WOMEN, MEN, CITIZENSHIP AND THE NEW SECURITY THINKING IN SWEDEN

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Introduction

In Sweden, the current defense situation is marked by rapid and far-reaching measures to change the military organization in order to cut costs but also with the purpose of aligning Sweden’s defense with that of the other EU members. In 2001, it was clear that Sweden had made a break with the neutrality doctrine of the past and was now venturing onto a new course for it’s “national interest”, to use a realist term. In April 2001, Swedish Foreign Minister Anna Lindh publicly announced that Sweden would no longer call itself a neutral state. In the declaration of the government in February 2002 this new approach was officially laid down and confirmed by a majority of the Parliament (Regeringsdeklarationen 2002). Today, neutrality has lost its long-standing salience and in the security doctrine of 2002, neutrality is considered a historical phase of Swedish security. A new vision is beginning to take shape of Sweden’s future military role amongst the other members of the EU. For example, one of the main points of the Swedish Defense force’s descriptions of its role in the years to come is as an active participant in a European peacekeeping task force.

During the cold war, Sweden managed to create a position for itself as a neutral little “great power.” As described by one Swedish historian, for the most part the special international position held by Sweden during the 1960’s and 70’s was a grandiose illusion and depended solely upon cold war tensions between the blocs. Consequently, the end of the cold war meant not only that Sweden had to re-evaluate its security needs but also that it lost its special in-between position. Thus, it simultaneously lost its national identity and strong positive self-image that seemed for a long time to make Sweden a winner internationally (Agrell, 2000, 278). For the last ten years, Sweden has needed to establish a new foreign and security doctrine. The neutrality doctrine had far-reaching effects on gender and citizenship in Sweden. As we have shown in earlier works, the everyday practice of neutrality had very different effects on men’s
and women’s lives. High military spending and the separation of male and female citizenship with different duties and obligations vis-à-vis the state upheld by the practice of compulsory male conscription are but a couple of the many effects it had on Swedish society at large (Kronsell and Svedberg, 2001). In this paper we look at the defense and security thinking from a different angle than is usually the case in most foreign policy and security analyses. In short, we are interested in how gender constructions and citizenship in Sweden are manifested in the current search for changed security thinking.

The paper consists of three parts. First we present the main points of the thinking on a new strategic security for Sweden. In the second part of the paper we discuss what Joan Scott has called the timeless paradox within feminism and of which Carole Pateman coined the expression Wollstonecraft’s dilemma. We look at how this paradox has bearing on the debate on whether women’s active participation in the military and war making should be supported as a step in the right direction or not. In the third and last part of the paper we briefly discuss a recent debate between Swedish feminist politicians and the younger generation of politicians born in the 1970’s.

Citizenship, gender, nationalism

Many feminist works have convincingly shown that gender constructions play an important role in nationalism. Ideas regarding the nation typically stipulate different roles for the male and female citizens, locating separate spheres and tasks to be performed by the two in the service of the nation (Elshtain, 1995; Cohn, ; Jabri, 1996; Pettman, 1996; Cockburn, 1996). Focusing on the current Swedish context, this paper will argue that enmeshed with the military and defense changes are well-known models, or gender constructions, of what men and women ought to be, i.e. what the core of the masculine and the feminine citizen of the Kingdom of Sweden is and how they may best be utilized today in the service of Sweden’s interests in post cold war Europe. In Elshtain’s analysis, the relational but unequal identities of men and women vis-à-vis the state - manifested in the constantly re-created categories of those who protect and those who are protected - are represented in the images of just warriors (soldiers) and beautiful souls (non-combatants). ‘Beautiful souls are too good for the world, yet absolutely necessary to it’ (Elshtain, 1995: 140). Elshtain shows that the identity of the soldier is associated with the just warrior, who is willing to dedicate his life for the good of the state and the nation.1 According to Ruth Lister women’s position vis-à-vis the state differs from that of men as a result of them not

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1 Other types of masculinities and femininities are also presented in Elshtain’s work, such as the Reluctant Warrior (the early Christian pacifist tradition) or the Compassionate Warrior, the soldier who places highest value not on protecting the abstract notion of the nation or the collective, but on sacrificing himself for the other soldiers in his group (Elshtain, 1995: 206).
being soldiers. Therefore, women are not considered to be full citizens in the same way as men (Lister, 1997). “The citizen is the male individual who acts in the public sphere, representative of the household which he heads through the hierarchical institution of marriage, the locus of male citizens’ power over female non-citizens” (Lister, 1997: 70). The male citizen became the norm already in the Athenian polis where he had a higher ranking in society due to his willingness to give his life for his country (Hartsock, 1983: 186-209). Furthermore, this construction of male citizenship prescribes a particular role for women as that of mothers and beautiful souls. The image of the female citizen as caretaker has been crucial to national security as well as to the construction of national identities. In this imagery, the natural role of the female citizen is to unselfishly serve the nation by caring and nursing, while the privilege and duty of the male citizen and soldier is to be willing to sacrifice his life for the sake of the nation.

In practice, the Swedish male conscript’s role has indeed been defined in these terms. His duty to protect and sacrifice is expressed in the law on compulsory conscription from 1941 in effect until 1990 (SOU 1990:89):

> The soldier must be instilled with such a sense of duty that, even under a threat to his life, he shall comply and fulfill his duty without hesitation. This is the foundation whereupon ultimately lies the army’s fighting capability in wartime (The 1941 Defense Report cited in SOU 1965: 68, p. 34. Our translation, emphasis added).

The appeal to the soldier’s duty to sacrifice his life for the nation is unquestionable. In addition, the notion of the just warrior takes on a meaning in the Swedish context parallel to what is expressed as virtuous behavior on the international scene by the neutrality doctrine. Both the collective Swedish nation/army and the individual Swedish soldier are constructed in a way, which resembles the just warrior. The Swedish nation’s behavior internationally, as a ‘just state’, implies not physically intervening in other states’ conflicts, and a real Swedish soldier is a just warrior if he acts in accordance with the beliefs propagated by neutrality, namely solidarity, peace, equity and democracy. This gives the Swedish soldier a more just character compared to other national soldiers.

Women in Sweden have been admitted to military service as well as training to become officers since 1980. The number of women who have gone through military training in Sweden has been small, if not miniscule. However, that women could enter the military was until recently regarded solely as an equal opportunity issue and not as a matter of how to attract the best individuals to the organization. The enlistment authorities made no efforts to recruit women. The information material that turned to young women regarding the possibility of volunteering to serve in the military was arguably more discouraging than encouraging. This was true until
spring 2001, when a new and completely different homepage on this topic was created on the internet as a result of a spontaneous initiative on the part of a small group of women military personnel. However, attitudes within military and defense circles on how to perceive women’s role in the military have gradually shifted. Beginning around 1998 new signals were being sent out to the public when Defense Minister Björn von Sydow described the increase of the number of women in the military as having direct bearing on the military organization of the future. According to von Sydow, this could meet the new security needs of a more specialized and skilled personnel. Thus, there seems to be a shift in framing the issue of women in the military from being about equal opportunities in the state sector in general to being about the military organization’s problems in meeting the demands of a post cold war European security scenario.

Still, why include more women? And why is it possible to envision now when it was not “impossible” before?2 What is it that makes it suddenly possible for the military to be so relaxed over the issue of including women - on a regular basis and not as volunteers - in the military? An overall question, of which it is too early in our research to make an in-depth analysis, is whether the re-formulation of a national identity (after neutrality) puts into question earlier held assumptions regarding men’s and women’s rigid separation in terms of different roles and duties vis-à-vis the state? Perhaps a slackening of the connection man-conscription in Sweden is what makes it now possible to have women enter this masculine “territory” on a large scale? The practice of conscription for all these generations of men in Sweden, i.e. the ability to quickly mobilize very large segments of the population, was for a long time a fundamental of Sweden’s Defensive strength. However, as a social practice conscription was equally important as an institution of male initiation whereby men were introduced into manhood and masculinity.3 Does seeking for an increase of the number of women in the armed forces have anything to do with letting go of a masculine cold war identity provided to generations of male Swedes before today, by the neutrality doctrine? From a state perspective, the practice of male conscription in Sweden was also a social institution that provided the welfare state Folkhemmet with men who understood the concept of duty (Kronsell and Svedberg, 2001). Via the training the individual soldier would learn to shoulder the duty as Protector of the neutral territory of Sweden. Taking on this duty would in turn impel him to feel personally responsible for the

2 Judging from the Minister of Defense Leni Björklund’s response in the spring of 2003, it is still not politically possible to have general conscription in Sweden. Björklund has repeatedly stated that conscription for women as well as men would be far too costly to put into practice. There is however continued strong support in the Parliament for women’s right to volunteer to be conscripted and do military service.

3 It was not uncommon for military spokesmen to explicitly state the importance of conscription in terms of “We make men out of boys”, and the like, see Kronsell and Svedberg, 2001.
nation’s security and the larger picture of Sweden situated both ideologically and geo-politically between the NATO and the Warsaw Pact. For decades during the cold war, young male conscripts were taught to see the Swedish soldier/man as a positive role model, a *neutral soldier*. As discussed already, the Swedish conscripted soldier was more righteous than other soldiers for he would not interfere in conflicts that did not directly pose a threat to Swedish security. Today, conscription has in practicality ceased to function as an initiation into manhood since less than one third of the young men going through military training every year. However, the question of how and why the loss of the role model of a dutiful neutral just warrior is linked with also letting go of traditional beautiful souls in favor of more women-in-arms is too early for us to say.\(^4\)

**Changing military and security thinking in post cold war Sweden**

During the second half of the 20\(^{th}\) Century, Sweden’s own definition of its national interest was to maintain non-alignment with other states in peacetime, with the intention of staying neutral in case of war. Whether Sweden really was non-aligned has been questioned since the ending of the cold war. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that neutrality was an important part of what it was to be Swedish to large segments of the public, the elite groups and the military in Sweden. The idea of neutral Sweden also contributed to a certain Swedish pride; that Sweden was an internationally known and respected active mediator and an independent, often sharp, critic of the large powers’ interventions in smaller states’ political and economic development. Well into the 90’s however, it became clear that Sweden had depended upon NATO for protection in case of a Soviet invasion. The agreement with the US military was secret to the extent that Swedish top politicians were equally kept in the dark. The situation was most likely only possible due to a long uninterrupted governing period of the Social Democratic party.\(^5\) The neutrality doctrine also had far-reaching effects on the internal economy and political power constellations. Since Swedish neutrality was not guaranteed by the major powers, its ability to appear credible as a neutral in case of war or international conflict was crucial (Goldman, ). Self-sufficiency in terms of food, clothing and weaponry was important to maintain. Consequently, these branches of national production were for a long time receiving large subsidies from the state.

\(^4\) Women have always been present in or connected to the military organization in Sweden. Women were not armed but were expected to tend to soldiers’ needs; clothing, food, nursing, psychological support etc. We have categorized women in the vicinity of the soldiers as beautiful souls performing typical female tasks. Most women’s work in the military was volunteer work.

\(^5\) The Social Democratic party was democratically re-elected so many times that in the end they had held office for 45 consecutive years.
After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the international political changes during the 1990’s in Europe, Sweden was careful not to officially change its defense and military course too quickly. Thus, it was not until the defense budget of 1996 that far-reaching cutbacks and re-allocations started to appear. Since then a number of military units in small and mid-sized towns around Sweden have ceased to be military installations and many employees – both military and civilian personnel, such as psychologists, teachers and medical professionals – have left the military. Still, even after significant cutbacks up to as much as 10 percent yearly beginning in 1997, the defense forces continues to be the single most costly branch of state expenditures with a total spending of 40 billion SEK yearly (RP 1999/2000:30, 19). The conscription army, which had traditionally been the backbone of the Armed forces, was made a corner stone in the cut-backs in military spending with the result of a sharp decrease in the number of conscripts trained every year. However, male conscription remains in the constitution where it continues to be the only law that explicitly does not apply equally to men and women. In an earlier study we found that conscription practices still contribute to a conservation of essentializing ideas regarding men and women, masculinity and femininity, war and peace.6

In the governmental investigations laying down the new strategic needs to be met by what is commonly referred to as the new defense of Sweden, 1996 is marked so to speak as “year zero” of this new era (SOU 2001: 23, p43-53). The parliamentary defense decision of 1996 agreed on four main tasks for the Defense forces. (1) To defend against an armed attack against Sweden. (2) To upheld Sweden’s territorial integrity. (3) To contribute to peace and security abroad. (4) To strengthen the Swedish society in case of severe challenges in peacetime (SOU 2001: 23, p46). This is to be compared with the preceding tasks of the Defense forces that focused more exclusively on (1) and (2). The vision of a militarily internationalist Sweden as expressed in the third task of the Defense forces has been enthusiastically backed up by high ranking military and could be seen as the Swedish military organization’s way to preserve itself and survive in times of large-scale cutbacks of the public sector (see RP 1999/2000:30, 22-35).

Furthermore, in the governmental white paper that lays out the new directions in personnel policy to realize the new Defense forces, there is a will expressed to recruit more women to the force “for the sake of gender equality issues” (RP 1999/2000:30, 109). It is also stated that other groups, such as immigrants and civilian professionals need to have a stronger presence among employed personnel in the Defense forces. These trends are an indication of Sweden being attuned with other western militaries that have already gone through similar kinds of organizational and attitudinal changes to a more fragmented military organization that allows

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6 In interviews with more than twenty conscripted soldiers during spring 2000.
for individual characteristics of the soldiers to become more visible, the so-called post-modern military (Moskos et al, 2000).

**Women in arms and the difference question in feminism**

Women’s inclusion in the military is in many ways a type of situation when a timeless paradox in the struggle for women’s equal citizenship comes to the fore. The paradox is that while a cornerstone of women’s organized political struggle has been and continuous to be to reach equality with men, i.e. to receive “gender-neutral” treatment as citizens on the part of the state, women must still retain themselves as political subjects and as a group apart from men. This is what Joan Scott has called "the constant paradox of feminism." Scott refers to women’s historical struggle to become full political subjects and be regarded and treated the same as male citizens, but she also describes a much larger dilemma among feminists: "In order to protest women’s exclusion [feminists] had to act on behalf of women and so evoked the very difference they sought to deny” (Scott, 1996, x). Carole Pateman has called the same problem “Wollstonecraft’s dilemma” after Mary Wollstonecraft who wrote about women’s rights in the late 1700’s. The dilemma has been that women “have struggled with the task of trying to become citizens within an ideal and practice that have gained universal meaning through their exclusion” (Pateman, 1980, 197). In other words, the dilemma persists as long as society continues to rest on an implicit patriarchal order. Today, when the need for more women in the military is being expressed in unprecedented ways, in official statements by politicians and in governmental and parliamentary investigations, it might appear as if one of the last havens of hegemonic masculinity and patriarchal orders in society is dissolving (see SOU 2000:21; SOU 2001:23; RP 1999/2000:30). However, we argue that seemingly progressive thinking leaving room for more individuality on the part of the soldier is at closer scrutiny nevertheless continuous with a fixed dualism that enables patriarchy to live on inside the military organization. Clearly, attitudes have changed so that women as military are now acceptable but it is equally clear that not any type of woman will do. The stipulations of what Sweden’s women-in-arms should be like are more complex than they ever were for the traditional Swedish male neutral conscript. Women are said to be especially suitable to serve in the new Defense because of the future demand of highly skilled communicators. Politicians refer to studies that show that women are better communicators than men; they are more likely to de-escalate conflicts when men are more likely to escalate conflict.7 Moreover, it is important that women-in-arms want to be in the military for “the right reasons.” For example, these women must not harbor any secret wishes to be men, but they should be sufficiently

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7 Interview with Social Democrat 20010127.
feminine to fit in. In short, although women are no longer seen as un-natural when they want to know how to handle sophisticated weaponry and military strategic thinking, the opposition of male/masculine and female/feminine is retained. In this way, the politicians and military strategists behind the new defense and security thinking in Sweden are still largely keeping to the military’s historical role as a conservatory societal institution regulating what real women and men should be like.

In 1980, when women first were admitted to the air force, the policy on the part of the military leadership was vehement on one particular point: there should be no difference between male and female soldiers in the Armed forces. In practicality this meant that to the organization both men and women would simply be soldiers as soldiers. However, since soldiers until then had always been men it soon became visible - as women were entering the organization - that a male norm and standard was already in place. In other words, for the policy formulation and practice of conscription to indeed become “gender neutral” a lot of changes would have to be made. Due to the multitude of problems that soon developed at military units around the country, including serious and widespread cases of sexual harassment, many women left and the overall recruitment of women conscripts plummeted. The military has since then tried a number of strategies to improve the conditions for women conscripts and officers. One strategy was to implement an educational program called Den Kreativa Olikheten (KREOL). This translates “the creative difference” and was built entirely around the notion that women and men are by nature different. The underlying message being: since women’s brains were so different from men’s brains, no wonder that there had been problems connected with introducing women to the organization on the premise of sameness with men.8

Wollstonecraft’s dilemma presents itself both in women’s everyday lives as soldiers and officers and in the debates surrounding the issue of women in the military. For one, there is the issue of how women as soldier should be. Should women be viewed as an exclusive group once they are in the military or as one-of-the-boys? The experience of women in the military shows that femininity is often talked about. Many women officers and soldiers can testify to the fact that in everyday military life there is a concern regarding what kind of femininity is right for the organization of the Swedish military. As a woman in uniform it is for example not uncommon to receive helpful hints from well-meaning male superiors regarding how one should, walk, talk, dress and otherwise behave around the men. It helps to be pretty to receive respect, but it is equally important that a woman, in order to fulfill the military’s (unofficial)

8 There is much to be said of the pros and cons of this very hands-on approach of KREOL (and there were some very clear pros). However, it was stopped as a result of its biological approach being too controversial.
“femininity standard”, should be “natural”. In other words, she should not have attained her attractiveness with the help of a lot of make-up, nail polish etc. Furthermore, our research shows that the search for the right type of femininity best suited for military life is, in some places, institutionalized as part of the standardized testing that goes on during enlistment day. An important purpose of the screening process of the new recruits to be part of the conscripted forces in the Swedish military is to learn about the recruits’ motives for wanting to do military service. The psychologists who conduct these interviews look for what is called secondary motives. There is on the whole nothing appalling about the fact that the Defense would like to question someone’s motives for wanting to undergo military training. Especially when considering that during the late 1980’s and early 90’s the military had extensive problems with conscripts who sympathized with Nazism, in some cases with an active involvement with Nazi groups in Sweden. Part of the military service means to learn about different weapons and how to use them. Conscripts also learn about where the military kept weapon storage facilities, in locked sheds around the Swedish forests and countryside. Nazi sympathizers who often were found to have a criminal record could later return to the storage sheds and empty these of guns and ammunition which would then be put into circulation among Nazis and other criminal groups. In light of this, looking for so called secondary motives in interviews and by checking criminal records seems reasonable. However, when searching for secondary motives also means looking for (overly) masculine women this enlistment practice gains a whole other meaning. In the Swedish enlistment service, the expression used for this type of femininity is manhaftiga kvinnor, which has a more negative, even ridiculing, ring to it than masculine women.10

“As women enter the ‘man’s world’ they are struggling not only with questions surrounding their capability to do ‘men’s work’ but with issues surrounding their own identity as women’ (Davis, 1997, 185). The process of identity formation for women in the military could best be characterized as a delicate balancing act in the midst of formal and informal, yet institutionalized, norms of the Defense forces. In our research we have found that in the military, women are simultaneously thought of as being the same and different. Women are marked as different partly because they are women, partly because they have volunteered. They are strange as women wanting to be trained militarily, but also strange in that they want

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9 Interview with woman officer, Stockholm, 2000-03- When talking to young women conscripts and officers regarding the most suitable femininity in the military, the image that comes to mind is of a woman-type like Ingrid Bergman in the Hollywood production of Hemmingway’s novel on the Spanish Civil War in “For Whom the Bell Tolls.” She is brave and unselfish but not intrusive. Never aspiring to compete with the masculine hero but rather to assist him.

10 In conversations with psychologists employed by Sweden’s Enlistment Service (Pliktverket).
this in spite of not being forced by the state to do so. However, this problem seems to be diminishing as the share of the young male population that actually goes through conscription dwindles. To some, it seems that conscription is nowadays so easy to escape that it can already be said to be voluntary for the men as well. Consequently, women who chose to go through military training voluntarily might not be stigmatized in the same way any longer.

Women in the military – a questionable step forward?

Would a gender-neutral conscription practice be a step forward in terms of gaining full citizenship for women or not? Indeed, women carry a heavier load, than men, when caring for children and the family. Is it right then to also ask women to go through an obligatory military service? In fact, women take out 84 percent of the 450 days for every child of state-subsidized parent leave and men take out 16 percent. Should women be pacifists or soldiers? In particular, how should feminism approach the subject of war and peace? April Carter and Jean Bethke Elshtain, each in their own article, refer to the National Organization of Women (NOW), which is a liberal equal rights feminist lobby group in the US with a narrow equality angle on the problem. NOW advocates women’s inclusion in the military as a strict equity-with-men issue. Carter disagrees and points out “women must make political judgments within the context of fundamental debates about war and peace, and not merely within the context of feminist goals” (Carter, 1996, 1). Elshtain is also critical of NOW’s way of framing the issue as simply being about women’s right to equal opportunity with the men to become military and gain combat positions in the US military. NOW’s argumentation does not challenge the old militarist order but simply positions women as equal just warriors with the men. “Ironically, female-linked symbolism is once again suppressed or depreciated. This time under a feminist imprimatur as a male-dominant ideal – the heroic fighter of the citizen-warrior is urged on everyone” (Elshtain, 1992, 264). When liberal feminists advocate women’s right to strive for and to have a military career their main concern seem to be that women should also be allowed to perform the (male) heroic role of just warrior and Protector of the Nation. In sharp contrast to the thinking that women in arms is an equality issue stands the historic women’s movement. Throughout history, fighting for women’s rights has been closely connected to a strong opposition to war and violence as such, viewing violence mainly as a male preoccupation. The women’s movement everywhere had strong ties to the peace movement (see for example Fredrika Bremer, ; Elin Wägner, 1941; Virginia Woolf, 1938). However, since women who voiced women’s rights as equal citizens were located in or around the peace movement they did not include advocating military conscription also for women. It is not surprising then, that in a Swedish context, there is no equivalence to the US lobby group NOW promoting women in the military as an equality issue. Apart from a few exceptions, women activists and politicians have been less engaged in
war and military security issues than in, for example, questions regarding foreign aid. It appears that as long as there were no women with experience from the military, either as conscripts or as officers, there were also fewer women with an interest or who seemed qualified to decide on the nation’s military matters. For these reasons, defense and foreign policy matters have largely been left to the men.  

In Sweden, the ties between the women’s movement and the peace movement has meant that thinking of war as more natural for men and peace more natural for women has not been seriously questioned until quite recently. Anna T Höglund, a theologian with an active involvement in the peace movement in Sweden analyzes the constellation war and gender in her doctoral dissertation (Höglund, 2001). According to Höglund, there is little actual discussion within the peace movement on war/peace and gender. There seems to be a taken-for-granted assumption in the peace/women’s movement that women in general have innate maternal qualities that make them more prone to conflict resolution and peacefulness than men who could be expected to be more aggressive and destructive as part of their nature. The type of feminism that holds women as more peaceful than men, is part of a culturally constructed understanding of war/peace. This is not surprising considering that the west is imbued with a tradition that “assumes an affinity between women and peace and between men and war... men and women [are] locked in a dense symbiosis, perceived as beings who have complementary needs and exemplify gender-specific virtues” (Elshtain, 1995, 4).

In January 2003, Inger Segelström, earlier the President of the Swedish Women’s International Association for Peace and Freedom (IKFF), now the General Secretary of the Social Democratic women’s caucus, entered - and thereby revived - the debate on conscription for women in Sweden. With a brief article in a Swedish daily, Segelström managed to make quite a stir within the younger generation of politicians – left to right – as well as the Conscript’s Council (Värnpliktsrådet). Segelström’s article is a reply to an earlier piece where it was pointed out that it is not fair that young women are free to do what they want while the male conscripts are bound to do their duty for the state for 15 months. Segelström reacted by pointing out that every year 100 000 women are pregnant for 9 months and after this they take at least 1 year off from work to care for the small child (while the fathers are supposedly making money and building their careers). Thus, as long as this situation stays the same, there is no reason to

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11 However, in 2003 Sweden’s Foreign Minister is a woman, Anna Lindh. The Minister of Defense is a woman, Leni Björklund and the General Secretary of the Authority for Crisis Management is a woman, Ann-Louise Eksborg.
12 IKFF is one of the women’s organizations that have advocated the thinking that women are more peaceful as a result of being mothers In a Scandinavian context, see further Brock-Utne, 1989; Berit Aas.
include women in conscription, Segelström argues.\textsuperscript{13} The reaction was, as mentioned, strong on the part of the younger generation. In a televised debate between three young politicians, representing the liberal party, the conservative party and the left party, and Segelström, the younger politicians were unanimous: All three expressed, in various ways, utter disbelief that a leading feminist could claim that women’s duty was to give birth and care for small children. In March the same year the Conscripts’ Congress voted for the first time ever in favor of conscription for all, men and women. The way the issue was framed in this political body was interesting as it did not talk about equality between the sexes but framed it as a question of whether to have a professional army and thus discontinue the Swedish traditional democratic conscripted armed forces. The argumentation in favor of conscription for women also included the point that it would strengthen the ties between people in Sweden and the defense (\textit{Folkförankring}).\textsuperscript{14}

The generational gap over the issue of female conscription, rather than being a left-right or a feminist-nonfeminist gap, is new to Sweden. So, how could we resolve this apparent gap over the issue of what would constitute a step forward in the struggle for equal citizenship for men and women? For an idea of how to proceed we will turn to Kathy Ferguson’s work. Ferguson is convinced that in feminism theory \textit{is} practice and this is a key to understanding her work. Thus rather than being frustrated about the different approaches and believing that we need to resolve them before doing anything else, a better way would be to instead use the tension as sources of inspiration to analyze and solve the riddles of patriarchy. For this, we will need both directions within feminism (Ferguson, 1993, 35). We should look more closely at how the two major approaches in feminism can “speak to each other” and more effectively together produce critical analyses of power relationships. As Ferguson puts it: “The vexing question is, then, What exactly constitutes patriarchy’s reproduction?” (Ferguson, 1993, 3). Ferguson describes two different outlooks or metanarratives within feminism. The purpose of identifying two metanarratives is however not to divide feminism into separate ideological camps that cannot be bridged but rather to point out in what ways the two may be combined to form coalition politics. This bridging will have to be unstable and areas of disagreement must be allowed to continue (Ferguson, 1993). The point is that with the will to form coalitions and combine different feminist outlooks (as whether conscription for women is a step towards equal citizenship or not) new insights into the workings of patriarchy may be gained. The issue of women’s conscription could then be broadened to also include the longstanding discussion of who-takes-care-of-the-

\textsuperscript{13} Inger Segelström, \textit{Expressen}, 20030108.

\textsuperscript{14} Telephone conversation with former President Jonas Sandberg and current President of the Conscript’s Council Erik Haara, 20030606.
children in Sweden. Thinking of feminist theory as practice, forming theoretical and political coalitions across generational and ideological gaps among feminists could open up for analyzing power in new ways. By doing so we may shed new light on patriarchal attitudes that today are blocking the men from taking a stand, going against the grain and take equal responsibility for the children.

Concluding remarks

Today, women are explicitly called on to join the military ranks as women soldiers, competent communicative and feminine - no longer the gender-neutral bodies, “soldier as soldier. It is said that women are needed because they come in with other types of skills and can therefore enrich the defense organization of the future in Sweden. They make good leaders. They are more empathetic, can better understand others people’s situation and are naturally more competent communicators. In other words, based on a thinking of difference it is now argued that women are good for the military and the defense of Sweden. However, the most likely explanation for the call for more women to the armed forces is that there is a lack of able and competent young men nowadays. Doing one’s military service has ceased to be part of young men’s path into manhood in Sweden, which shows in that many more of the young men with good grades in school find ways to avoid it altogether. In addition, the part of the military that trains conscripted soldiers has reported a noticeable drop in motivation or morale among male soldiers and there is an alarmingly high frequency of “early-drop-outs”. In other words, more than anything women are probably asked to join the military these days in order to solve a shortage problem.

Will conscription for women as well as men be a step forward to equal citizenship between the sexes in Sweden? Although it may appear so on paper it is still highly unlikely to have any significant effect on the “practice of citizenship” in everyday life of most women in Sweden. For example, it would probably not affect the unequal salaries of women and men. Indeed, it would open up for opportunities to women who otherwise would not have had them. Certainly, conscription for women would also have a positive and vitalizing effect on the military organization overall as well as to the women military personnel’s everyday lives. However, Inger Segelström does have a point in that until the men take a much more active role in caring for children and start organizing their lives around children’s needs, patriarchy will still be in place in Sweden.
References

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