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UTBLICK



A MAGAZINE ABOUT FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES



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relevance of claims by stateless
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föreningen
Göteborg



Letter from the Editors



More now than ever is it apparent that we live in a turbulent world. With Donald Trump installed in the White House and nationalist movements gaining strength in Europe, liberal and democratic values face fierce competition from authoritarian ideas. Much of the international machinery, including cooperative institutions as the European Union and the United Nations, has so far been built upon tolerance and the idea that getting along is always better than creating enmity between each other. However, the functioning of this global framework is a hard one to really get a grip on. Here, we hope Utblick has a role to play as to add perspective to questions discussed daily in the media.

New editors for this year are Axel Christoffersson and Mina Ghassaban Kjellén. Axel studies a bachelor in economics, spending a lot of time thinking about inequality and the meaning of sustainability. Mina is a master student in political science, with a particular interest in the Middle East, global power structures, and democratization processes. In the magazine, our study areas and interests are visible in, for example, Axel's from now on recurring economics column in which he addresses hot topics in the global economy.

Because of the complexity of today's world, we figured that choosing only one theme for each issue is close to impossible – there are just too many interesting and important things going on right now. In this number of Utblick, we address a variety of issues, and from different perspectives. The articles include overviews and discussions on the Catalan independence movement, major political parties in the Netherlands, the process of automatization in the global economy, and much more.

Lastly, we would like to take this opportunity to say that new writers are always welcome to join our editorial staff. If you're interested; send us an e-mail at mina.ghassaban.kjellen@utblick.org. and/or axel.christoffersson@utblick.org.

We wish you a pleasant read!

Best wishes,

Axel Christoffersson and Mina Ghassaban Kjellén

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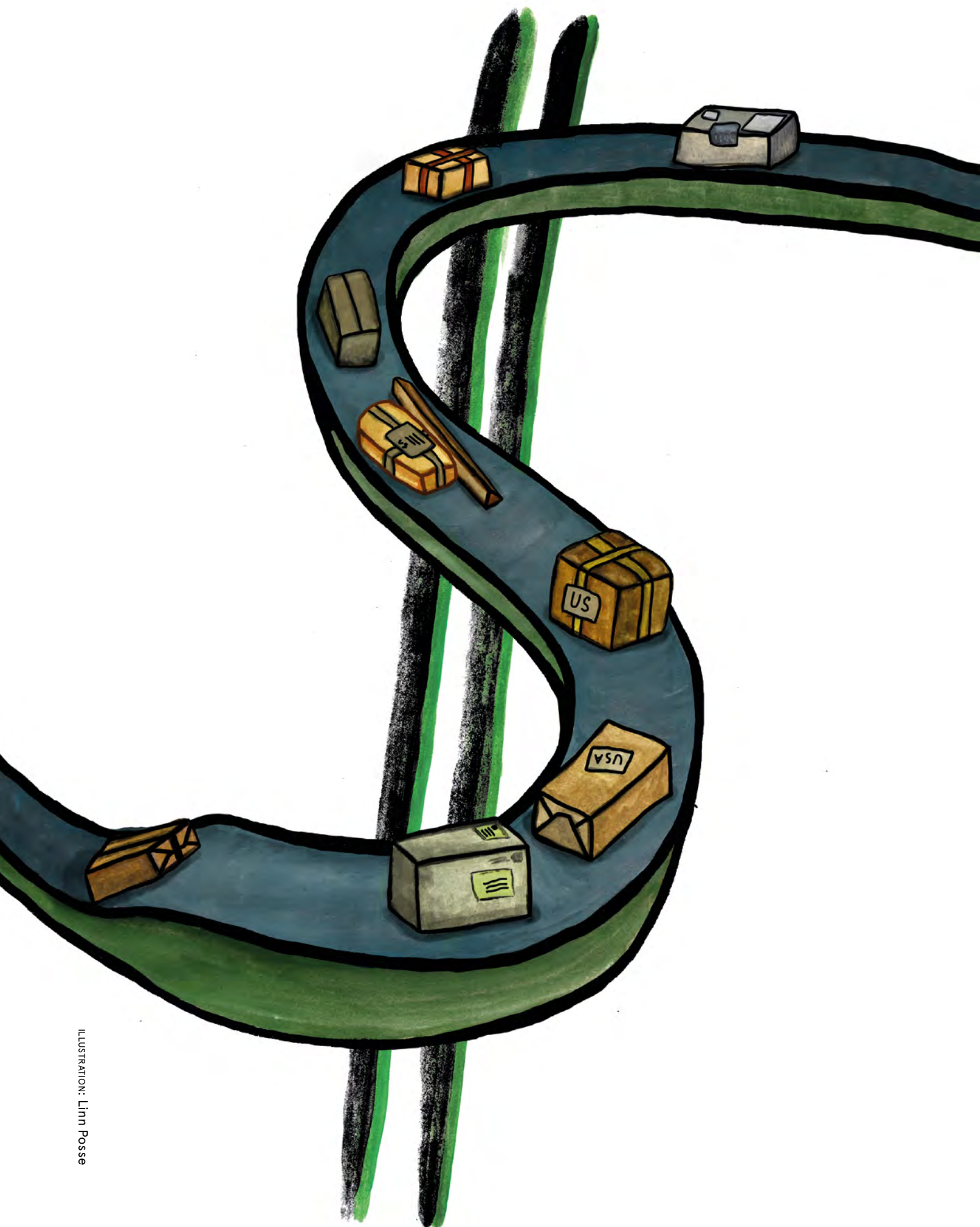


ILLUSTRATION: Linn Posse

Varför all mexikansk oro?

"Många mexikaner innehar arbetsuppgifter som är direkt kopplade till möjligheten att fritt handla det som produceras."

TEXT: Axel Christoffersson

TURBULENSEN KRING Förenta staternas nye president har varit kraftig ända sedan tillträdet den 20 januari i år. Löften som inte togs på fullt allvar under valrörelsen förra året, så som minskad invandring från muslimska länder och nedskärningar i stödet till organisationer som stöder aborträtten, har genomförts i rasande takt. Att Trump inte skulle göra slag i saken också med sin handelspolitik tycks i dagsläget osannolikt, något som fått grannen i söder, Mexiko, att bäva.

1994 implementerades ett nordamerikanskt frihandelsavtal som i dagligt tal kallas NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement). Detta avtal, som medför tullfrihet för de flesta varor som passerar gränserna mellan Kanada, USA och Mexiko, har kraftigt ritat om handelsmönstren på den nordamerikanska kontinenten. På bara fyra år i slutet av 90-talet fördubblades USA:s import från Mexiko, vars låga löner än så länge har lockat amerikanska företag att pröva lyckan i sitt södra grannland.

Idag är Mexikos export till USA ungefär fem gånger större än den var när NAFTA trädde i kraft. För Mexiko har detta inneburit en rad ekonomiska förändringar, på gott och ont. Genom tillströmning av utländskt kapital har en livskraftig tillverkningsindustri vuxit fram, där bland annat bil- och flygplansproduktion är viktiga element. Samtidigt innebar öppningen för frihandel att det mexikanska jordbruket tvingades konkurrera med ett effektivare och kraftigt subventionerat amerikanskt dito, något som småskaliga odlare i Mexiko inte klarade av. Det är ingen högoddsare att gissa att dessa relativt fattiga lantbrukare tvingats in till staden för att söka jobb på fabrikerna, som ännu går på högvarv.

Att avgöra huruvida Mexiko och dess befolkning gynnats eller missgynnats av NAFTA låter sig inte göras här; som vi ser är bilden komplex med både vinnare och förlorare. En slutsats som kan dras är dock att den mexikanska ekonomin idag är tätt sammanflätad med den amerikanska och att många mexikaner innehar arbetsuppgifter som är direkt kopplade till möjligheten att fritt handla det som produceras. Och precis som Donald Trump i sin retorik och röstfiske utnyttjat det faktum att det är den arbetande, lägre utbildade medelklassen som är mest utsatt för förändringar i en global ekonomi, är mex-ikanska låglönejobb utan större utbildningskrav de som drabbas först om samme Trump skulle välja att bryta upp eller omförhandla NAFTA.

Ur ekonomisk synvinkel skulle orsakssambanden kunna se ut ungefär så här: USA höjer tullarna mot Mexiko för att skydda industrin på hemmaplan. Detta höjer kostnaden för att sälja varor i USA för mexikanska exportörer, som för att kunna konkurrera med amerikanska producenter tvingas skära i kostnaderna eller lägga ned. Detta drabbar i sin tur de anställda, som riskerar uppsägning eller lönesänkningar från redan låga nivåer.

Den som någon gång i unga år byggt med kapplastavar vet hur det är. Du lägger dit ena byggklossen efter den andra och tornet växer. Plötsligt råkar du emellertid stöta till fundamentet med en lång tå och ser timmar av byggande falla ihop på golvet. Ekonomi fungerar ungefär på samma sätt, speciellt så på det individuella planet. För en uppsagd fabriksarbetare utan längre utbildning tar det tid att hitta nytt jobb, och att gå tillbaka till jordbruk torde det sällan vara tal om på grund av den stora initiala kostnaden det skulle innebära.

Innan den mexikanska ekonomin hinner ställa om till de nya förutsättningar som en potentiell amerikansk omläggning av handelspolitiken skulle medföra, skulle alltså landet förmodligen tvingas genomleva en period av hög arbetslöshet eller lönesänkningar i de regioner som är mest knutna till resten av kontinenten. Ställda inför detta, med allt vad det innebär i form av social oro och möjlig ökning av den ännu ganska utbredda fattigdomen i landet, är det inte konstigt att allmänheten och diverse beslutsfattare med oro följer Uncle Sams nyckfulla agerande.

Så skulle alltså Trump kunna få mexikanerna att betala, inte för en mur men för amerikansk industris brist på konkurrenskraft. Och inte med reda pengar, utan med välfärd. För något som förmodligen inte gynnar andra än en bråkdel av amerikanska befolkningen på längre än kort sikt. Men det är en annan historia. ■

Vidare läsning:

Council on Foreign Relations (2017) NAFTA's Economic Impact. <http://www.cfr.org/trade/naftas-economic-impact/p15790>

Reflections on the Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy

TEXT: Mina Ghassaban Kjellén*

ON MARCH 8, the International Women's Day, the Society of International Affairs at the University of Gothenburg had the pleasure of welcoming Foreign Minister Margot Wallström for a lecture on Swedish foreign policy.

To reach and maintain all kinds of global security, the Foreign Minister stressed the importance of identifying, and attempting to solve, ongoing problems in the world that may form the roots to conflict – “not invest in more weapons”. A world in which females are, inter alia, systematically excluded from

political influence and peace agreements, and subjected to sexual violence as a weapon of war; cannot ever reach sustainable peace, Ms. Wallström rightly argued.

The 2014 Löfven cabinet is the world's first self-proclaimed feminist government, with feminism forming the base of its foreign policy line. The general framework of the Swedish feminist foreign policy (FFP) is composed of the so-called “three R's” – Representation, Rights and Resources. These aim to (1) promote the representation of women in politics and in peace processes; (2) to advocate

women's rights as human rights; and (3) to ensure there are enough resources for aid projects directed to women's needs, as well as for a more gender-equal distribution of the world's resources (Aggestam & Bergman-Rosamond 2016).

Foreign policies communicated on the basis of norms, rather than explicitly stated material interests, have come to be rather controversial during recent years. As an extreme case, one may consider the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 that was legitimized by its supporters as to bring "freedom" and "democracy" to the country – eventually turning out to be everything but free and democratic. This event, and other similar ones, has created a world-wide suspicion towards Western countries' proclaimed altruism in international relations. Not only is it regarded by some as nothing but rhetorical tricks to pursue national interests, as was the case in Iraq; but also as institutionalized forms of a Western chauvinist attitude toward other parts of the world.

While this is unfortunate, I argue that it is an existing and challenging dilemma for any norm-based foreign policy framework – whether guided by feminism, democracy or freedom. Needless to say, I too want to see women and girls – as well as men and boys – live in peace and enjoy political, civil and economic freedoms. This is far from the case today, and one should not turn a blind eye towards oppressive patriarchal structures that exist globally, but that tend to be overrepresented in poor and conflict-ridden countries. Notwithstanding, the reality we live in is one in which a long history of European and American imperialism has created wounds of hostility towards the Western world. These will take time to heal and need to be treated with great care.

In an interview with Al-Jazeera in June 2015, Foreign Minister Wallström was asked to comment on the issue that Western – in

this case, Swedish – feminism is sometimes perceived as taking on "saviour mentality towards people of colour". To this, Ms. Wallström responded "I think we have to cool that down", and that "sometimes feminism, not in my country but in other places, has a pejorative sense". Given the Foreign Minister's many years of international experience in the field of women's rights, I was surprised to see her take this issue so lightly – particularly in response to a news station as influential as Al-Jazeera. I am convinced that Margot Wallström, a highly competent diplomat, has given this issue a lot of consideration and has no intention whatsoever to pursue a neo-colonial 'civilizing mission'. But why not communicate that when she had a golden opportunity to do so to millions of Al-Jazeera viewers, many of whom reside in areas considered underdeveloped in terms of women's rights?

The day after Foreign Minister Wallström's visit to Gothenburg, I met with Professor Ann Towns at the University of Gothenburg to hear some of her perspectives on feminism in international politics. She pointed out that one commonly used narrative on women's rights, shared and reproduced globally, is that of a common, global political history of patriarchal political oppression of women, a shared human history which modern European nations were the first to liberate themselves from.

In *Women and States* from 2010, Ann Towns shows through an extensive reading of anthropological research and primary historical documents, that this narrative is far from historically correct. Many societies in the world, such as parts of Africa and North America, were relatively gender equal in terms of political rights and representation long before the Europeans were. So, while the idea of political gender equality has perhaps been most visible in liberal Western societies in recent decades, it certainly does not originate from here – quite the contrary.

In relation to the implementation of feminism in international relations, such as the Swedish FFP, Ann Towns proposes a humble approach in which emphasis is put on cooperation towards the common goal of women's rights (which I have interpreted as the opposite of one actor in the international community teaching the other what is 'right' and 'wrong' behavior). "Political equality [between men and women] has several roots", she said in our meeting, "and has existed in many different places ... I believe it is important to get off the 'beaten paths' in terms of how we understand and talk about women's rights – the West and the 'Rest', Europe and the Middle East, and so on. There are feminists all over the world."

The usage of political communication is a matter of effectiveness of the Swedish FFP. I suggest that the slightest risk of Sweden being perceived as taking on the role as the 'civilized saviour' of the oppressed women of Africa, the Middle East, Latin America and Asia; needs to be met – and eliminated. This includes the Swedish government establishing much more clearly how its FFP line is to be communicated to the recipients of it. Are they working with non-Western women, or for them? Are there any particular countries/regions that especially need development assistance and if so, why? And are local ideas on feminism and suggested solutions to gender equality valued equal to Swedish/Western experiences? These are sensitive and complex questions – but also very important ones that need honest, well-thought out, and clear answers.

I am convinced that recipients of Swedish foreign aid, as well as Swedish voters, would be able to handle, and welcome, a philosophically and historically informed public discussion on complex matters such as postcolonial power structures – and how to really work together on an equal basis internationally. To go even further; I believe this is a prerequisite to avoid, both within and

outside of Sweden, a dislike and suspicion of sharing best practices internationally.

Sweden's feminist foreign policy is a necessary initiative that places women's rights high up on the international agenda, particularly with regards to Sweden's current membership in the UN Security Council. However, if development projects as part of its implementation are viewed – by donors or recipients – as little more than a package of liberal Western norms (whatever those are anyway) to be distributed to 'uncivilized' communities; they will probably be dismissed. If so, a Swedish feminist foreign policy could unfortunately turn out to be of little use, or even contra-productive. ■

** I am thankful to Dr. Ann Towns for providing me with valuable perspectives and insights on the issues brought up in this article. However, unless stated otherwise, any arguments put forward in this text are entirely my own.*

References and further reading:

Aggestam, Karin. & Bergman-Rosamond, Annika (2016) *Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy in the Making: Ethics, Politics and Gender. Ethics and International Affairs*, 30(3), pp. 323–334.

Al-Jazeera/Patel, Khadija (June 15, 2015) Q&A: *Exploring Sweden's 'feminist' foreign policy.* Transcript available at: <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2015/06/southafrica-ausweden-feminism-foreign-policy-150615140028265.html>.

the Government Offices of Sweden (2017) *Swedish Foreign Service action plan for feminist foreign policy 2015–2018 including focus areas for 2017.* Available at www.government.se.

Towns, Ann E. (2010) *Women and States: Norms and hierarchies in international society.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Also, check out V-Dem's *Women's Empowerment Index* on <https://www.v-dem.net/en/>



Catalan independence

*and the relevance of claims by stateless
nations in globalization*

TEXT: Mikael Lassa

THE CATALAN INDEPENDENCE movement is nothing new in the international political sphere, but political turbulence periodically shakes the Iberian scenario. As tensions have been built up through the years, often obscured by more pressing matters, most will probably remember the independence referendum held in 2014; with the more recent declarations for a new referendum to be held in 2017, the issue is as current as ever, and plays an interesting role in the framework of returning national claims in a globalized world.

Separatist feelings in the region have rather deep historical roots. The key date in Catalonia's history is September 11, 1714, marking the imposition of Spanish rule on the region after the War of Spanish Succession. The unity made by a shared language and culture, however, helped set the roots of a Catalan nationalism that was to grow stronger through the following centuries. Swept by the spirit of European Romanticism in the 19th century, Catalan Renaixença (cultural renaissance) pushed for a revival of local traditions, helping keep them alive.

Attempts to gain full independence failed during the early 20th century, and Franco's subsequent rule was strongly opposed to any kind of Catalan autonomy, actively promoting the settling of Spanish speakers to Catalonia in order to halt secessionist sentiments in the region. This seemingly brought no concrete results in the long term, as claims for a Catalan independence have not died down in the post-Franco era, culminating in the 1979 Statute of Autonomy, which was further modified in 2006.

Albeit not willing to negotiate the unity of the kingdom, the Spanish constitution grants a certain degree of autonomy to Catalonia and other regions; the autonomous Catalan government (Generalitat de Catalunya) enjoys a considerable level of self-government in matters such as culture, transportation, commerce, public safety (possessing their own police force), and sharing responsibility with the Spanish government in other aspects. No other region in Spain enjoys such a degree of autonomy; in fact, no other region in Europe (not even Scotland) is likely so close to being an independent state. This, however, is not considered to be enough by local parties and forces striving for independence.

Tensions have indeed been growing in the last few years. Between 2009 and 2011 several municipalities organized symbolical referendums on independence, followed by the more famous 2014 referendum. In that occasion, a clear majority of Catalan voters voiced their endorsement for independence; however, the voter turnout was only around 42%. In the following Catalan parliamentary elections in 2015, pro-independence parties gained the majority of seats, leading to the "Declaration of the Initiation of the Process of Independence of Catalonia" in November. All of this led up to the latest development, which saw Carles Puigdemont, the current president of the Generalitat, recently announcing the will to go ahead with a new

referendum for independence in September 2017. This one, they say, will have legal value and the will of the voters will be followed. According to the Spanish government, however, such a referendum would be illegal and unconstitutional without the approval of state authorities. Spain might be willing to negotiate conditions up to a certain degree, but the government remains firm not to grant the right to hold a referendum with binding legal value. Moreover, no major political party in the Spanish parliament endorses Catalan independence. As for the support of the Catalan population, recent polls suggest that between 45–50% of voters in the region would favour independence, leaving the result of a referendum difficult to predict, in the case that only Catalans, and not the whole of Spain, can cast their vote.

Some would argue that the degree of shared culture in Catalonia is enough to justify it as an independent political entity, while others dismiss such claims as an "identity obsession", as asserted by some Spanish parties. It is not my intention here to make normative or moral claims about a desired outcome of the Spanish-Catalan dispute; rather, I want to clarify the peculiarities of this case and the ways it could fit into the broader picture of globalization and identity issues.

The success, or at least the persistence, of the Catalan case is in part, due to the ability of local leaders to construct and effectively communicate, during the last two centuries, a common history and a shared culture even without the media apparatuses of deep-rooted nation-states. A shared language, a shared symbolism, including a national flag, and the reiteration of the discursive position of being victims of the Spanish crown's historical dominance have gradually built up the current situation of tensions and widespread support for national self-determination. Interestingly, support for this cause is not stopped by the contemporary institutional complexity that makes a hypothetical



Carles Puigdemont

secession more difficult to obtain. For instance, one might think of the consequences related to the institutional framework of the European Union. In this sense, the outcome would be considerably unclear: the role of the EU in such a matter is ambiguous and it does not seem that the EU has the institutional capabilities to deal with a region seceding from a member state. In such a scenario, the new state would likely need to endlessly renegotiate treaties and agreements. However, Puigdemont and other Catalan leaders have appealed to EU institutions to gain support for their cause, stressing the peaceful character of their claims and their will to remain in the EU.

Much has been said on the meaning of nationalism in globalization, and on the return of national identities on the political agenda. What is particularly interesting in the Catalan case, however, is that it challenges the modern paradigm that neatly separates cosmopolitanism from the parochialism of secessionist allegations. The Catalan example is indeed peculiar in its synthesis of tradition and cosmopolitan tendencies. If, on the one hand, local culture and history are strongly emphasized in their juxtaposition with the Spanish ones, on the other hand, the tendency of the Catalan minority to integrate itself in broader global processes without the interference of the Spanish

state reveals a much wider orientation, exemplified by their will to be part of the EU, but not of Spain.

Catalonia is ultimately one of many cases of stateless nations in Europe and beyond that demand more recognition, Scotland and the Kurdish nation being notable examples. It is not always clear where boundaries are to be drawn, or what specifically classifies a national or ethnic group as entitled to an independent state. In many places, the supposed benefits of national self-determination need to be weighed against the risks of further balkanization, understood as an often conflictual political and territorial fragmentation, thus making the matter an extremely complex one to address politically. ■

Further Readings

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Lanz, Tilman. 2016. "Minority Cosmopolitanism: The Catalan Independence Process, the EU, and the Framework Convention for National Minorities." *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe* 15(2):31-58.



The delegation of UF Gothenburg at the International Model United Nations conference in Leuven (Belgium), March 2016.

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Where are we standing regarding abortion?



TEXT: Liza Rousselle ILLUSTRATION: Filippa Andersson

THIS PAST JANUARY, President Trump signed an executive order that bans international NGOs that perform abortions from receiving aid from the United States. This is clearly a problem for abortion supporters, because this represents a loss of \$600 million for family planning abroad. People across the world have gathered to protest this decision. But I wonder why so many people are only getting upset about this now, when there is so much progress to be made and insufferable situations abroad.

We could think that the right to abortion is getting more and more recognized worldwide, but if we look closer, we observe that it is not the case. Chile, Nicaragua, El Salvador, the Dominican republic, Malta and South Sudan still do not grant the right to abort if the pregnancy is putting the mother's life at risk. Many countries have adopted laws enabling women to abort in certain conditions, for example if the pregnancy is the consequence of a rape, or if the pregnancy is dangerous for the mother or fetal defects.



Foto: Mark Dixon/CC

While for each situation the legislation is different, notably regarding the maximum number of weeks into the pregnancy during which the abortion can be performed, I will solely focus on the abortion for personal reasons, which do not require medical justification. This type of abortion is one that the least number of countries have approved, and is the most crucial. It means that a woman can abort without having to supply a justification, and can be because of all the reasons mentioned previously among others, such a lack of resources to raise a child or lack of support from the family or father. As of 2011, only 58 countries allowed such abortions.

As a French person, I am deeply concerned by the fact that, in a country where women have obtained the right to abort decades ago, we are now witnessing the rise of anti-abortion movements, also called 'pro-life'. The most famous group in France, 'Les survivants' related to the Manif pour tous movement (a right wing movement against same sex marriage and adoption) has been on the front page of many newspapers because of the extreme statements they have made. They call themselves 'the survivors'

because they consider they have survived an abortion and they claim to be mourning their unborn sibling that were never born because of abortions. Nevermind the usual arguments against abortions, they have set up a website on the 'dangers' of abortions as well as setting up false testimonies from women regretting undergoing an abortion. This has forced the French government to issue a law regarding misinformation on the subject, after citizens mobilized and set up a petition against it, signed by more than 76 thousand citizens.

France is not the only country to witness this change of heart in Western countries. Spain has considered revoking its law on abortion. Poland has known huge uprising in the fall of 2016 after there have been propositions of revoking the law allowing women to abort. This is revolting to me, as a Western-born woman from a liberal country, and to many people like me in Europe and the United States. But we are only a fraction of the international community. Many countries still have not legalized abortions, forcing women to abort in unsafe conditions; this ranges from unsanitary conditions to unqualified personnel. This represents 20

"We cannot force religious conservative countries to legalize abortion ... acting in our own countries should be a priority."

million unsafe abortions every year, out of the 44 million abortions performed each year, as estimated by the World Health Organization.

We can see that religion has obviously a part to play. Countries with strong religious influence, regardless of which religion, have taken stands against abortion, arguing that children are gifts from God and should not be killed. The countries that I have mentioned above are strongly affiliated to the Catholic Church. The conservative Muslim countries are against abortion. Judaism recognises the right to abort when the pregnancy puts the mother's life in danger or the foetus has a risk of malformation, but only before the 40th day. Even Buddhism forbids abortion as it considers the foetus to be living from the moment of conception, and abortion goes against the first principle of Buddhism which is not to kill any living creature. However, Protestantism has a slightly different position, usually tolerating abortion when it is needed, in the case of medical problems but also in case of social problems.

We can consider that, following the principles of state sovereignty and respect of cultural differences, we cannot force religious conservative countries to legalize abortion and so we are powerless to the current situation in these countries. In consequence, acting in our own countries should be a priority.

I now wonder what the international community, and by this I mean the UN, NGOs and individual states, should be focused on. To keep the right of abortion in countries that already acknowledge it? Try to spread this right? Make illegal abortions safer? It appears that different actors are not able to agree as of today. It makes the struggle for women's rights more complicated when they should be treated as a priority. ■



Foto: Mark Dixon/CC

Further reading:

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2017/jan/25/us-foreign-aid-abortion-affect-ngos>

http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/topics/unsafe_abortion/magnitude/en/

<http://edition.cnn.com/2017/01/23/politics/trump-mexico-city-policy/index.html>

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Energipolitik i Mellanöstern

TEXT: Arash Bolouri & Viktor Warg

MELLANÖSTERN HAR SEDAN länge varit en viktig geopolitisk region. Eftersom regionen är belägen mellan Afrika, Europa och Asien blev det en mötesplats för olika civilisationer och kulturer och redan under 100-talet f. Kr. var Sidsenvägen öppen för handel. Den geopolitiska betydelsen av denna handelsrutt kan sägas ha haft en central roll i de romersk-persiska krigen, som varade mellan år 54 f. Kr. och år 629. Striderna mellan romare och perser utgjordes till viss del av ombudskrig, där stormakterna stred mot varandra på en tredje parts territorium (för att få större

inflytande över Sidsenvägen). Detta kunde i praktiken innebära att stormakterna aldrig möttes direkt utan stödde sina allierade i mindre, lokala sammandrabbningar. I staden Palmyra, belägen i dagens Syrien, stöttade till exempel perserna och romarna varsin allierad grupp och utnyttjade samtidigt etniska och religiösa splittringar i området.

Liksom perser och romare hade intresse av att kontrollera Sidsenvägen och dess handel med viktiga varor har dagens intressesfär kommit att centreras kring naturresurser,

"Hur skulle en iransk-rysk monopolisering av gasexporten påverka dollarn, USAs ställning inom energisektorn och därmed deras inflytande över internationell politik?"

då dessa är av vital betydelse för världens industrier. Av världens totala energiförbrukning står olja idag för ungefär 40 procent och länder i Mellanöstern besitter omkring hälften av världen totala oljereserv. Att ha inflytande över energisektorn i dagens globaliserade ekonomi innebär makt i många avseenden. Detta visade sig inte minst under OPEC (Organization for Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries)-ländernas handelsembargo 1973, där oljehandeln användes som politiskt medel i syfte att straffa de länder som inte följde deras agenda. Utöver denna aspekt är också energitillgången idag en livsviktig del för varje samhälles överlevnad, inte minst under krigstider då moderna krigsmedel är extremt energikrävande.

Oljan fyller en annan viktig funktion i och med dess relation till den amerikanska dollarn – den så kallade 'petrodollarn'. Efter andra världskriget sattes dollarn i fast växelkurs mot guld vilket gjorde den till världens reservvaluta. Den amerikanska centralbanken levde emellertid inte upp till sitt åtagande och i slutet av 1960-talet sattes de under press av världssamfundet (delvis på grund av ett kostsamt krig i Vietnam). De stod inför att antingen omvärdera dollarn, sanera sin offentliga sektor eller upphäva förpliktelsen att växla dollar mot guld. Då en omvärdering av den amerikanska dollarn ansågs ge för stora negativa konsekvenser beslutade dåvarande presidenten Richard Nixon år 1971 att avskaffa dollarns fasta kurs mot guld. Detta följdes av 1973 års oljekris, som utmanade västvärldens ekonomiska stabilitet och potentiellt dess förhållande till Sovjetunionen. För att upprätthålla status quo och säkerställa dollarns förtroende behövde man

göra dollarn attraktiv igen. Då guld inte längre var ett alternativ, vände man istället blickarna mot energisektorn och skapade 1975 en dollar-för-olja pakt med oljejätten Saudiarabien. I utbyte mot modern teknik, militära medel och beskydd av kungahuset Saud övertalades Saudiarabien och de övriga OPEC-länderna att från och med nu sälja sin olja i amerikanska dollar. I överenskommelsen ingick dessutom att avkastningen skulle användas för att köpa upp amerikanska statsobligationer. Alla moderna ekonomier behövde dollar för att kunna importera olja, varför dollarns ställning återigen säkrades.

Teknologisk utveckling och rädsla för att oljan i sinom tid ska ta slut har gjort att allt fler konsumenter och industrier börjat leta efter alternativ till det svarta guld. I och med detta har efterfrågan på naturgas stigit. Gas utgör idag 20-25 procent av världens totala energiförbrukning, vilket gör den till den viktigaste energikällan näst efter olja. Gas är dock svårare än olja att transportera, varför kostsamma anläggningar såsom gasledningar krävs. Nackdelen med gasledningar är att de allt som oftast behöver dras genom andra länder, vilket innebär att det politiska beroendet av omvärlden ökar för det gasexporterande landet.

Den europeiska ekonomin har blivit allt mer beroende av naturgas, vilket har lett till att gasexporterande länder strävar efter tillgång till den europeiska marknaden. De länder som huvudsakligen kan mätta det europeiska behovet som tekniken ser ut idag är Ryssland, Iran och Qatar, vilka tillsammans sitter på omkring hälften

av världens gasreserver. Om behovet av gas fortsatt ökar öppnas möjligheten för dessa länder att eventuellt hota dollarns ställning på energisektorn. Liksom oljan har mångdimensionell betydelse för politisk makt och krigföring kan man tänka sig att naturgas kommer spela en liknande roll i framtiden. Gasen får en alltmer framträdande roll i olika staters säkerhetstänk.

År 2009 påbörjades rapportering om Qatars

"De politisk-ekonomiska allianser som bildades 2009 går idag att urskilja i de militära koalitionerna som klyver Syrienkonflikten."

planerade dragning av gasledningen Qatar-Turkey Pipeline. Bygget planeras från världens största gasfält i Qatar till Turkiet och vidare till den europeiska marknaden. Ungefär samtidigt blossade oenigheter upp kring Qatars planerade bygge. Syriens president Bashar al-Assad motsatte sig planerna med argumentet att det gick emot Syriens och dess allierades, inklusive Rysslands, intressen. Två politiska läger skapades där det ena utgjordes av Iran, Irak, Syrien och Libanon med ryskt stöd medan det andra bestod av Qatar, Saudiarabien, Jordanien och Turkiet, med stöd av USA. Assad och Syrien hamnade i konfliktens centrum på grund av sitt geografiska läge och ovilja att stödja Qatars planer. Utöver denna konflikt över gasledningarna bedriver Iran fortfarande en energipolitik med ambitioner att underminera dollarns dominans på energimarknaden

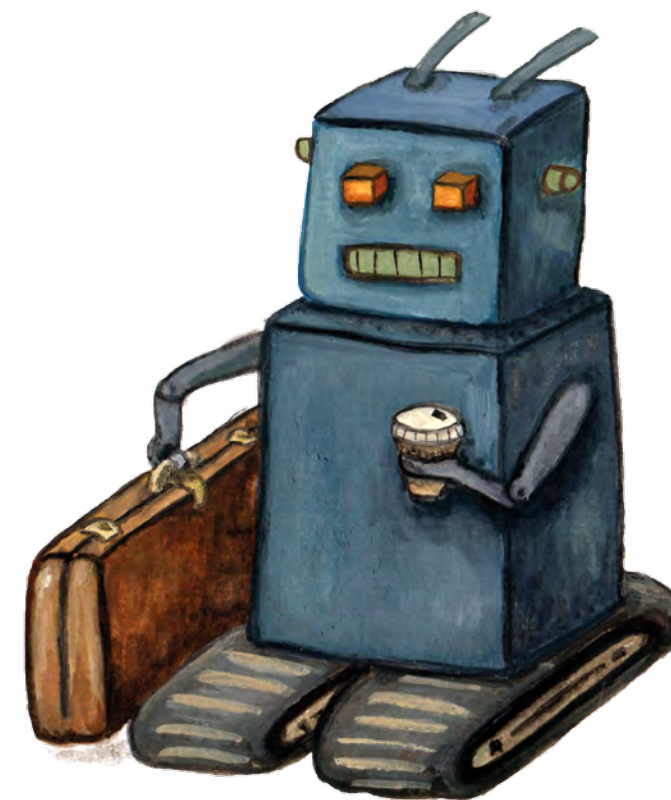
genom att bojkotta densamma som bytesmedel för olja. Att Assad stöttar Iran och Ryssland innebär därmed att också Assad för en anti-petrodollar-politik. Detta för tankarna tillbaka till Nixons pakt med Saudiarabien på 70-talet. Hur skulle en iransk-rysk monopolisering av gasexporten påverka dollarn, USAs ställning inom energisektorn och därmed deras inflytande över internationell politik? Redan 2010 hårdnade de olika parternas agerande gentemot varandra då det politiska lägret som stöttar Qatars planerade gasledning propagerade för Assads avgång. Som skäl anförde man Assads illegitima styre och befolkningens krav på reformer.

De politisk-ekonomiska allianser som bildades 2009 går idag att urskilja i de militära koalitionerna som klyver Syrienkonflikten. Liksom i de gamla ombudskrigen mellan perserna och romarna är Syrien (då Palmyra) återigen ett offer på grund av sitt geostrategiska läge. Centrala aktörer som idag strider mot Assadregimen, som lite generaliserande ofta benämns som moderata rebeller, innefattar bland annat salafistiska grupper som får både vapen och militär utbildning av bland andra Qatar, Jordanien, Turkiet och Saudiarabien. På samma sätt stöttar Iran och Ryssland Assads position genom paramilitära grupper.

Eftersom energisektorn är essentiell för den globala ekonomin har den tagit en självklar plats i staters utrikespolitik. Syrienkonflikten är mångbottnad och den lokala problematiken, som Bashar al-Assads onekligen brutala styre, måste kompletteras med en regional geostrategisk analys för att förstå komplexiteten. Idag liksom igår spelar centrala råvarumarknader och handelsrutter en betydande roll i staters säkerhetstänk, något man inte kan bortse från om vi vill förstå hur vår värld fungerar. ■

The Rise of the Machines

- policy in the age of automation



TEXT: Anna Kuzmina ILLUSTRATIONS: Linn Posse

DEVELOPMENTS IN THE 21st century have seen radical changes in IT and economy. These changes, along with increasing automation, have been called the Fourth Industrial Revolution by the World Economic Forum. A recent report published by the consulting firm McKinsey & Co. predicted that half of the activities that people are paid to do could be automated by 2055 (+/- 30 years). Authors predict several positive

outcomes of automation based on the assumption that the displaced workers will find employment elsewhere. They argue that since previous "industrial revolutions" have generated new types of work, unfathomable at the time, so will this one. Yet this poses a serious and currently neglected challenge for policy makers. How should policy makers create labour market measures for jobs that do not yet exist?

Economist David Autor argues that automation and machines do not pose a significant threat to jobs as a whole. His argument is that while machines take over manual and repetitive tasks the value of human ingenuity and problem-solving will increase, making future jobs more interesting and stimulating. The challenge he sees lies mainly in the increasing polarization in the labour market. According to Autor, labour market polarization will occur due to increasing amounts of work for high skilled workers (doctors) and low skilled workers (food delivery), and decreasing amounts of work for medium skilled workers. A report published by the Swedish Foundation for Strategic Research underscores this, pointing out that 46% of jobs such as "business economists and marketers" could be gone within the next 20 years.

Another aspect of the future labour market is presented in a Ted Talk by Rainer Strack, who argues that many of the world's industrialized countries will soon face a shortage of labour due to demographic changes and the subsequent declining number of working adults. He predicts that the world's 15 largest economies will all have significant labour shortages by 2030, ranging from 1-2% in France and the UK to 25-30% in Russia, South Korea and Japan. When disaggregated, Strack's data show even bigger shortages in high-skilled professions, and equilibrium or slight surpluses in low-skilled professions.

These two trends – labour market polarization and a future shortage of labour – are two of the biggest policy challenges post-industrialized society is currently facing. By 2045, a large portion of today's jobs could be automated, leaving many unemployed, at the same time as there is labour shortage in high skilled jobs.

To solve the problems related to automation, such as unemployment, loss of income and labour shortages in different sectors, the main ideas put forth have been to increase

educational efforts and to introduce basic universal income. In order to meet the upcoming demand of high-skilled, primarily STEM¹-educated workers, states have to invest in higher education and ensure that the absolute majority graduates high school. But unemployment due to automation will mean income loss over a long period of time, assuming retraining programmes are not implemented, which is why some advocate basic universal income. It is thought to be cost effective for the state while allowing people to pursue their interests rather than work, essentially removing the stress of unemployment.

But the problems with these solutions are not to be taken lightly. The level and type of education required for the high skilled jobs of the future are crucial questions, as well as the question of funding. It is possible that the level of knowledge required in the future might not be attainable for the multitude, and that the vast majority will not want to, or be able to, acquire a skillset that is in demand.

Unemployment presents further problems for governments as high unemployment means decreased tax revenues states. Without sufficient revenue it will be difficult for governments to fund large scale educational programmes for their citizens, potentially leaving many without opportunity to re-educate themselves in order to re-establish themselves in the labour market.

This is also connected to the critique of basic universal income. While salaries are progressively taxable, basic universal income will probably not be due to the (presumably) low levels of compensation. And with salaries switched for basic universal income, the state could potentially have the same expenditures while losing income. Economically, taxes will increasingly have to come from capital rather than labour in the future, if this model is to hold.



Basic universal income is not only an economic issue but also a social one, which relates to the possible social implications of automation. Despite the notion that work is necessary solely as a source of income, work also has a social component. For many, work is essential for their sense of identity, and for others it is one of the only available arenas to socialise. While basic universal income might solve the problem of paying rent, it cannot substitute the social benefits so valuable to many.

And here we approach the key problem of automatization. While automatization could ease the issue of labour deficit and increase production rates, it could also simultaneously lead to the creation of an unnecessary segment of society – an unnecessary class. The problem is not that many will potentially lose their jobs, it is that without adequate policy decisions, a potentially big portion of the population could become unnecessary. ■

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Dutch Elections 2017

TEXT: Thomas Kräuchi

WRITTEN MARCH 13. The upcoming Dutch election, to be held on March 15th, will be one of the most important elections occurring this year. While the Netherlands is not as significant a political player on the world stage as certain other European countries, the election will serve as an important signalling device and symbol for other European elections this year, such as the French and German elections. Most importantly of all, at the time of this article Geert Wilders far-right PVV is narrowly leading (depending on the poll in question), after having received a boost from the Brexit decision and Trump's presidential victory. Should Wilders win, far-right parties in France and Germany may also receive momentum and shift the political balance in Europe. But to many readers, relatively little is known about the Dutch political system and its significant parties. So let's take a quick look at the seven major ones:



VVD - Led by current Prime Minister Mark Rutte, the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy is a centre-right and economically liberal party. It has roughly a quarter of the seats in the Parliament which makes it the largest party in the Netherlands at the moment, and is polling a loss relative to the last election (17% compared to the previous 27%). It is slightly socially conservative by Dutch standards, for example favouring integration of immigrants, which has become an increasingly significant topic in the ongoing campaign.



PVDA - The Labour Party is currently the junior coalition party of the Dutch government. With 35 seats, it is at the moment the second largest party, and the largest Social Democratic party in the country. It has historically been one of the major parties in the Netherlands, being involved in 13 coalition governments since its foundation in 1946. It was the original supporter of building a comprehensive welfare state, as well as women's liberation and environmental protection, although it has since the 90s taken a gradual shift towards the centre-left. Since the last parliamentary election, it has continuously lost electoral support and is currently polling at a catastrophically low 7%, perhaps due to negative opinions of its work in the previous coalition.



SP - The Socialist Party is currently the largest opposition party with 15 seats, and strongly defends a left-wing position. It obtained its first seat in parliament in the 1994 election and has since grown, mostly due to PvdA's shift to the centre. It has frequently called for a society based on human equality, dignity, and solidarity and been particularly critical of globalization. As opposition to right-wing movements it is currently polling a slight increase in support, with 10% of votes.



GROENLINKS - Although currently only holding 4 seats, the Green Left is projected to win a total of sixteen seats or 11% of votes. As a relatively young party formed by the merger of four alternative, left, and green parties, it represents a combination of ecological and left-wing ideals, with a particular focus on creating a sustainable and inclusive future. While currently in opposition, it may play a decisive role in the formation of a coalition government in order to exclude the PVV.



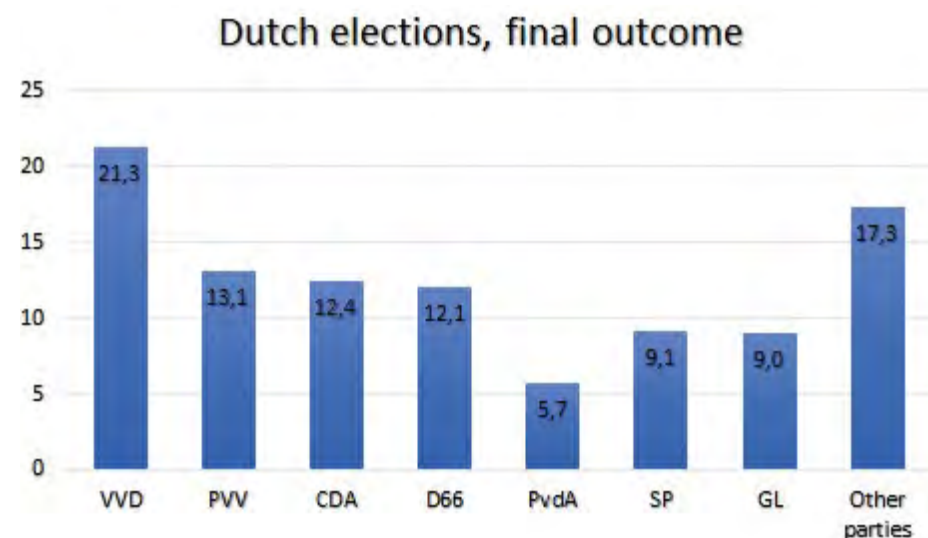
CDA - The Christian Democratic Appeal is the traditional centre-right party of the Netherlands and has historically been involved in all but three coalition governments since the 1970s. Over time, it has adopted an increasingly centrist position in social questions with a rather leftist position economically. It considers broader than only a Christian party, as it is also represented by Jewish, Hindu and Muslim members of parliament. It currently has 13 seats in parliament, as it began to suffer significant losses at the 2010 elections. At the moment, it is currently polling a slight improvement with 13%.



D66 - Democrats 66 is a centrist, socially liberal, and progressive party founded in 1966 by political unaligned intellectuals. The party has suffered from infighting which has characterized its large electoral fluctuations. Its radical democratic wing aimed at creating a German-style mixed membership proportional system, while the progressive liberal wing emphasized environment, innovation, and public education. Currently, it is polling at 12%.

PARTIJ VOOR DE VRIJHEID

PVV - The Party for Freedom, led by controversial politician Geert Wilders, is currently the fourth biggest party in the Netherlands, but is polling to become the largest party with 14-17% of votes. It defends a populist, nationalist, anti-immigrant, and anti-EU position with promises of a "Nexit" referendum should it win. The party has come under fire for remarks about banning the Koran and Muslim immigration. Like in most European countries, it is supported by the disenchanted working class who traditionally voted for Social Democratic parties, which may explain the catastrophic demise of the PvdA.



source: Ekot, Sveriges Radio 2017-03-16

“The fears of most liberals and progressives did not occur- that the PVV would win a majority of seats”

At the moment, the most likely outcome is that the PVV will win the election, but that Geert Wilders will not become Prime Minister. The results of the remaining parties is then extremely important, as the VVD, polling a close second, has already said it would not enter into a coalition with the PVV. The PVV would have clear trouble finding any coalition members, and would surely not be supported by any significant party under a minority government. The other parties polling highly, such as CDA, D66, and GL would then be the preferred coalition members for the VVD, although this could be opposed by GL due to its leftist position. Rather, this could lead to a fragile “Grand Coalition”, involving members from the centre-left to the centre-right, such as PvdA. In the long run this could succumb to pressure especially in planning a budget, yet be more stable than an unassisted minority led by the PVV. Most likely of all however, the post-election period will lead to long negotiations among the mainstream parties leading to a fragile compromise. But of course, nothing can be determined before March 15th.

March 16th

Following the results of the Dutch election, certain surprises occurred. The fears of most liberals and progressives did not occur- that the PVV would win a majority of seats. Instead, due to recent political events with Turkey, Mark Rutte’s VVD surged to 21%, winning 33 seats. The PVV did improve on their previous position, but only won 5 more seats than they held in 2012 (with an increase of 3% of votes). The two biggest surprises that occurred were the complete collapse of PvdA, which only won 6% of votes and a total of 9 seats, compared to its previous 38. The ecological GL now appears to be the rising force of the left and centre-left, after having won 10 more seats than at the last election and now holding a total of 14.

Now that Dutch parties will enter coalition talks, at first glance a centrist coalition seems most viable. As the Dutch Parliament holds 150 seats, 76 seats are needed for a coalition. The parties that are the most aligned and powerful to create a ruling coalition are thus (in order from most to fewest seats): VVD (33 seats), D66 (19), CDA (19), and CU (5) - a centre-right Christian Democratic party. This coalition, however, would only hold exactly 76 seats, making it a fragile coalition. The need to bring in external parties may be necessary - yet a wider political spectrum in power may be tenuous. Only the coming months of political negotiation will tell how a coalition unfolds. ■

Chronicle: Germans hate the f-word

TEXT: Anna Lindvall

FEMINISM. In Sweden it has become a popular theme among students, musicians, and comedians alike. It has also entered the political stage with triumph, with an officially feminist government and feminist foreign policy. Gender equality is a mainstream topic and goal. Feminism, the belief that men and women should have equal rights and opportunities, is seen as a win win situation, influencing different aspects of society. Fathers increasingly take parental leave because they want to be more present in their children’s lives, and acting sexist in working life won’t help you climbing the career ladder in society.

My current home town is Berlin; the culturally prosperous, vibrant and liberal valued capital of Germany. Here, people get to live a free life, they are open-minded and accustomed to change, whether you are a careerist, a straight-edge, a drug addict or an environmental activist. Here, I live a student life among German friends equivalent to the life I had in Sweden, and mostly, the cultural differences feel insignificant. I understand the social codes and if there are any eventual differences, the rule is mutual understanding rather than shock. The societal discussions can touch basically all subjects, however, feminism and gender issues rarely get in

the spotlight. Feminism is silent in Berlin. Furthermore, masculinity and femininity is more pronounced here, and to behave like a dude seems to be entirely accepted. For me, Swedish as I am, gender inequalities and stereotypes are important and exciting topics, so of course I occasionally bring it up, and always the same surprised reaction. You can basically see how the atmosphere falls dead on the floor. Irritation, disinterest or awkwardness. So, what just happened? Did I say anything offensive? My observation may be biased, but feminism seems to be a fairly unpopular topic here. If so, is that a problem at all? Maybe they deal with the issues in another way?

In my quests for answers, I decided to explore the matter in a strictly unscientific way with German work colleagues, peers and acquaintances. I met up with the former political science student Katarina and a law student Juliane, both having experienced the German culture at close range and both willing to go into details.

Firstly, Katarina and Juliane stressed that the German society is clearly divided and varied when it comes to cultural values, gender issues and feminism. Moving between different circles of friends could sometimes be like jumping between different worlds, Katarina explains. Her political science sphere is entirely different from that of her family-in-law. Politically there is a wide range of values represented; conservative, radical, liberal, populist and green... The countryside is more traditional than urban areas. West is richer, but more unequal than the East, just twenty years ago separated from each other by an iron curtain. The labour market statistics confirms this picture. According to a Eurostat report in 2014, the unadjusted gender pay gap is 25 percent in West Germany but only 5 - 7 percent in the East. Overall, Germany's gender pay gap is 23 percent, which is higher than the European average and notably higher than the 14 percentage wage gap in Sweden.

The longer I stay in Germany, the bigger the cultural differences seem to me", says Katarina, who grew up in Sweden and Germany and is now married to a German man. When she wants to discuss gender inequalities, she often feels she gets the label of a "super feminist Swedish girl", which makes her both sad and angry. Moreover, many young people have had mothers that stayed at home during their childhood, taking care of children and household, which makes the issue burdened by guilt, Katarina continues. If one wants to discuss the German "housewife model" on a general level, it quickly gets personal, and some get offended. However, this socio-economic pattern is now slowly changing as women continue to enter the workforce. Katarina believes the change towards more equality is mainly a question of time, and that in terms of a more equal labour market, Germany is a generation behind Sweden.

The German-Brazilian law student Juliane confirms that the label "feminist" is strongly unpopular in Germany. The unpopularity is connected with the disinterest in the topic, the word is filled with prejudices, and few people actually know the meaning of it, she states. For example, a man would very rarely call himself a feminist in Germany. "If someone calls you a feminist, they often mean it as an insult, to mark that you are aggressive, a 'man-hater' or that you aim for female supremacy over men rather than equality", Juliane explains. This is an unfortunate misunderstanding of the concept. Feminism is also regarded as a small and detached issue, which can be excluded from other societal and "more important" problems, Juliane continues. It is often reduced to be an intellectual debate about, for example, the language or motherhood issues. "And old people think gender equality is already achieved, that we don't need feminism anymore", yet to actually make a difference, "it would be easier to establish any other word than to change the



ILLUSTRATION: Linn Posse

perception of the word 'feminism'", she adds, although emphasizing that obviously "there are a lot of people fighting for feminism here".

As an effect of the unpopular status of feminism, the role models and sources of inspiration seem to be few. Where are the celebrities, or young people present in the public opinion? Who wants to represent these ideas? I ask my local student experts. The person one might think of when you mention feminism in Germany is Alice Schwarzer, who was an activist in the 70's and 80's. A role model for older generations. Juliane indicates she is unpopular in the public nowadays, and often made fun of. Katarina draws a parallel to the United States: "Schwarzer is Hillary Clinton", a symbol for the established and outdated, "but there isn't any Michelle Obama".

So, the picture gets clearer. There seems to be a relatively big difference in the meaning and value of the word feminism between

Germany and Sweden. Feminism is far from mainstream, it can even be used as an insult to diminish those who are engaged in gender issues and want to prevent sexist and discriminatory structures in the society. In conclusion, with a risk of brutal generalization, Germans seem to dislike and avoid the f-word. So how will teenagers relate to problems of inequality and sexism if no one stands up for them in the public? If one risks the aggressive label, and gets ridiculed? Of course you want to deal with something that is both interesting and cool. Feminism - the respectful, fair and equal treatment of women and men - is still important, and still needed. Therefore, it needs supporters, it needs a name. Young people in Germany, let's give the f-word the respect and attention it needs. ■

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The Society of International Affairs Gothenburg is a non-governmental organization with the ambition to spread knowledge and spark discussion about foreign policy issues. We organize lectures and trips, host movie screenings and publish the magazine Utblick. A one-year membership is 50 sek and everyone can join.

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Letter from the President



Last year was a turbulent one in international politics; Great Britain's decision to leave the European Union, Donald Trump's victory in the US presidential election and repeated terrorist attacks throughout the world have underlined the fragility of the contemporary international order. The coming year has the potential of equalling, or even superseding, 2016 in terms of important political events: France, Germany and the Netherlands all have general elections, the outcome of which will be of paramount importance to the future of the EU. In other words; 2017 has the potential of turning into a truly horrific, albeit interesting year in international politics.

Equally important, 2017 is a new year for the Society of International Affairs as well; new board, new members, new lecturers and guests, new trips and so on. We've gotten off to a flying start, too, with a successful kick-off event in late February and a lecture with the Swedish Minister of Foreign Affairs in early March, among other things. I figure that the back of our magazine is as good a place as any to encourage everyone to take part in our events, and in doing so, help us reach out to even more people. Among our activities are arranging lectures with prominent people in the field of International Affairs, publishing the magazine which you're reading right now, organizing simulations of, for example, the UN General Assembly and the EU Council of Ministers, and arranging study trips abroad. Finally, I would like to wish you a pleasant read.

Hope to see you around!

Mikael Hemlin

President, the Society of International Affairs in Gothenburg