

Feminist Foreign Policy

Margot Wallström, former foreign minister of Sweden

Ebony Bennett [00:00:04] Good day, everyone, I'm Ebony Bennett, I'm deputy director at the Australia Institute, and welcome to our webinar series, part of the Australia Institute TV. I'd like to begin by acknowledging that I live and work on Nonlegal Anambra Country and by acknowledging the traditional owners here past and present, and acknowledge that sovereignty was never stated and this always was and always will be Aboriginal land. And then all of us have a lot of work to do to secure a voice to parliament treaty and a truth-telling process as the invitation was extended to us by the Olary statement from the heart. As you will know long time watchers, the Australia Institute aims to do these webinars, at least weekly. The days and times do vary, so please make sure you head on over to Australia Institute dot org. I you. To find all of our webinars and other events coming up, we'll be speaking with Independent Senator for South Australia, Rex Patrick and activists Chanel Kantos about understanding consent. And just a few tips before we begin to help things run smoothly today. If you hover over the bottom of your screen, you should be able to see a Q and A function where you can ask questions of our panellists and also upvote other people's questions and make comments. Please keep things civil in the chat or we'll have to put you out. We don't do it often, but we will if we need to. And finally, a reminder that this discussion is live and it's being recorded. We'll make a copy available up on our YouTube site at the end of this. So often the policy debate in Australia is so often dominated by what's happening in the United States or in the UK. But the Australia Institute Nordic Policy Centre looks to the Nordic countries, which are amongst the happiest in the world, amongst other things, for policy inspiration. And that was indeed the inspiration for the new book, *The Nordic Edge Policy Possibilities for Australia*, coedited by Andrew Scott and Rob Campbell. The book examines everything from prison reform to electric vehicle policy. And tonight's special guest, Margot Wallstrom, contributed a chapter on Sweden's feminist foreign policy and to formally introduced the former foreign minister of Sweden. I'd like to hand over to the role convenor of the Nordic Policy Centre and co-author, co-editor and author of the book, Professor Andrew Scott. Thanks, Andrea.

Andrew Scott [00:02:24] Thank you, everybody, and welcome, everybody. And Margot, it's good to see you again on sorry as we've had a few soundchecks before of the last 18 months since covid Firstbrook, welcome. Thank you so much for sharing your time with us and your experience as Sweden's foreign minister from 2014 to 2019, following on from your earlier work as a commissioner in the European Union and High-Level, work with the United Nations. I want to start by asking you, why did you lead a feminist foreign policy as Swedish foreign minister in those years?

Margot Wallström [00:02:58] First of all, good evening to all friends down under and thank you, Andrew. It has been a pleasure and a true honour to contribute to to this book. And I found it very politically very, very interesting and also impressive in that it sets out all the details about the comparison between Australia and the Nordic countries in different policy areas. So thank you again. And very nice to to see you, even though I have preferred to be with you down under now. Well, of course, the government that I was a member of the red green government when we took office, it was after eight years with with parties on the right of politics. And of course, we wanted

to set our own policy direction. And we and I announced that we would pursue a feminist foreign policy based on the research that shows that more women in peace processes means more peace. So it was as simple as that. It belonged to foreign policy. And also I came to and took office as a foreign minister with a fresh experience of working on the issue of sexual violence in war and conflict. And that made a deep impression on me and both. I often say that it was it gave me nightmares, but also, paradoxically, more hope for the future, because I met with all of those survivors of sexual violence and understood that they don't want to be defined only as victims, but they are also actors and want to be part of shaping their own future and the future of their countries.

Andrew Scott [00:05:08] Thank you, insert the feminist foreign policy had it built on earlier Swedish policy,

Margot Wallström [00:05:15] when we are fortunate in that we've had, I would say, common understanding of the basis of the fundamentalists of a foreign policy. And gender equality has also been wrong on the Swedish government's foreign policy before. But until the feminist foreign policy, it was mainly concerned with foreign aid and rights. And now it became more prominent in areas like security policy, defence and trade. And underpinning this was a long, strong, long standing of values of gender equality in our domestic policy in Sweden. And what we have

Speaker 4 [00:06:03] seen is, of course, that Swedish men

Margot Wallström [00:06:05] have been taken on much more responsibility for household labor and parenting during my lifetime because of, I would say, mainly social Democratic policies, and also that we have since nineteen seventy nine rebind physical violence against children, including by my parents. A very important step as well. And I think it has changed the role of our fathers of of men. And of course, parental leave has meant a lot in changing the attitude of the men. But we still have a problem, like I would say most countries around the world with violence against women. And this is something that we really have to work on together and on a global scale. And we've had a number of other reforms

Speaker 4 [00:07:09] that

Margot Wallström [00:07:09] I think have changed also the role of men, because they will continue to be very important in making sure that that gender equality becomes a reality.

Ebony Bennett [00:07:20] Yeah, absolutely. Margaret, I was going to ask I was really interested there about the reaction when you first kind of label it as a feminist foreign policy and that you kind of had to explain that feminism wasn't all about hating men. Had it did, how does it relate?

Margot Wallström [00:07:36] Well, we, of course, knew and I knew that there it comes with a negative connotation in many countries and is very often interpreted as being against men. I think, you know, if you choose a controversial term like this, then it gives you also an opportunity to to use the definition, to set the definition, to explain what it is. And you also create expectations. And that was that's the whole point of using something that, you know, would be partly controversial. So, of course, we had you can look it up. What is feminism? What does it mean? What does it stand for? And it is as simple as, say, that men, men and women should enjoy the same rights and opportunities and obligations in the society. But of course, it is when it comes to implementing that. So it gave us an opportunity to explain what feminism is and also why it is connected to

foreign policy, why it belongs to foreign policy and security policy, and that more women means more peace, basically. And I think that it quickly shifted into a debate about how do we how do we pursue this? How do we implement it also through all our embassies around the world. And that is why I introduced also the parameters that we were going to use, namely those three Rs, that that means rights that we look at. Do women and girls enjoy the same legal and human rights everywhere? But what about the representation? Are they there around the table where important decisions are being made and also resources? What about the budgetary resources? Are they used to meet the needs of women and girls? And I think that helped a lot. And we added a couple of hours also. We said that it starts with a reality check and this is in the book. You talk also about gender budgeting, for example. You have to make sure that you have the right statistics to to describe reality in in in different countries. And then you also have to to make sure that you get good results so that. Is the effect of all of this in the.

Andrew Scott [00:10:15] Thanks, Margaret. Yes, well, you mentioned in the book out that Australia has slightly higher than the average in terms of women as a proportion of parliaments globally, the average is less than a quarter. In Australia, it's 30 per cent. Sweden is close to 50 per cent now. And you say more women, more pay. So is there evidence, in fact, that when more women are involved in peace agreements are achieved and that they last longer?

Margot Wallström [00:10:44] Yeah, we we don't have that much of the of statistics about this

Speaker 4 [00:10:53] because unfortunately fewer than 10 percent

Margot Wallström [00:10:55] out of peace agreements have a female signature. So between 1990 and 2014, out of 130 peace agreements, we signed only 13 and sexual violence. This is a weapon in wars and conflicts all around the world. But very often this is something that that is not mentioned in peace agreements and not followed up properly. And also, one hundred and four countries in the world have laws that prevent women from taking on certain jobs. For example, we have we have statistics to show that there is a discrimination against women and that in the cases where women have been part of the peace process, where they have been around the table, where they have signed a peace agreement, did you have more options put on the table to to discuss for a peace agreement, like in Colombia, where women introduced land reform as one of the most crucial things to put in a peace agreement, but also that it lasts longer because women are peace keepers in their societies and in their homes and in their villages and in the countryside. So this is important statistics, although this

Speaker 4 [00:12:28] unfortunately is a modern

Margot Wallström [00:12:30] phenomenon that women are around the table and look at, look around the world right now. Do you see women taking part in the peace processes or the discussions in Yemen? Do you see that what is going on in Afghanistan right now in Syria? I mean, it has been a constant struggle for women to to be able to participate in the negotiations or to the agreements that that will shape their future as well. And they make up half the population. So to me, it is also a matter of democracy.

Andrew Scott [00:13:10] One other statistic, which you've told me I didn't know this before, I don't know how many people would know this, but what proportion of girls under the age of 18 in the world are married? And why is that proportion such a problem?

Speaker 4 [00:13:23] Well, you might think that you might find that this is a shocking statistic that every fifth girl in the world under 18 years of age is married. We have to look at why this is because in many countries and when I travel, for example, to the Lake Chad countries around Lake Chad, and they explained to me that this is a way to

Margot Wallström [00:13:52] secure

Speaker 4 [00:13:56] livelihood for for for the girls. You know, if they are married away, then there is a husband who will take care of them. Otherwise, girls are discriminated against in every aspect from health care to the fact that they have to do household chores and not play. They cannot go to school. They don't have the right to do all the things that boys normally can enjoy. And at the same time, you have to understand that when such a big proportion of young girls are married away before they are, they will also give birth to many children. So in both Chad and Niger, I think it was the average number of children were six or seven children. And of course, they will never get back to school. They don't have a chance to get a proper education. And it will be so much more difficult to fight poverty because they will remain in poverty. So I think that this is something we we have to help with. We have to make sure that also girls can enjoy proper education and have the right and access to to education. That's where it

Margot Wallström [00:15:12] starts. And I think we have to look at that also with our development policies. We have to go back to some very basic elements, like ensuring access to education.

Ebony Bennett [00:15:25] And Mark, I was going to ask about what it actually looked like when you implemented feminist foreign policy. I noted in the chapter you talked about making sure that women were invited to give input to security discussions and that female mediators and the. Is where part of agreements and things like that. What did it actually look like when he started implementing it?

Speaker 4 [00:15:51] Well, we served also during my period, as it were, with my status as foreign minister. We served two years as a non permanent member of the Security Council at the United Nations. And of course, we we had to make sure that we were consistent also in everything we did in the Security Council. And I I will claim that we

Margot Wallström [00:16:17] put this whole

Speaker 4 [00:16:19] issue of women, peace and security firmly on the Security Council's agenda. We made sure that every product of the Security Council, you know, whether it is

Margot Wallström [00:16:31] presidential resolutions

Speaker 4 [00:16:33] or resolutions or statements or, you know, the outcome of every meeting of the Security Council, that we have this issue covered, that it is mentioned we invited as many women as briefers to the Security Council as men. And that happened for for the first time. We made sure that in every discussion about the country's situation that this was also, you know, I made my ambassador raised his hand to say where all the women. So this was the question we repeated. And I know that, for example, Germany and other countries know Norway and those who serve on the Security Council have have taken on to to continue that that work. So so this was very important. And I have often told the story about above my ambassador because the Security Council travelled to Mali and he said, well, you always make me ask that question, where are the

women? And when we came to Mali, women came up to me and said, thank you very much for putting language about women's participation in the resolution about Mali, because for the first time we could meet with the president of our country. We were actually given a seat around the table. So I think that that is important. And then, of course, you have to set up a structure at the national level. We had an ambassador who worked on this issue. We introduced training for all our diplomats, the diplomatic corps. We made sure that there was a structure that would remain even if we went out of office or voted out of office, that that this would strengthen the way we work on these issues through our embassies around the world.

Andrew Scott [00:18:33] Margaret, can I mention one direct contact with Sweden and Australia had in foreign policy was when the young Australian named Alex went missing almost exactly three years ago in North Korea and there were grave fears for his safety. And then all of a sudden he emerged, accompanied by Swedish diplomatic envoy that you personally had sent. And Marise Payne, our foreign minister and minister for women, expressed gratitude and thanks to you in Sweden for extricating Alex from North Korea. But how did Sweden do that? Why was it Sweden and what Sweden do differently in foreign policy that might have led to that?

Speaker 4 [00:19:09] Well, thank you for mentioning this. And Sweden's role rolling in in achieving that outcome actually came about in part because we had and maintained the diplomatic presence and representation in North Korea since mid 1970s. And that's one of the few countries that have had an embassy there. Australia, Canada and the United States. We are we serve us as embassies and try to help also your countries in North Korea. And then we also invited and received the foreign minister of North Korea to Stockholm in March. Twenty eighteen. We tried to

Margot Wallström [00:19:59] contribute

Speaker 4 [00:20:00] to strengthening the communications and help to de-escalate also the very high tensions between North Korea and the United States at that time. But, you know, you even though you are very restricted, also our ambassadors and our staff at the embassy have been very restricted in exactly what they can do. But they build up a knowledge and contacts in the country. And we have also

Margot Wallström [00:20:27] had a special

Speaker 4 [00:20:28] envoy. And and I think thanks to those contacts, we were able to help. So I was very pleased that that we could that we could help. And I hope he's well,

Andrew Scott [00:20:43] I'm sure he was very relieved that Sweden did take that approach to foreign policy, as was his family and many others. Not a transactional approach in foreign policy, but acting according to values and the importance of maintaining dialogue and so on. It hasn't always been an agreement between Sweden and Australia, though. You were European commissioner for the environment from 1999 to 2004. How did you go with Australia then in tackling climate change?

Margot Wallström [00:21:11] When I visited Australia, I was commissioner for the environment, and then my portfolio was source of climate change. So, for example, what is being discussed now with the emissions trading system or the chemicals legislation was was part of my responsibilities. But that I went to Australia because I really wanted Australia to come on board. At that time. It was the Kyoto Protocol that we discussed on climate change, but it was not easy. And and

Australia chose a different path. Maybe now the debate in Australia has changed also with the experience that you've had of these extreme weather conditions with the fires and the drought and what have you, and these this will continue. The extreme weather events has been pointed out as one of the effects of climate change by all the three consecutive reports from the IPCC. And we simply have to do more and we don't have much time. So at the moment, as you know, the European Union is presenting a real package with the rather drastic measures. Not even that might be enough to keep us under the one point five degree change in temperature. But but we have to we have to start. And I think the minute you put that in place, I think other countries will also see that it is possible and they will have to follow and more and more countries will be affected by this extreme.

Ebony Bennett [00:23:09] And I'm really sorry to report that the bushfire, sadly didn't seem to change the federal government's policy on climate change much certainly didn't increase their ambition to reduce emissions. But I was going to ask about that European package that we've just heard about. One of them includes a carbon border adjustment mechanism. So very emissions intensive exports from Australia, such as aluminium and things like that could be subjected to tariffs. So do you think that's the reality, that even if domestically the politics are still quite difficult at a federal level for Australia, that more and more international pressure is going to face the country as other countries see the impacts and really try and lift their ambitions?

Speaker 4 [00:23:58] Yeah, yeah, absolutely. That's my short answer. Yes, I think I think we will see that it will accelerate drastically the effects of climate change. Can I recommend a Netflix movie called *The Boundaries*? Oh, my goodness. It's with you on Wroxtton, the professor, Swedish Professor David Attenborough. *Breaking breaking boundaries*. It's called. I think it sets out the the the scene that we that we can see for for climate change. And it's done in a very sort of scientific way and at the same time, easier to understand for for everybody. It doesn't take away all our hopes. Luckily, it says that we still have a reasonable chance to do something about this, but it doesn't in a very pedagogical way. And I just think we need to understand exactly what we are about to do. And, of course, we are here in the Arctic

Margot Wallström [00:25:17] region and you are on the other you're down under the Antarctica and we will be the most affected. You know, it's like you are. Some said that if if the snow melts, the snow and ice melts in the Arctic region, it's like when the sun is shining and you take off your cap from your head and the sun will shine directly on you. So we see that the increase in temperature is going much, much faster. And I know that Antarctica is also affected in the same way that the heat will be very dramatic unless we do something

Ebony Bennett [00:25:57] quickly with them. We'll get to questions from the audience just shortly, but I thank you for that Netflix recommendation. We've actually got two cities in Australia in lockdown. Jada, I'm sure they'll all be looking for Netflix recommendations at the moment, *breaking boundaries*. Andrew, did you have another question? Before we go to the Q&A,

Andrew Scott [00:26:21] I would like to ask you about asylum seekers. Sweden and Germany are the two countries in Europe which have gone against the tide and taken many asylum seekers in recent years. And it does contradict the the the incorrect image that many have of Sweden as being a monocultural place where only blonde people and three blondes in this panel. But you find Spike, that's not typical of Australia or really Sweden anymore. Why have Sweden, like Germany under Angela Merkel, taken so many asylum seekers? And do you think Australia should take more?

Speaker 4 [00:27:01] I think we have to share the responsibility and it's not only a burden, but it can be also at times a burden, because when so many people came, as was the situation in 2015, you know, it was this put a strain on our systems, of course, of our sort of welfare systems and the whole society. And since we've had a very sort of negative debate and it has affected politics in Sweden, where all the problems are even pointed out. And at the same time,

Margot Wallström [00:27:37] Sweden has

Speaker 4 [00:27:38] changed drastically from when I grew up. I mean, no, I think we are around 20 percent of our

Margot Wallström [00:27:45] population, if not more,

Speaker 4 [00:27:48] than have roots in another country. And of course, this is also a blessing and a gift to our society. We develop thanks to that. But we also it is also a challenge when you take in so many people at the same time, and especially since we received so many

Margot Wallström [00:28:10] children

Speaker 4 [00:28:11] and unaccompanied minors and the proportion of that made sort of an impact, the deep impact, impact on society. So I think if we had had a distribution and sharing of that responsibility when they came in 2015, it wouldn't have been any problem for any country in the European Union. But it was it was a fight over over this. And it continued to be,

Margot Wallström [00:28:44] I would say, also denotes sort of the the debate that we have on on immigration in in Sweden. And we want to be you know, we want to have a human respect of the asylum laws and the asylum legislation and also have a human approach to to dealing with those issues.

Ebony Bennett [00:29:09] Thanks so much, Margot. We might go to questions from the audience now. And thank you so much, everyone, for tuning in. I know we've got hundreds of you on the line with us today from right around the country and a few people from overseas as well. So much for tuning in. The first question that I've got here is from Julianna McCann. She says, How can an ambassador pursuing a feminist foreign policy agenda change or affect the three Rs for women in that country? As an outsider, perhaps for people who aren't necessarily familiar with how diplomacy works in that respect?

Margot Wallström [00:29:49] No, that's a great question. That's absolutely what it's all about. How how are they supposed to act? Because I think when I when I announced that we would pursue a feminist foreign policy, many of the ambassadors, I'm sure, sort of their jaws dropped to what what is this now and how are we going to work on this? And this is why it helped to define it, to say, well, you you have to look at it in the country where where you represent Sweden. You should look at when it comes to rights. So what about the legislation in this country? Can women open a bank account? Can be inherit the land? Can they take on any job? Can. What about discriminatory laws, et cetera? Can can girls go to school? And to look at whether we can have when it comes to the gender budgeting or getting the statistics they need and and all of that. And I think that many ambassadors as well as they told me they were looking at. So let's see, who do we invite to to to come to the embassy or to different events that we arrange? Are we sure that we cover also the

and listen to the voices of women and girls properly? Can we do even better? We introduce through our embassies an exhibition that was called Swedish Dads, and it turned out that that was a very, very effective way of having an impact on the debate about the role of men in the country and in that country and on, for example, introducing parental leave, which was the result in a couple of countries after having had that the scene that that exhibition. So I think they they chose, according to the the reality check that they did in that country, they followed up. And we have also to use the network of women mediators and the. So we had 15 members of that network and they have been deployed to situations of peace agreements or or or

Speaker 4 [00:32:15] different process peace

Margot Wallström [00:32:16] processes in countries from Colombia to Afghanistan. So they are all deployed in different situations. So to encourage to make sure that we help, that we share our own experiences and that we work towards gender equality.

Speaker 4 [00:32:34] And I think the

Margot Wallström [00:32:35] enthusiasm that that came as a result has been absolutely amazing. So it was not difficult because if you just look carefully, you will see that there is still so much unfortunately, so much of discrimination against women. And so we have to do something about that.

Ebony Bennett [00:32:56] The next question is from Jill Rodgers. She says that having women involved in foreign policy clearly changes the outcome of the policy. But does it also change the process by which that policy is achieved?

Margot Wallström [00:33:12] Yeah, I think it will. If you have sort of enough women participating, I think, you know, it's not only to have like a token woman that you you play somewhere. But as was stated already in Beijing, the action plan for women is that you need around 30 percent of women to actually create that critical mass that will change things around. And you will need support from from other women to to maybe turn things around completely or find that that you work in a different way, that the minute that that women are or are on board, they will also bring their experiences. And I often say it's not that women are better than men. We of course, we would like to think so. But but that's not necessarily true. But we we have a different experience with us. And and that is also necessary to make us all richer if we if we share also women's experience and knowledge. And they are their thoughts and ideas about how to work.

Ebony Bennett [00:34:26] Thank you. The next question that I've got here is from Sara Davies, and she says she'd like to hear about your experience trying to end the arms trade deals with countries that had high gender inequality. And she'd also take part in a second question here. I like to know your thoughts about the immediate priorities for women's peace and security in the next five years.

Margot Wallström [00:34:56] Well, as you know, Sweden also produces weapons and military equipment. And, of course, that is the dilemma for a country who also insists on working for for peace and development then. And the way we have dealt with that with the is that we have very strict legislation and control over export of of weapons and with, of course, a role for the Swedish parliament and also with a new a new democracy criteria that has been introduced lately. So the process is sort of a separate one with with the control of parliament and also with those kinds of

objectives of making sure that it doesn't end up in the wrong in the wrong hands. And this is an ongoing debate, of course. And if you

Speaker 4 [00:36:11] ask me, I would have preferred that

Margot Wallström [00:36:13] Sweden, not Sweden, did not trade in weapons. But it is important for a country that is also a non aligned country and to show that we are willing to defend ourselves, that we have also a strong a strong sort of defence industry. So that is the background of the history and how this has developed

Ebony Bennett [00:36:42] and the priorities for women's peace and security in the next five years.

Margot Wallström [00:36:46] When I think this is also a very relevant question, because I think it just has to be more intensive that, you know,

Speaker 4 [00:36:54] what is called intersectionality will will

Margot Wallström [00:36:57] become

Speaker 4 [00:36:58] a more prominent part of all of this. To me, this is natural. The minute you because to me it's also about democracy. You have to

Margot Wallström [00:37:06] include all all

Speaker 4 [00:37:09] women and you have to make sure that there is not a discrimination. But I think this has to be put much, much clearer in the way we work plans and structures.

Ebony Bennett [00:37:25] The next question is a kind of stimulus. I'm going to put them together there from a whip and Isabella, boom. They ask what impact that having a feminist foreign policy would one ask would have on Australia's ability to navigate the strategic competition between the United States and China at the moment? And the other one asks on Australia's role in the Pacific Islands.

Speaker 4 [00:37:56] Well, I think we we can only share our experiences, we can say that this is our history, this is how we have been, this is what we have learnt. This is what we believe in. This follows our ideas of of foreign policy and security policy, because I truly believe that security policy has to be redefined. We know that security is not hard security. It has to be smart security or support for the future. And a security policy these days is not only about sort of defence, it is really also about pandemics, climate change and everything that were environmental catastrophes that will impact have a deep impact on our lives. So you have to redefine security as common security.

Margot Wallström [00:38:53] You have to come back to that concept. It's an old concept.

Speaker 4 [00:38:58] I think that and Australia, of course, will have to design because I think it's now

Margot Wallström [00:39:06] several

Speaker 4 [00:39:06] countries that have followed in our footsteps and declared that they have either a development policy or foreign policy that is a feminist foreign policy, including Mexico, Canada,

Margot Wallström [00:39:17] France, Luxembourg,

Speaker 4 [00:39:21] Tunisia,

Margot Wallström [00:39:23] and I think maybe one or two more.

Speaker 4 [00:39:26] And you will have to look at how will this be helpful in in your policy? What is it that we've learnt

Margot Wallström [00:39:34] about the role

Speaker 4 [00:39:36] of women in peace processes? Do we believe in that, in those

Margot Wallström [00:39:41] facts and statistics?

Speaker 4 [00:39:42] And what do we do about this? And I think it's obvious because women make up half of of the population on this planet, you cannot exclude women in peace process because

Margot Wallström [00:39:56] you will not have a long lasting peace unless they are

Speaker 4 [00:39:59] also on board and

Margot Wallström [00:40:01] involved and given listen to and be given a proper role. So to me, it's. But but you have to shape it so that it fits, of course, Australia and you choose your path, the future. But we are a group of countries that can stick together

Speaker 4 [00:40:23] and share our experience.

Ebony Bennett [00:40:25] Yeah. The next question is from John Name. He says, How good are fully paid parental leave scheme for better future outcomes for all citizens? And there's quite a few people asking about that Swedish dads exhibition in the chat. Just how transformative, I guess, was where those policies for Sweden and how much is that linked to the ability to implement a feminist foreign policy years, years later?

Speaker 4 [00:40:54] Can I give you a sort of the fair shot and killed? A friend of mine said that he had found his grandfather's

Margot Wallström [00:41:01] diaries and his grandfather wrote today he had found the dates when they were born, when the children were born. So his grandfather wrote and his wife gave birth to a son. So he was completely sort of detached from that, from that. And then his father wrote today, I got five big fish. A Pike, I think is the name of the book. I got five packs and a son. And then he so actually the fish was mentioned first and then with the other son the same day. And then his own experience, of course, being there as a father with his wife and four and then also using his parental leave. So I think that this is it shows the story of how how it changes. Also the way you look at children and your own role as the parent and the understanding of what it

takes to raise a child. I think it cannot be it mustn't be underestimated. It is so fantastic to see my sons now with my son, with with his children. And it's just, yeah, I think it transforms a society completely, very, very important. And the thing with the exhibition was that they were then asked to send in their own photos and their stories about what happened with how they relate and how they act and and are together with their children and moving and fantastic stories.

Ebony Bennett [00:42:51] Mhm. Um the next question is from. She says, Does Sweden teach gender equality in schools?

Margot Wallström [00:43:00] Yes, yes, absolutely. It's part of the curriculum, too, to talk about gender equality in school.

Ebony Bennett [00:43:10] Margot, you touched on, I guess, outcomes for women and being out of find good statistics on budgeting and things like that. Andrew, I wondered if I might just ask you quickly the chapter of the MAGOS in the book, and I'll just remind everyone the Nordic Edge available in all good bookstores in Australia. The chapter after that deals with gender budgeting, which was started in Australia, but then kind of fell away. Could you just tell us a little bit about that chapter?

Andrew Scott [00:43:39] Thank you. Yes, Marion Store is the co-author of the chapter, and he was involved, as was and Summers in the pioneering of Kaneda budgeting in the 1980s in Australia, following on from the Whitlam governments and the Women Women's Electoral Lobby. If it's the strange thing is that Australia invented it and inspired Sweden and other countries to take it up in Australia, stopped it in Sweden and other Nordic countries, kept it going. And Marion is firmly of the view that of budgeting helps prevent Naani gender inequality and economic inequalities too, and so argues for a return to it. And she does so in conjunction with Lanita Freedom Veau, a Swedish colleague at the University of Stockholm who is also advised the Swedish parliament on gender equality. And perhaps the Australian Parliament could do with some advice on gender equality to.

Ebony Bennett [00:44:30] Hmm, indeed, and actually on that same kind of note, the Australia Institute and in another anecdote, we did some research looking at the gender impacts and the outcomes of the government's proposed income tax cuts. And we looked at who benefits more men or women or if it's equal. And basically because the income tax cuts package really designed for high income earners and more men and higher incomes, we found that from stage three tax cuts, men would benefit two dollars for every dollar that women received, which the prime minister and treasurer didn't really fancy much. I think the prime minister complained that you don't fill out a tax return and a blue tax return. But the reality is, yeah, it was because we don't have that gender budgeting anymore. They're implementing policies that really widen an income gap and a wealth gap between men and women in Australia. So very interesting. The next question that we've got here is from Michelle Emerson. She says, Sweden has a proud tradition of generosity to international development assistance, currently over one percent of GDP compared to Australia's zero point two percent, which she's correctly described as paltry. The feminist foreign policy can be seen in Sweden's international assistance as well, with a strong focus on sexual and reproductive health and rights. And she asks, How do you think feminist foreign policy will continue to shape Sweden's international assistance in the future?

Speaker 4 [00:46:07] As it has until now, I think it has saved lives and the campaign that we had also called midwives for all has really made make a difference. And it's correct that there has been

a focus on sexual and reproductive rights and rights and health, and that means the difference between life and death in so many countries. So I think that this is this will continue to be sort of a major part of our development policy. And I think this is

Margot Wallström [00:46:46] also for our own

Speaker 4 [00:46:47] good. We have to understand that if we do this, we will all know the destiny of others is also our destiny. And we see it clearer and clearer. If we help or so poor countries there would be less inclined to to leave their their countries and try to to come here, but instead have a dignified be able to live a dignified life where where they are.

Margot Wallström [00:47:16] And so it's it's something that can help all of us in the end.

Ebony Bennett [00:47:23] I've got a question here and a couple of comments that I've noticed about how good would it be if every leader on the planet was a woman. You talked a little bit about political representation, but why is that important?

Speaker 4 [00:47:38] Well, I think we we are you know, we make up half half of the population, as I've said many times now, so it's fair that that we we could be represented up to 50 percent. And I think we need to share and we we need to live together also with women. And the men will play a very important role in making sure that this this is good for both men and women and children. And I I don't think I want to see a mix. I think that's natural that we have a mix of both with women and men as leaders. There are too few women who are leaders. I admire many of. And it has been said often that in dealing with Kofi Annan, the pandemic, women leaders have been more effective. I am I don't know if we have enough of examples to to sort of be able to prove that. But I can see that that women like Jacinda Ardern and Angela Merkel and others, they have found their own way to communicate and their own way to sort of shape the policies and interact with their populations. And I think they are in a lot of respect for that. And that's

Margot Wallström [00:49:04] what we wish for that that people and women everywhere and women leaders, more women leaders, and that they should

Speaker 4 [00:49:11] be able to do things there in their own way, following

Margot Wallström [00:49:16] their personality on their own.

Ebony Bennett [00:49:18] They're always I've got a couple of questions in here around whistle blowers from Kimberly and Mike Dore. They're asking how to sweet regard whistleblowers and what would be the difference in handling such things in Sweden compared to Australia in the USA. Kimberly and Mike, I will point you to the chapter that I co-authored in the book on media diversity. We certainly looked at all the Nordic countries, including Sweden, and they really topped the charts for press freedom the way that they deal with whistleblowers, certainly compared to Australia, which has fallen in the world press freedom rankings recently. And partly I think that's to do with the fact that press freedom is protected in some of the constitutions of those countries. And it's not in Australia. But certainly I don't think and correct me if I'm wrong, but I'll get you to comment on this in a second. But you wouldn't see the raids on things like the ABC and specific journalists like Annika Smethurst that we've certainly seen here in Australia in the past and pretty weak defence of Julian Assange as well. But is there anything you'd like to add on the topic of whistleblowers, Margot?

Speaker 4 [00:50:35] No, but there has to be sort of a legal protection

Margot Wallström [00:50:38] of of

Speaker 4 [00:50:41] whistleblowers and also the kind of legislation that we have, which creates a very open, open society and having access to the documents and the procedures and so on. So that's very important in our Constitution puts a good defence for whistleblowers.

Ebony Bennett [00:51:05] The next question is from Harriet Bailey. She says, How do you think diplomatic representatives can institutionalise feminist approaches within the United Nations systems and organisations, noting that very few international organisations are headed by women?

Speaker 4 [00:51:25] Well, I you know, you have to be consistent and coherent if if we announce that we pursue a feminist foreign policy, we hope we have to make sure that we are ambassadors, are also women, that we appoint women and and we we change that and improve that during my years as well. So you have to make sure that that you are you making and turning to an example of all of this, and you

Margot Wallström [00:51:54] have to be

Speaker 4 [00:51:57] very stubborn in all of these organisations. You have to look at sort of what candidates to support to make sure that you change the representation. You have to make sure that you also invite and interact with civil society organisations because they have a particular role to play. And this was also part of my agenda that I wanted to invite the civil society organisations to come also to to the foreign ministry to give us sort of their insights and their ideas about how to to work on certain policy areas. So I think this is an ongoing work and you just have to make sure that you insist on this being you change the attitude, you change the understanding of certain things. I think we should mention also one more thing, and I think we have I think I mentioned it in my chapter, but we also looked at Wikipedia and we noted that

Margot Wallström [00:53:03] 90 percent of the editors were men. And we we of course, we became sort of the the place where they could come, where we invited women and those who could write more pieces about women to put them on Wikipedia. And this result had a very good result with with all of this. And I think that's another example of what you can can do to to change sort of the the outcome and the results.

Ebony Bennett [00:53:42] And the next question I've got is from Rochelle Strache. Strache, sorry if I've mispronounced his name there, Michelle. She says, What recommendations can you suggest for Australians interested in helping to progress a treaty with First Nations Australians?

Margot Wallström [00:54:02] Can I give any advice? I don't know if I'm the right person to give any advice, I think. All right. The minute you you you find your your voice, the minute you find others to share your engagement engagement with, then you will also find a way to to work on it if you want to start a new organisation or if you want to enter into existing organisations. But I guess there is a lot of work to, to do. So I, I really I'm not the best person to give you advice on what to do in Australia.

Andrew Scott [00:54:45] Could I just mention the Ebony mother? It's not so widely known that Finland has a constitution which protects the languages of its indigenous Sami people and indeed not only protects languages, but enshrines the right that they be able to go to school and maintain their own languages. And that is something, of course, we haven't done in Australia. In the Sami people, the indigenous peoples of the Nordic region have much less health disparities compared to the rest of the population than indigenous Australians do. And it's quite a bit to be learnt from that comparison.

Ebony Bennett [00:55:20] Hmm. Thanks, Andrew. And just worth noting that people can support the Olary statement from the heart. And there's a big push on this year to really make sure that the voice to parliament in particular stays on the national agenda and gets progressed. Before we wrap up. I've got one last question here from Yolanda Vega. And you've already kind of touched, I think, Mago and a couple of things, but I thought it might be good to kind of end on what positive outcomes have been measured from the Swedish foreign policy, feminist foreign policy and what have been the results. Give us some of the greatest hits.

Margot Wallström [00:55:57] Yeah, well, I,

Speaker 4 [00:55:59] I would say, first of all, that we placed it firmly on the UN Security Council's agenda. I think it will stay there and we will see that that it is needed more and more. I think that we've done it in changing the lives of women and girls everywhere through our embassies, works through the development policy, through through trade policy and everything that that our fantastic diplomatic people in the diplomatic corps are doing as well, introducing policies that ensures the right to representation and that resources go to to all these women and girls. I think that the network of networks, I would say because now they exist in many parts of the world of women mediators and negotiators will also change the way we look at peace processes. So I think we see that more women means more peace. And I think that we have put in place also a structure in the foreign ministry that we let this leave on. And I hope we have inspired others as well. And I can see that there are organisations now set up that will argue for for a feminist foreign policy. So I hope that by being a bit controversial, choosing a controversial term like this, we we have also maybe a little bit bent the arc of history in the right direction. But it is also the practical outcomes in looking at rights, representation and resources that I care about.

Ebony Bennett [00:57:47] Yeah, well, we'll have to wrap it up there. But thank you so much for your time this evening, Margaret. And to Andrew as well. Mago's written an absolutely cracking chapter, so please check out the book. You should be able to find that in all your local bookstores, The Nordic Edge Policy Possibilities for Australia co-editor Professor Andrew Scott, as well as our research director Rod Campbell, who couldn't join us tonight. Thank you so much, everyone, for your wonderful questions. I'm sorry we couldn't get to all of them. And just a reminder, don't forget to subscribe to Australia Institute DOT TV. You'll find all the recordings from our previous webinars and the recording from tonight's one will be up there soon as well. And thanks very much, everyone. Stay safe out there and we'll see you next time.

Margot Wallström [00:58:36] Thank you for having me. Bye bye bye.