Welfare state has lost its stateness. At this point, we can see a part of radical democracy in the process of realising the philosophy of FFP in concrete actions. Through the discourses on the diplomatic issue, different actors pointed out what FFP is, and they follow the idea, while some opposition parties just wanted to criticise the government, or the government never expected that FFP was influential. Radical democracy, a concept advocated by Laclau and Mouffe in the *Hegemony and Social Strategy*, “put an end to capitalist relations of production, which are at the root of numerous relations of subordination” (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001[1985], p. 178). Furthermore, they state that “socialism is one of the components of a project for radical democracy, not vice versa” (Ibid, p. 178). In other words, applying this to Swedish politics, the Social Democrats are a component of the practice of radical democracy, that can have the power to counter neoliberalism. It has promoted diplomacy by referring not only to women’s rights, but also to human rights based on feminism ideology. At the same time, the public in Sweden and abroad has also questioned the significance of being a feminist government. The discourses centred on FFP are linked to social issues based on gender equality. By advocating women’s rights first, it includes a wider range of vulnerable people across national borders.

Regarding the dilemma between the self-interest of labourers and the idea of FFP, the improvement of the problem can be pointed out from the following description of Laclau and Mouffe regarding workers’ self-interest. They say, “(T)o reduce the issue to a problem of workers’ ‘interests’ can be constructed in such a way that they do not take account of ecological demands or demands of other groups which, without being producers, are affected by decisions taken in the field of production (Ibid, p. 178)”. We find the fact that we cannot let go of our vested interests, that is, we refuse to

“abandon the assumption of a sutured society (Ibid, p. 179)”.

The maintenance of the social-democratic welfare state was always a matter of debate due to the unstable international and economic situation. It may therefore be uncomfortable to discuss the state of the welfare state with Laclau and Mouffe’s post-Marxist view, that is, the view that denies economic determinism and class reductionism. However, as we have seen earlier, those who joined FFP sought to transform diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia by putting ideas before economic interests. The idea around “women’s rights, resources, and representatives” had great centripetal power, and was appealed as what is normal and legitimate in the political and social sphere. This non-economic examination of the social-democratic welfare state with feminism provides a space in which the ambitions of the welfare state can be more politicised and debated.

As combative means against warfare, continuing to question welfare for women and girls as the future welfare state and building a hegemony of women’s rights based on FFP could functionate. The division of workers’ interests and feminist ambitions at home, which I mentioned earlier, becomes an even more difficult task at the international level. This is because there is a possibility of giving up the vested interests cultivated at the national level. However, as this paper explained, FFP guarantees women’s rights not only domestically but also across national borders. FFP, which was rooted in the social-democratic norms, will challenge national security as well as the dilemma of domestic welfare supply within Swedish Social Democratic Party or the pursuit of international welfare ideas. It can be said that radical democracy presents in Swedish FFP. Various theories are currently being created to overcome the problems created by neoliberalism and chauvinism, but their feasibility may be questioned in “realpolitik”. However, the similarities between Swedish FFP and radical democracy could be the evidence of this feasibility. The direction of Swedish social democrats should be steered by FFP toward a more universal direction. Currently, Social Democratic Party is taking over the reins of the government and needs to be in solidarity with the centre-right. The party is in a very unstable state. Therefore, if political steering becomes difficult, the future of the left-wing, as Laclau and Mouffe claim “alternative for a New Left”, would determine what kind of discourse space can be created by the people joined by FFP.

## Conclusion

Analysing the diplomatic crisis between Saudi Arabia and Sweden, specifically the abolition of the military agreement with Saudi Arabia, has demonstrated the following three points.

Firstly, FFP articulated different actors of media, some opposition parties, and feminists. At the same time Social Democratic Party found itself in a dilemma between idealism and realism. The opposition parties like Christian Democratic Party and Liberal People’s Party have different opinions: the former attempted to cooperate with other countries with acknowledgement of the promotion of

feminist diplomacy, and the latter claimed to promote feminist diplomacy rather than cooperation with countries regarded as undemocratic. Media commented differently but whatever their ideological position, they focused on how the Social Democrats would act as feminists. In other words, they did not argue that they should quit being feminists and be realists. From there, it became clear that FFP-based discourses could be hegemonic in the social and political spaces against remarks of the beneficiaries of arms export. This struggle was not extrinsic to the Social Democrats, it was intrinsic. This means that promoting trade for the maintenance of the welfare state and the security of the nation are incompatible with the identity of being an international leader who is ethically superior and promotes gender equality in the world. However, the military agreement with Saudi Arabia was abolished not because of this well-known internal dilemma, but because of morals and ethics that FFP brought on the agenda in Sweden.

In addition, when the Social Democrats, who have provided comprehensive welfare based on egalitarianism within the country, advocate feminism, they are providing cross-border welfare based on feminism through FFP. Namely, welfare in not only materialistic production but also idealistic ambition. FFP is a radical attempt in terms of pursuing human security and rights of women and girls, while it is also located into active diplomacy that Social Democratic Party after Olof Palme is viewed as part of identity.

Finally, from the consideration of these practices, FFP would be regarded as new left, the practice of radical democracy in antagonism with neoliberalism and chauvinism. This is because the government cannot easily eliminate its identity of partaking in proactive peace diplomacy, and because domestically there is little criticism of FFP's ambition. Thus, it has the power to mobilize many different people. It can be seen as chains of equivalence by FFP because various political actors and media united to one identity "feminist". Since Foreign Minister Margot Wallström advocated diplomatic ideas in Social Democratic Party in 2014, which was the year Social Democratic Party won the election from the beaugregory government for the first time in eight years, the opposition party and Left Party, which had external cooperation with the government, had criticised not only Margot Wallström but also the Minister of Trade and the Minister of Immigration because they demanded the new government to act in a feminist way as it had announced to do. In this respect, FFP is binding on a wide range of government policy-making actions. In other words, FFP affects not only domestic politics but also diplomacy. Consequently, members of the government are responsible to be feminists. In addition, FFP is a means for Social Democratic Party to tackle the problem of domestic welfare or cross-border welfare. In this point, Social Democratic Party is driven to expand the beneficiaries of Swedish welfare politics internationally.

There is also a negative prospect of FFP. The main reason is that it has the possibility to reproduce existing power relations between males and females, and western or non-western people (Robinson,

2019). That is to say, protection of women's rights causes the division between men and women, after which the normative force can be imperialistic. This negative aspect of FFP should be considered and further discussed. However, this study will contribute to emphasising that ambitions based on idealism could be influential on realpolitik. This research of ideology will be an important perspective for understanding Sweden's ability to challenge existing policies with feminist ideology in a world of increasing nationalism and xenophobia. Furthermore, it will be beneficial to see both aspects of a principal and a system of the welfare state. In this study, the historical context was underestimated, hence the interrelation between institution and discourse changes is a subject for future analysis.

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