The swing of the pendulum: Sweden’s pivot to NATO

A case of small states’ shift in security policy

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Abstract

Sweden is the only state in the Baltic Sea region currently not under NATO protection, which puts the state in a particularly vulnerable position. On 18 May 2022, Sweden officially deemed NATO alignment a more effective option of security strategy in projecting deterrence and dealing with the security challenges the state is facing, compared to a strategy of non-alignment which has been Sweden’s security posture for over 200 years. The aim of the thesis is to explain this shift in Sweden’s security policy.

The thesis will explain small states’ security policy beyond the traditional explanations found in realist theory of state-centric threat balancing and sovereignty. Shelter theory claims that small states’ options for security is either to find a protecting power or join an alliance in order to be politically and militarily sustainable (Thorhallsson 2019:15-16). The thesis will analyse Sweden’s shift in security policy by examining shelter theory’s claim that in order for small states to survive and prosper, buffering up domestic capabilities does not suffice, they need to seek political and military shelter from external security providers by implementing bi- or multilateral agreements with neighbouring states, great powers and by joining alliances.

Analysing a long-time deviant case of a non-aligned small state, this thesis argues that Sweden’s drawn-out road-map to NATO membership is problematic to explain from the perspective of shelter theory. Consequently, the thesis makes the additional claim that factors related to Sweden’s domestic policy, such as public opinion and the nearly institutionalised practice of broad political consensus in issues relating to security policy, also play an important role for the design of Sweden’s security policy. Shelter theory in combination with domestic factors’ influence on security policy change offer a more fully fledged explanation of Sweden's shift in security policy to NATO alignment. This thesis argues that its findings complement and enhance shelter theory by shedding light on the importance of domestic factors in the study of small states’ security policy.
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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Great powers dominate the international system. In a time of increasing polarisation between unpredictable great powers like Russia and the United States follows a more turbulent period that is imperilling the European security order. Russia’s deviance can be viewed as an attempt to maintain its great power status which has increasingly been eroded since the fall of the Berlin wall. The invasion of Ukraine manifests Russia’s revisionist ambitions, a behaviour that constitutes a considerable security threat on the European continent. The region’s security is not rendered less challenging by the United States’ increasingly unpredictable stance on European affairs represented by the great power’s pivot in foreign policy and military focus away from Europe to South East Asia. European insecurity is further reinforced by the prevailing NATO scepticism brewing in the United States, as shown by former, and currently running, president Trump’s exhortation that Europe itself must be more responsible for and invested in European security. Russia’s offensive war in Ukraine and the fact that the battleground directly borders with member states of both the European Union and NATO, has once again made Europe into a theatre of war. Even small states in Northern Europe are exposed to the palpable security threat in the region. The small states in the Baltic Sea region are facing a great challenge in how to deal with this recent shift from being an arena of peripheral interest to great powers to yet again being drawn into great powers’ conflicts (Schmidt-Felzmann & Engelbrekt 2018:2).

The rise of security threats in Europe due to great powers’ increasing polarity in combination with the Baltic Sea region’s geopolitical closeness to revisionist Russia, render the states surrounding the Baltic Sea interesting units to analyse. Amongst them, Sweden sticks out as it has an essential role in keeping the stability in the Baltic Sea with its central geographical position and its extensive coastline along the Baltic Sea. Swedish security policy is an interesting case of small states’ security policy since Sweden, in addition to its status of being a small state and its geographical closeness to Russia, also is the only state in the Baltic Sea region with no external defence garanties. These circumstances are currently exposing Sweden to a particularly vulnerable position.
This thesis revolves around how small states¹ model their security policy. During a period of 200 years, Sweden adopted a security strategy of neutrality/non-alignment in its foreign affairs, a strategy resulting in keeping Sweden out of two world wars (Dalsjö 2014:177). Since the end of the Cold War, however, Sweden has radically shifted its security policy (Engelbrekt 2010:9). Initially, Sweden’s neutrality strategy was replaced by a non-alignment strategy as Sweden joined the European Union in 1995. As the European security order once again deteriorated, Sweden’s insistence on remaining non-aligned resulted in a security strategy referred to as the Hultqvist doctrine which consisted of buffering up national defence and entering into a plethora of international defence agreements with strategic Western states and being an active NATO partner. Eventually, on 18 May 2022, three months after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, Sweden’s reluctance to alignment was mitigated and its security policy pivoted to alignment as the state applied for NATO membership. At the time of writing this thesis, Sweden's NATO membership has not been fully ratified by NATO’s current members, rendering Sweden the sole state in the Baltic Sea region without NATO protection.

1.2 Research problem

The reasons explaining states' choices of security strategies are often linked to external factors. The order in the international system is traditionally argued by realist theory to be the driving force behind the design of a state’s security policy (Waltz 1979:ch.6). The resurgence of war in Sweden’s vicinity and neighbouring faltering great power Russia's revisionist behaviour, are indeed explaining factors to Sweden’s shift to NATO alignment. However, these external factors only partially explain the shift in Sweden’s long-standing security posture. Shelter theory established by Baldur Thorhallsson (2019) is based on realist theory but argues that small states are operating according to a different logic from larger states as there are limits to what small states can single-handedly achieve in dealing with external security challenges. In accordance with shelter theory’s political/military dimension, this thesis claims that, in addition to the explanation offered by realism's external factors, the vulnerabilities inherent to small states, such as small population and limited military and economic resources, also constitute decisive factors.

¹ This study assumes Sweden to belong to the subcategory of "Western democratic small states" as defined and categorised by Fredrik Doeser (2008:14) and by Edström & Westberg (2020:194)
in defining the room for manoeuvre when forming security policy of small states. In an increasingly globalised and institutionalised world, opting for neutrality and striving to rely on domestic deterrence alone is often not a viable option for a small state like Sweden.

Sweden’s insistence on remaining non-aligned even as the European security order deteriorated with Russia’s annexation of Crimea in 2014, and even more noteworthy, Sweden’s continued hesitance to NATO alignment after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, cannot be explained by either realist theory or shelter theory. Given these shortcomings, this thesis makes the additional claim that *domestic factors* related to small state Sweden, such as the prevailing public opinion and the nearly institutionalised practice of broad political consensus in issues relating to security policy, also play an important role for the design of a small state’s security policy. By adding domestic factors to shelter theory, this thesis offers a more fully fledged explanation to Sweden’s drawn out road-map in seeking NATO membership.

1.3 Aim and research question

The aim of the thesis is to explain the driving forces behind Sweden’s shift from the state’s centuries-old neutrality/non-alignment security posture to seeking alliance with NATO. The purpose is to empirically examine shelter theory’s claim that a state's ‘smallness’ is a decisive factor for Sweden’s recent shift in security policy to join NATO. Furthermore, the thesis will examine the claim that various domestic factors are additional and essential driving forces to consider when explaining why Sweden opted to seek NATO membership. This leads to the guiding research question of the thesis:

*How can Sweden’s shift in security policy from its long-standing non-alignment strategy to NATO membership be explained?*

By applying the theoretical perspective of the political/military dimension of Thorhallson’s (2019) shelter theory, the thesis will examine how Sweden models its security policy from the perspective of Sweden being a small state. It seeks to identify Sweden’s security strategies, choice of external security providers and understanding the challenging trade-off between using external
protection and strengthening domestic efforts. An analysis of Sweden’s security policy prior to the shift and the process leading up to the pivot to NATO alignment will be carried out.

This thesis will contribute empirically by applying shelter theory to a new case, the case of Sweden’s shifting security policy from a non-alignment strategy to seeking membership in NATO. It will further contribute on a theoretical level by examining the influence of domestic factors in shaping small states security policy, in order to enhance shelter theory and provide a more fully fledged explanation to the shift in Sweden’s security policy.

1.4 Outline of the thesis
Following the above introductory section, is a literature overview of security policy and small state studies. Chapter three outlines the theoretical framework of shelter theory’s political/military dimension as well as the hypothesis of domestic factors' influence on small states’ security policy. Chapter four deals with methodology and explains how the thesis will go about examining the empirical material and answering the research question. In chapter five, the empirical analysis is laid out by applying the research framework presented in the previous chapter, including discussions on findings and revisiting the theoretical and hypothetical assumptions from theoretical perspectives. Finally, concluding remarks and suggestions for future research will be presented in chapter six.

2. Literature overview

This section will put the thesis’ research question into context by presenting and analysing how earlier scholars have approached the study of security policy from the perspective of small states. Small states studies is a subfield of security studies relating to small states in the international system and a research field within international relations.

The traditional state-centric security has often been studied from the role of superpowers and great powers. Small states have not gained nearly as much attention in security studies as great powers, which is remarkable as small states often find themselves in a state of constant threat requiring constant attention to security which in itself renders small states interesting security-objects to study. The sheer increase in the number of small states due to decolonization in
the mid-1970s and the downfall of the Soviet Union early 1990s, has attracted more attention to
the research field of small states (Neumann and Gstöhl 2006:13-14).

States have two major security policy options to choose from in order to protect their sovereignty:
an internal and non-aligned strategy projecting deterrence by national armament or an external
and aligned strategy projecting power by joining alliances (Waltz 1979:118).

Structural realism

Structural realist Kenneth N. Waltz (1979) claims in his seminal work *Theory of International Politics* that *anarchy* prevailing in the international system constitutes the determining factor explaining the design of states’ security policy. Since the international system, contrary to the
domestic system, is a lawless environment with no system-monopoly of legitimate use of force,
states need to rely on self-help as a means to protect their sovereignty (Waltz 1979:104,105). It
follows that national defence capability is the most essential factor to ensure a state's survival
(id.97-98). Each state will thus seek to increase its capabilities but by doing so it will
automatically diminish the relative security of other states. Due to this “security dilemma”,
mistrust and fear will prevail in the international system and a state can thus not count on other
states to ensure its security or survival (id.186-187). Consequently, cooperation is not an option as
such a security strategy would increase a state’s interdependence to states it cannot effectively
trust (id.105-107). Waltz further argues that states’ *power position* in the international system is a
relevant factor in explaining states’ security policy, and that states subordinated in power to
dominant states will be more prone to opt for alliances, as states behaviour is driven by creation
of balance of power (Waltz 1979:97-98). Waltz’ central claim is that striving for balance of power
in the system is the root cause of all states’ behaviour. If a state’s power position causes an
imbalance in the balance of power the state will seek to change its power position either by
enhancing domestic military strength or by way of alliance. States can use two strategies when
allying with great powers in the international system, either balancing (ally in opposition to the
principal source of danger) or bandwagoning (ally with the state that poses the major threat)
(Waltz 1979:126; Walt 1987:4).
In his influential book *Origins of Alliances*, Stephen M. Walt argues that the main reason for states to form alliances is not to balance power as suggested by Waltz but to balance against threats (Walt 1987:263-265, Westberg 2017:418-419). Walt defines threat as a function of power, geographic proximity, domestic capabilities and perceived intentions and that those are all “threat” factors in determining a state’s security policy (1987:vi,1). Walt concludes that states choose allies in order to balance threats and that bandwagoning was the lesser chosen strategy and was opted for by particularly weak or isolated states with exposure to revisionist power in their proximity (id. 263).

Small states studies

In the 1950s and 1960s, the research field of security studies began taking an interest in the challenges and opportunities of small states. The pioneering book of Annette Baker Fox (1959) *The power of small state diplomacy in world war II* marked the beginning of small state studies as a research field. With the central question “How can the small state exercise power in international politics?” (Baker Fox 1959:4), the study focuses on how small states resisted the pressure of great powers and avoided being drawn into World War II by the way of superior diplomacy. Baker Fox argued that a state’s ability to exercise influence and resist coercion can be exercised by way of diplomacy, ideology and economic measures, on top of military strength. The fact that small states possessed relatively limited hard power resources compared to great powers, did not render them “...a helpless pawn in world politics” (Baker Fox 1959:1)

David Vital (1967) in his influential book *The inequality of states* claims that the power projected from resources can be modified by factors such as the small state’s level of economic and social development and the geographical proximity to areas of great power interest (Vital 2006:77). These factors can change the ability for a small state to go from passive to active member of the international system. Vital argues that small states that seek alliance with other powers to offset their weakness, are willing to sacrifice their autonomy in controlling national resources and limiting their political manoeuvre (id.79). Small states opting for non-alignment, however, will face high and with time rising costs as projecting deterrence will be costly.
In his seminal work *Lilliputians' Dilemmas: Small states in international Politics* Robert O. Keohane (1969) focuses on the role of small states in international institutions and together with Nye (1977) argue that different states’ level of power in the international system should not only be viewed from a hard power perspective as small states with limited hard power can be influential in either specific issue areas such as Switzerland in the financial services sector or Saudi-Arabia in Oil or a state can be deemed by its moral greatness like Sweden (Neuman & Gstöhl 2006:8,23-24).

Michael Handel (1981) claims in his influential book *Weak States in the international system* that as great powers are increasingly reluctant to use their military strength, power has shifted focus to the economic arena and empowered economically strong states, even if such states are militarily weak. Traditionally strong military states also had strong economies but the oil states of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Iran have emerged as militarily and technologically weak states with limited domestic markets but with strong economies thus projecting power (Handel 2006:152-5).

In his seminal book, *Small states in world markets*, Katzenstein (1985) is puzzled by the fact that by 1982 small European states such as Sweden had surpassed the US in GDP per capita (Katzenstein 1985:18). Katzenstein argues that globalisation has rendered even large economies dependent on global markets and that small states have more successfully than larger states developed domestic structures to accommodate this dependency on the global market. Katzenstein refers to this phenomena as *democratic corporatism* (id.80).

Amongst more current notable research findings on small states security policy in the case of Sweden are Fredrik Doeser’s (2008) *Foreign policy change in Denmark, Finland and Sweden 1988-1993* and Håkan Edström’s and Jacob Westberg’s (2020) *Between the eagle and the bear: Explaining the alignment strategies of the Nordic countries in the 21st century* which studies the strategic changes in security policies of the four small Nordic states caused by the changing external security environment.

From a constructivist perspective, Sweden’s relationship with NATO has been studied from the viewpoint of Swedes’ deeply embedded national identity of *neutrality* and its impact on Sweden’s
foreign and security policy. Linus Hagström’s *Disciplinary power: Text and body in the Swedish NATO debate* studies Sweden’s governing elite’s and public opinion’s increasing support of NATO from an identity and discourse perspective (2021:141).

**Defining small states**

There is no universal definition for what a small state is (Edström & Westberg 2020:193). Traditionally, international relations literature deals with smallness in terms of measurable and objective parameters of size, such as population, territory, military strength and national economic factors. A small state, when defined small by objective measures, can still prove to gain influence in global politics by subjective measures and thus be considered a more influential state than objective measures would suggest. This higher-than-expected status can be achieved through influence in international institutions (Keohane 1969), by way of superior diplomacy (Baker Fox 1959), by developing and adjusting domestic features leading to democratic corporatism (Katzenstein 1985), by excelling in a specific area (Handel 1981) or by being morally superior acting as norm entrepreneurs (Neumann & Gsthöl 2006:8).

**3. Theory**

Structural realist theory is relevant as it sets the outer framework for all states’ security policy. To obtain a greater explanatory value for this thesis’ research question, shelter theory has been chosen as it is a general theory focusing on small states’ behaviour in world politics. It is considered a mid-level theory that belongs to international relations’ subdiscipline of international politics. Furthermore, in order to examine the impact of domestic determinants on Sweden’s security policy, this thesis draws on the hypothesis underpinning foreign policy change where internal driving factors are also considered to influence states’ security policy.

**3.1 Shelter theory’s political / military dimension**

Shelter theory has been used in various small state case studies in order to systematically deconstruct and understand small states’ foreign policy. The assumptions underpinning shelter theory are based on influences from both classical small state theory (Baker Fox 1959; Vital 1967; Katzenstein 1985) and structural realism (Waltz 1979; Walt 1987). There are, however, some fundamental differences. Baldur Thorhallsson (2019) argues in his book *Small states and shelter*
theory that the explanatory value of structural realist theory is limited when studying small states. As a response to the shortcomings in realist theory, Thorhallsson has developed shelter theory which takes into account small states’ inbuilt structural weaknesses (Thorhallsson 2019:24).

Shelter theory presents a multi-vector strategy for small states consisting of political, economic and societal shelter (id.ch.2). As this study is concerned with small states’ security policy, it applies only the political/military dimension of Thorhallsson’s shelter theory as external political/military shelter is the most relevant shelter in explaining changes in security policy.

One major aspect that sets shelter theory apart from realist theory is that it posits that globalisation and interdependence play a large role for small states. In a world that is highly connected, the incentive for small states to seek shelter is more urgent. This is the reason why the political/military dimension of shelter theory does not deem neutrality/non-alignment to be a valid security policy for small states. Despite the great advantage of non-alignment of preserving states’ sovereignty, a major goal for structural realists, it is increasingly challenging for small states to deal with threats effectively in an autonomous way. Decreasing a state’s sovereignty is a cost small states have a higher propensity to accept due to the increased interconnectedness and institutionalisation of the world (Wivel & Ingebritsen 2019:207). Consequently, small states seek shelter from stronger states and international organisations in the form of bi- and multilateral defence agreements.

The political/military dimension of shelter theory does not regard small states as uniform units but as structurally different units compared to large states and as such they operate under different logic (Thorhallsson 2019:24,49). Small states are more vulnerable and face challenges from several preconditioned domestic and international factors (id.13). It follows that the behaviour of small states is not only a consequence of external factors, such as relative power and anarchy, but also of the particular vulnerabilities inherent to the “smallness” of the small state. Disadvantages ascribed to small states are often argued in relation to size such as small population and limited domestic market. Furthermore, national military and economic capacities are insufficient for the small state to independently provide adequate protection for its state’s sovereignty. The status of being small is the reason why it is particularly problematic for a small state to single-handedly

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protect its own state's territory, citizens and values and why small states seek external security providers (id.24-25).

Shelter theory argues that small states’ are not only driven by survival, as realism posits, but that small states also strive to obtain prosperity. In order to secure both survival and prosperity in today’s globalised world, isolating security strategies of neutrality/non-alignment, is not a viable security policy for small states. Furthermore, as large states do not perceive small states as competitors, they allow the small state to disproportionately gain from the cooperation between them as such relative gains will not result in small states constituting a threat in the future (Thorhallsson 2019:17). Shelter theory argues that cooperation in the form of external shelter is less expensive for small states than buffering up the national military capacity. Opting for a strategy of buffering up domestically will not be politically and militarily sustainable in the longer run.

3.2 Domestic Determinants of Security Policy

Realist theory argues that domestic determinants’ impact on foreign policy are less salient in small states than in larger states, as their high dependance on the international system leaves less room for manoeuvre in their domestic decision-making process (Handel 2006:149).

Various research claims that there is a linkage between domestic politics and foreign policy². Jakob Gustavsson demonstrates in his model of causal dynamics of Foreign Policy Change (1999:85) that both structural international and domestic factors affect changes in states’ foreign policy and that there is no analytical priority between them. Fredrik Doeser in his study of foreign policy change in the Nordic states, claims that a domestic political perspective leads both to constrain foreign policy and to serve as a stimulus for foreign policy (Doeser 2008:38). Joe D. Hagan claims that there are two domestic imperatives impacting foreign policy (1) retaining political power and (2) coalition policy-making (Hagan 1993 in Doeser 2008:39). In order to retain political power in democratic states, public support is required which means that the governing politicians need to take into account domestic circumstances and include them when

² The thesis assumes that the underpinnings of foreign policy are sufficiently similar to security policy to be treated as transferable.
shaping foreign policy. This renders public opinion an essential determinant factor of domestic policy when deciding on foreign policy. The second domestic imperative according to Hagen is coalition policy-making which implies that the actors who decide on the deployment of a state’s resources need to agree on the course of action in foreign policy. The consensus of parliamentary political parties, both governing party and opposition parties, and public opinion are two influential domestic barriers or carriers to shifts in security policy. A carrier is defined as “an incentive for change” and a barrier as “a hindrance for change” (Kelistr and Mayer 2001 in Doeser 2008:46).

In summary, variation in security policy is also caused by domestic policy. It follows that this thesis’ hypothesis is that small states’ security policy is not only a structured response to external factors and the “smallness” of small states, but that domestic factors also play an important role as determinants of a small state's security policy. Changes in the domestic arena will ultimately also lead to changes in small states’ security policy, as domestic factors’ impact on security policy are salient even in small states.

4. Methodology

This section will explain the research design the thesis adopts to answer the research question. It will define what is being studied and how it will be studied and it will link the empirical material to the research question and ultimately to the study’s findings (Yin 2014:28).

4.1 Research design

This study’s purpose is to explain the causes of a single country’s shift in security policy which renders qualitative research the most apt choice of method as quantitative research is more suited for large N-studies (Lamont & Boduszynski 2020:99). There are, however, various quantitative elements present in the study. Single case study tests theories, generates new hypotheses and contributes to theory-building, and allows for extensive and in-depth analysis for complex contemporary social phenomenon (Yin 2014:4; Lamont 2022:213), which makes single case study research design compelling as this thesis’ aim is to both test the explanatory value of shelter theory by applying it to a new empirical case: the case of Sweden’s shift in security policy, and to
complement shelter theory by adding determinant domestic factors to explain the shift in security policy.

Gerring defines single case study as “an intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a large class of (similar) units” (Gerring 2004, cited in Lamont 2022:212). In order for the findings of a single case study to be generalisable, the study needs to define what larger class of phenomenon it belongs to (Lamont 2020:85). This study’s unit of analysis is a case of *shift in small states’ security policy*. Defining the unit of analysis is critical in understanding how the single case might relate to a broader body of knowledge (Yin 2014:33; Lamont 2022:211). The choice of studying Sweden’s shift in security policy is motivated by Sweden’s status as a small state, its frontline position to revisionist Russia and its long-term motto of “alliance-free in peace time and neutral in war time”. Sweden’s long-term non-alignment policy deviates from shelter theory’s claim that small states seek external protection.

In summary, the case of Sweden’s security policy can be deemed a “hard” case for shelter theory. The study’s purpose is not to reject or falsify shelter theory but rather to adapt the scope of shelter theory’s framework. If this study minorly tweaks the assumptions that underpin shelter theory, it will in the longer run, make shelter theory slightly more accurate and it will also render it more adaptable to a larger number of cases. The thesis aim is to enhance the explanatory value of shelter theory.

4.1.1 Explanatory case study

The analysis deals with a positivistic logic of inquiry as it aims to explain causality relating to a social phenomena (Lamont 2020:85; Esaiasson 2012:50-52). It examines the ability of shelter theory and the domestic-factors hypothesis to explain the case of Sweden’s shift in security posture. During the study of the empirical material it became apparent that shelter theory could not account for the drawn-out process leading up to the shift and that domestic factors, such as public opinion and practice of consensus in security policy, seemed to impact the shift.

The two main hypotheses that will be examined to clarify their ability to explain Sweden’s shift in security policy are:
(1) shelter theory’s claim that small states’ shift in security policy is decided by their inherent vulnerabilities of “smallness”

\[ X \rightarrow Y \]

States’ smallness \hspace{4cm} Shift in security policy

(2) the claim that small states’ shift in security policy is also decided by domestic factors of public opinion and the almost institutionalised practice of consensus amongst parliamentary political parties

\[ X \rightarrow Y \]

Domestic factors \hspace{4cm} Shift in security policy

Factors inherent to Sweden’s “smallness” and domestic factors are the independent variables (X) and the thesis will examine their impact on the outcome: the shift in Sweden’s security policy, the dependent variable (Y).

4.1.2 Method Process-tracing

The method selected to analyse the empirical data is process-tracing which enables “to make a strong within-case causal inference about causal mechanisms based on in-depth single-case studies” (Beach & Pedersen 2019:2). In process-tracing the focus is on the intervening variables in between causes and outcomes (Esaiasson 2017:81-82). Process-tracing method helps explain why X leads to Y. The method opens up and chronologically unpacks the micro-causes that cause event X to give rise to the outcome Y.

Derek Beach and Rasmus Brun Pedersen make a distinction between four types of process-tracing in their book Process-Tracing Methods of which the theory-testing process-tracing (2019:9,245) seems apt for the deductive part of the study examining if shelter theory’s hypothesised causal mechanism is present and if it does function as theorised. As the thesis studies a deviant case of shelter theory, theoretical-revision process-tracing is also used to trace the mechanism suggested by the hypothesis of domestic factors with the aim to uncover omitted factors that must be present for the mechanism to function properly (id.11,274).
As process-tracing helps to evaluate existing explanatory hypotheses, generate new hypotheses and assess new causal claims (Collier, 2011:824), the method can be used deductively and inductively. The study is mainly deductive as the research is based on the scientific proposition of shelter theory with the aim of testing the explanatory value of shelter theory by applying it on the case of Sweden’s shift in security policy. The analysis is also inductive both from the perspective of studying a new case and more evidently as empirical observations are used to understand the causal link of domestic factors to the outcome of small states’ security policy and thus enhances theoretical propositions of shelter theory (Lamont & Boduszynski 2020:19,101).

4.2 Research framework

Operationalising the theoretical hypotheses, derived from shelter theory’s political/military dimension and from domestic factors’ impact on security policy, renders the hypotheses “measurable” or “traceable” in the empirical material. This will help to identify evidence for the proposed causal mechanisms. Developing a research framework based on theoretical perspectives and applying it on the empirical material, allows for a higher reliability of the study’s findings as it renders the analysis consistent, and thereby allows for a higher degree of generalisation as it will enable for similar results in repeated “measurements”.

(1) Shelter theory

Wivel & Ingebritsen (2019:206-208) offer a general framework for analysis, derived from shelter theory, consisting of the questions of when, why and how states seek shelter.

*When and why do states seek shelter?*

According to shelter theory, the driving forces of small states’ security policy is the world’s increasing *interconnectedness* and *institutionalisation*, themes central to liberalism. Today’s greater interconnectedness and institutionalisation cause small states to more willingly trade off their sovereignty and seek external shelter from stronger states and international organisations. The anarchic international system is considered a contextual constant and the incentive to seek shelter will vary over time due to increased or decreased interconnectedness and institutionalisation. Small states’ security policy may also be viewed as a consequence of *power*
and anarchy, themes central to structural realist theory. Small states seek external political/military shelter as their absolute and relative power is limited. This vulnerability stems from low populations and limited resources.

How do states seek shelter?
External political/military shelter consists of military, diplomatic and administrative backing from large states and international institutions. Shelter theory advocates that small states negotiate international defence agreements bilaterally or multilaterally with great powers or international institutions. The supply of various political/military shelters has increased due to the rapid institutionalisation in the world, a recent phenomenon of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and mostly experienced geographically in Europe. This gives small states access to vast possibilities for a combination of both institutional shelter and bilateral agreements with great powers; a plethora of overlapping bi- and multilateral agreements is often the reality of small states’ security policy (Wivel & Ingebritsen 2019:207). Today’s rapid reproduction of international agreements is “creating a spaghetti bowl character of international relations with multiple overlapping agreements” (id. quoting Alter and Meunier 2009:13).

(1) shelter theory’s claim that small states’ shift in security policy is decided by their inherent vulnerabilities of “smallness” and that the driving forces are increased interconnectedness and institutionalisation and limited absolute/relative power.

\[
\begin{align*}
X & \rightarrow \text{causal mechanism} \rightarrow Y \\
\text{“Smallness”} & \rightarrow \text{interconnectedness} \rightarrow \text{shift in security policy} \\
(\text{Vulnerabilities of smallness}) & \rightarrow \text{institutionalisation} \rightarrow \text{limited absolute/relative power}
\end{align*}
\]

(2) Domestic factors
As public support is of essence for the governing elite to retain political power, a shift in public opinion can lead to a shift in security policy. Another important carrier or barrier of domestic factors’ impact on security policy is the coalition policy-making consensus amongst political parliamentary parties.
(2) the claim that even a small state’s shift in security policy also is decided by its domestic factors of public opinion and the almost institutionalised practice of consensus amongst parliamentary political parties with the driving forces being retaining political power and coalition policy-making:

\[
\begin{align*}
X & \rightarrow \text{causal mechanism} \rightarrow Y \\
\text{Public opinion} & \text{retaining political power} \quad \text{shift in security policy} \\
\text{Parliamentary consensus} & \text{coalition policy-making} \quad \text{shift in security policy}
\end{align*}
\]

To sum up, the causal mechanisms for (1) shelter theory are: increased interconnectedness, institutionalisation and limited absolute/relative power and for (2) determinant domestic factors of public opinion and parliamentary consensus are: retaining political power and coalition policy-making. The purpose is to examine if the causal mechanisms that the hypotheses allege drive and explain the link between the outcome (Y) the shift to NATO alignment and the underlying causes (X) states’ smallness and domestic factors, are confirmed by the empirical material.

The causal mechanisms will be traced in the empirical material as follows:

(1) Shelter theory’s causal mechanisms interconnectedness and institutionalisation and limited absolute/relative power are observed in the empirical material as bi- and multilateral international defence agreements, and;

(2) Domestic factors’ causal mechanisms retaining political power and coalition policy-making are observed in the empirical material as a shift in domestic opinion towards NATO alignment and/or a shift in the parliamentary consensus towards NATO alignment or the loosening of the practice of parliamentary consensus in security policy.
4.3 Empirical material
The study is based on a wide range of documentary sources, such as official pronouncements, policy statements, research articles and media reports in relation to Sweden’s shift in security policy. The veracity of the empirical data gathered is confirmed by triangulation in the sense that several types of document-based primary and secondary sources corroborate the empirical data used.

The primary sources’ countenance and facts are assumed to be trustworthy although deliberate choices have probably been made to officially publish general and overriding information rather than detailed and polarising information. Announcements are not necessarily made for policy-options that have been opted out of or activities that have not been fruitful. In order to counterbalance this risk of bias and to reinforce the validity of the study, collection of additional empirical material from secondary documentary sources is required. Specialised news media journalists closely follow and report on Swedish foreign and defence policy issues, and can be treated as reliable secondary sources. Their articles, however, have processed and analysed the material from primary sources from the point of view of journalism, with an aim to produce a narrative.

Empirical material published by research institutes and think tanks, whose researchers often constitute an authority in the field of security and defence policy issues, can be subject to biases due to both external financial liaisons and ordering of scientific studies or reports. Furthermore, researchers may have a background as advisors to national authorities or international organisations, which provides the researchers with greater insights and more in-depth knowledge, but can also influence their angle of approach and their arguments.

4.4 Delimitations
Process-tracing requires setting temporal boundaries for the study (Lamont 2022:107). In order to catch the gradual process of Sweden’s shift in security policy, the time-horizon of the study will stretch from one extreme of the pendulum, Sweden’s neutrality policy during the Cold War, passing by the non-aligned phase to the opposite side of the security policy spectrum, represented by Sweden opting for alignment when applying for NATO membership on 18 May 2022.
5. Analysis - Sweden’s pivot to NATO

In this section, the research framework developed in the previous chapter will be applied on the empirical material in order to analyse and explain the shift in Sweden’s security policy to NATO alignment. A chronological unpacking of security policy developments will allow for an analysis of the gradual process leading up to Sweden deeming a pivot to NATO alignment the preferred security policy option over the long-dominant policy of neutrality/non-alignment. The shift can be regarded as a pendulum that has swung from one extreme on the security policy spectrum, neutrality, to the opposite extreme, alignment. This thesis regards security policy changes as gradual transformations rather than revolutions happening due to external shocks. Tracing the evidence stipulated in the research framework in the different stages of the chronological process, will allow for testing the hypotheses of the causal mechanisms presented in section 4.2. This will show the process that has been building up to the “radical” shift in Sweden’s security posture, from neutrality to alignment. The observable phenomena are, from

(1) Shelter theory: *bi- and multilateral international defence agreements*, and;

(2) Impact of domestic determinants: *a shift in domestic opinion towards NATO alignment* and/or *a shift in the parliamentary consensus towards NATO alignment* or *the loosening of the practice of parliamentary consensus in security policy*.

5.1 Sweden’s long-standing neutrality policy: not so neutral - The Cold War

Sweden’s long-dominant motto of “non-aligned in peacetime, neutral in wartime” can be argued to primarily have served Swedish domestic politics and peacetime purposes during the Cold War, and less to keep Sweden out of war, as the neutrality stance would not have de facto been used in the event of a major war (Dalsjö 2014:175; Kunz 2005:10). Starting in 1814 and running for a period of 200 years, Sweden’s neutrality/non-alignment security policy in its foreign affairs has created a path dependency and a strong identity of independence for both Swedish politicians and its population. Neutrality has been strongly embedded in the Swedish national identity (Dalsjö 2014:180; Petersson 2018:90).
The state's neutrality strategy was well rooted after the second World War; it was considered the main cause of why Sweden was successfully kept out of two world wars and remained a neutral buffer-zone state during the Cold War (Dalsjö 2014:177). A strong motive for Sweden’s neutrality policy was that it served to keep the superpowers apart and to lower tension in the Nordic region during the Cold War but it was also the policy of choice of the Swedish public which was strongly against Sweden becoming an allied NATO partner as its neighbours Denmark and Norway had in 1949. The “Finland-argument”, implying that closer Swedish ties to NATO would force Finland into the role of Soviet satellite state, was a major reason why Sweden chose the same path as Finland, becoming a neutral Nordic state (id.177). In addition to the strong public support to Sweden’s neutrality policy, neutrality was also the only agreed security policy that could be found between the parliamentary political parties (id.176).

The authenticity of Sweden’s neutrality policy is, however, debatable as research has shown substantial unofficial Swedish cooperation with NATO member states, both during the Cold War and increasingly so after the fall of the Berlin wall (Kunz 2005:11-12). Magnus Petersson refers to Sweden as “The Allied Partner” and claims that Swedish defence was, to a certain extent, integrated into NATO’s defence since the inception of NATO 1949 (2018:73,90). The covert cooperation took place in various domains, such as intelligence sharing, common defence planning and development of interoperability (Petersson 2018:78-81;Dalsjö 2014:180). In case of war between the Soviet Union and the West, one could argue that the planned allied overflights of Western air forces over Swedish territory would inadvertently have drawn Sweden into war (id.176). Neutrality is a security strategy that is viable only if the neutrality is credible and acknowledged by other states. Obtaining credibility would imply that the neutral state does not cooperate with other states or choses sides in case of conflict (Thorhallsson 2019:29). Sweden’s balancing its independence and “self-help” with unofficial NATO cooperation jeopardised Sweden’s neutrality, a risk that Sweden was apparently willing to take (Brommesson 2016:2). A further consequence that is debated in relation to Sweden’s drawing security advantages from the covert “life-line” with NATO member states, is that it misled the Swedish population in believing that Sweden had the capacity to independently deal with security challenges as a non-aligned state (Dalsjö 2014:181). This false belief can serve as explanation to the Swedish population’s reluctance to NATO membership. The misleading information of sufficient national capacities
was backed-up by Sweden’s economic strength enabling a buffering up of domestic military capabilities during the Cold War with a defence budget superior to 4% of GDP (Westberg 2016:416). Furthermore Sweden had a strong domestic defence industry to support self-sufficiency and the ability to mobilise almost its entire military-age male population in a short period of time as well as a built-up total defence with war-plenished stockpiles (Kennedy & Schmitt 2020:293-294,303). These domestic efforts were, however, still not deemed sufficient by the governing politicians to single-handedly defend Sweden in case of war.

5.1.1 Findings

Shelter theory’s causal mechanisms for small states security policy are traced by bi- and multilateral international defence agreements. Sweden’s security strategy as a neutral state consisted of buffering up domestic capabilities and not of international defence agreements, at least not overtly. As Sweden did, however, covertly cooperate with several NATO member states one can consequently argue that there are traces, albeit covert, of international defence agreements even during the Cold War years when Sweden supposedly was a neutral state. The external reasons for neutrality were to not provoke the Soviet Union and to support Finland (“the Finland-argument”) but the external factors are indeed joined by valid domestic reasons. The observable causal mechanisms for domestic factors are a shift in domestic opinion towards NATO alignment and/or a shift in the parliamentary consensus towards NATO alignment or the loosening of the practice of parliamentary consensus in security policy. There are no traces of any shift in public opinion towards alignment, on the contrary neutrality was deeply embedded in Swedish national identity and from the perspective of retaining power, politicians were thus cautious not to disturb the neutrality stance. In addition, neutrality was the only security policy that political consensus could back.

In summary, Sweden’s neutrality/non-alignment security policy did primarily serve domestic politics and peacetime purposes and although it is unlikely that its neutrality would keep Sweden out of war, as widely believed by majority of Swedes, it would allow for a valuable gain of time before Sweden was drawn into war, keeping Sweden out of the initial violent nuclear phase, which was the greatest worry during the Cold War (Dalsjö 2014:192). Consequently, Sweden’s neutrality policy during the Cold War could be argued to indeed be the result of both external and
internal factors. The consequences of covert “life-line” leaves however both the public and majority of Swedish politicians unaware of what Sweden’s government assessed as incapability to defend itself independently of the support of other states and international organisations.

5.2 Sweden’s militarily non-aligned alliance policy - Post-Cold War

The Cold War-ideas of a strong domestic total defence strategy, consisting of a large draft army, a significant national defence industry and an extensive defence budget of 4% of GDP, ceased after the implosion of the Soviet Union, as Sweden no longer considered a weak Russia to pose a threat. The armed forces were substantially reduced (Kennedy & Schmitt 2020:303). The period of “strategic timeout” that followed was marked by the abandonment of conscription, the put on hold of renewal of defence equipment which led to privatisation of the defence industry and the general dismantling of existing Swedish military and total defence capabilities and infrastructure. What remained of Swedish defence shifted towards dealing with crises outside of Sweden’s borders, abandoning Sweden’s anti-invasion territorial defence and reorienting the national armed forces towards expeditionary crisis-management operations to be used abroad (Kunz 2015:13). During this period the doctrine of Swedish security was referred to as the “Afghanistan doctrine” (Brommesson 2016:1).

5.2.1 The solidarity policy

In practice, Sweden has since the end of the Cold War abandoned its neutrality policy and taken ever-greater steps away from non-alignment albeit continuing to officially marking its security policy as non-aligned but with the emphasis on militarily non-aligned (Westberg 2021:215). Already in connection with Sweden’s joining NATO’s Partnership for peace program (PfP) in 1994 and the European Union in 1995, however, the state’s long-standing neutrality policy effectively came to an end, clearly demonstrated by the contribution of Swedish troops to NATO-led military operations in Bosnia in 1995 (Dalsjö 2015:169). Sweden’s close political and economic links to EU member states was further enhanced in 2009 with EU’s solidarity clauses 222 and 42.7 in the Lisbon treaty which oblige EU’s member states to assist other EU countries in the event of an armed attack. Sweden’s security posture developed into a solidarity policy (Westberg 2016:411; Dalsjö 2015:166) and the defence decision of 2009 adopted a unilateral declaration of solidarity which means that “Sweden will not remain passive if another EU
Member State or Nordic country suffers a disaster or an attack, and that we expect these countries to act in the same way if Sweden is affected” (DS 2022:8:19). The phrase “not remain passive” alludes to neutrality no longer being central to Sweden’s security policy (Wieslander 2022:4). The 2009 defence decision did not only enable a closer security and defence cooperation with the EU, it enabled a closer cooperation amongst the Nordic countries with the creation of Nordic Defence Cooperation (Nordefco) and a close bilateral Finnish-Swedish defence cooperation (Brommesson 2016:2). The major shift in 2009 security policy of solidarity was that it required the Swedish Armed Forces to develop capabilities that would allow them to give and receive military assistance from other states, setting the framework for interdependencies in defence cooperation (Westberg 2016:413; Wieslander 2022:46). Officially admitting external support as the central piece of Swedish security strategy, Sweden’s solidarity policy represented the first steps towards a policy of alliance. Paradoxically, Sweden remained militarily non-aligned (Dalsjö 2015:177).

In its 2009 defence decision, the parliament shifted policy from the quasi-abolishment of Sweden’s domestic defence capabilities to redirecting state budget funds to once again buffer up domestic military capabilities. Sufficient funds were, however, not earmarked to back up the implementation of these defence reforms (Dalsjö 2015:180). The Swedish Audit Office concluded in reports in 2013 and 2014 that the Armed Forces were unable to fulfil their mission to defend Sweden due to shortage of funding, personnel and equipment (Kunz 2015:16) and that the essential plans for how Sweden was to give and receive military support, the central element in Sweden’s solidarity policy, were not clearly outlined (Westberg 2021:221).

The debate of Sweden’s real defence capacity surfaced on the political agenda in 2013 when Sverker Göransson, the Supreme Commander at the time, announced that Sweden would be able to defend itself single-handedly for one week only, coining the expression “the one-week defence” (Dalsjö 2015:181; Petersson 2018:89). Sweden’s dependency on expedient external help in order to counter an attack was made bluntly evident. The external help element was central to Sweden’s security policy of solidarity adopted in 2009 but in 2013 it still remained unclear where such help would come from. NATO made it clear that Sweden could count on collective defence guarantees from NATO only as a NATO member (Dalsjö 2015:181). The debate was further sparked as Sweden's military weakness came into view in 2013 and 2014 as Russian aircrafts
frequently violated Nordic airspace and were even able to simulate an attack on Stockholm and two targets in Southern Sweden and Sweden needed NATO’s help with using two Danish F-16 from Lithuania to fend off the Russian bomber planes as Sweden had no planes or pilots ready (Chatterjee 2023; Kunz 2015:18-19). In 2014 an intensive but unsuccessful hunt for a foreign submarine took place in the Stockholm archipelago, causing a Cold War déjà-vu, and President Vladimir Putin warned Sweden from joining NATO as it would be interpreted “as an additional threat for Russia” (Wieslander 2022:41) and the Russian ambassador to Sweden Viktor Tatarintsev declared that there was “no way to guarantee that Russia has no plans to attack Sweden” (Kunz 2015:18).

5.2.2 The Hultqvist doctrine paradox

Despite Russia’s military build-up, the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014 and Russian violations of Swedish territory, Sweden did not abandon its military non-alignment. Instead the government dealt with the external threat issues by implementing a paradoxical “non-aligned alliance policy” as military non-alignment was combined with an extensive bi- and multilateral defence and security cooperation with other states (Westberg 2016:412). This policy later came to be labelled the “Hultqvist doctrine” after Peter Hultqvist, the Swedish Social Democratic Defence Minister, in office October 2014 till October 2022. Hultqvist was thus Sweden’s Defence Minister both when Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022 and when Sweden handed in its NATO application in May 2022. Before that, however, Hultqvist took upon him the paradoxical task of retaining a militarily non-aligned security policy while concurrently building extensive external shelter to ensure Sweden’s security.

Hultqvist considered pivoting Sweden’s security policy to NATO alignment a risky option as it would contribute to disturbances and tensions with regard to domestic politics and Finland as well as negatively impact the relationship with Russia which would consequently create instability in the Baltic Sea region (Mechta 2017; Wieslander 2022:49).

As a compensation in lieu of NATO alignment, Sweden built close relationships with NATO and an extensive web of bilateral and trilateral defence cooperation. The government mandated Krister Bringéus, a former ambassador, to investigate the pros and cons of Swedish security
policy cooperation with other states and international organisations. In his report, Bringéus argues that Swedish NATO membership would lead to enhanced predictability in the Baltic Sea region in the event of a regional security crises and therefore probably increase West’s deterrence (Wieslander 2022:49-50). Bringéus’ conclusion was the opposite of the governing politicians’ arguments of why not to join NATO. A NATO membership application from Sweden would likely lead to a political crisis with Russia. Bringeus concludes, however, that previous rounds of NATO enlargements were initially opposed by Russia and could indeed cause Russian military adjustments but that eventually Russia would accept the fact and the situation would return to status quo ante (SOU 2016:57:154).

Under the direction of Hultqvist, the military defence was redirected towards national anti-invasion defence and rearmament and in 2018 conscription was reactivated (Ydén et al. 2022:372). In addition, Sweden also entered multiple bilateral defence agreements predominantly with Finland and the United States, joined the Great Britain-led Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) and deepened cooperation with NATO (id.372). Consequently, the Hultqvist doctrine consisted of two pillars: (1) strengthening the national defence and (2) entering multiple international defence cooperation agreements with other states and international organisations. Sweden’s solidarity security policy of 2009 set the space for manoeuvre enabling the implementation of the Hultqvist doctrine and the policy’s goal to build interdependencies with NATO and other states for military support. Sweden’s solidarity policy states that Sweden’s security “can best be averted collectively and in cooperation with other countries” (Wieslander 2022:42).

Building up domestic total defence capacity is a lengthy and costly process, in particular given the depletted point of departure after years of budget cuts for the resources of the Swedish Armed Forces (Kennedy & Schmitt 2020:324). In 2018, Sweden’s defence spending amounted to 1.12% of GDP and the Defence Commission 2019 white book concluded that the Armed Forces were unable to meet an armed attack against Sweden given the non-sufficient funding resources (id.:312). Consequently, the parliament agreed to increase the defence spending to 1.5% of GBP by 2025, a considerably lower level compared to NATO's ambition for its allies to meet 2% of GDP by 2024 (Wieslander 2022:43). In 2018, military conscription was partially reactivated with 4,000 recruits being annually selected for basic gender neutral military training (Berndtsson et al.
with the plan to double the number of conscripts by 2024 to 8,000 per annum (DS 2019:8:172). Reintroducing and building up of conscription represented a central strategy of the Hultqvist doctrine in addition to the more frequent and complex regional military exercises as well as the re-establishment of a permanent military presence on the island of Gotland which during the Cold War had a force of at least 15,000 soldiers giving its central positioning in the Baltic Sea (Wieslander 2022:43; Chatterjee 2023). In 2017, Aurora 17 was Sweden’s biggest military exercise in two decades, it focused on territorial defence and included 19,000 Swedish troops, corresponding to the majority of the Swedish Armed Forces, and 2,000 foreign military from Finland, the United States and multiple other alliance members (Berndtsson et al. 2018:353). In 2019, the Swedish Army exercise Northern Wind, located in the northeast of Sweden, involved 7,000 troops from Finland, Norway, United States and the United Kingdom (Kennedy & Schmitt 2020:309). There was an ever increasing internationalisation of military exercises occurring, both Swedish military exercises including foreign troops and Swedish Armed Forces participating in exercises held by other states’ armed forces.

The Hultqvist doctrine led to a sharp increase in Sweden’s military cooperation with various states and international organisations comprising approximately twenty international defence cooperation agreements (Skr.2020:21:56). This thesis will outline the most important bilateral and multilateral agreements with Finland, the EU, Nordefco, JEF and the NATO partnership.

Finland

Sweden’s closest defence ally is Finland with whom it shares a northern border and the Baltic Sea. Finland’s vulnerability, primarily consisting of its 1300 km long border with Russia, has long represented a main reason for Swedish non-alignment as it was assumed that Finland could fall under Russian control if Sweden joined NATO (Ydén et al. 2019:9). As Denmark and Norway joined NATO in 1949, Finland and Sweden remained the neutrals of the Nordic countries. Finland partly constitutes Sweden’s buffer zone to Russia and also provides Sweden with strategic and operational depth (Kennedy & Schmitt 2020:310).

Sweden’s bilateral defence cooperation is most far-reaching with Finland. The Defence Commission 2019 white book defines the Finish-Swedish defence cooperation as “unique” and concludes that the cooperation should continue to be highly prioritised (DS 2019:8:297).
bilateral defence agreement includes joint planning in crisis or war, and although mutual security guarantees are not part of the defence agreement (id.299), the transparency and the intentions of the two allies in case of war is an exceptional element in their relationship (Wieslander 2022:44).

In 2014, Sweden’s and Finland’s Defence Ministers agreed on deepened defence cooperation including all defence domaines (Skr.2020/21:56:6). In 2015, Sweden and Finland signed a joint declaration, covering various areas of cooperation, including a joint Naval Task Force and giving the option to work together “beyond peacetime” (Kunz 2015:30). Since 2015, areas of cooperation have been broadened to include joint operational planning, exercises, combined military units, establishment of secure communication systems, air and maritime surveillance, defence materiel, mutual use of military infrastructure and personnel exchange (DS 2022:8:23), demonstrating a very close relationship between the two militarily non-aligned states in the Baltic Sea region. Given limited defence funds of smaller states, coordinating on procurement and operational planning provides both countries with higher capabilities. Cooperation in procurement is organised both bilateral and within Nordefco and allows for developing a higher interoperability between the Armed Forces of Finland and Sweden and thus a higher operative capability (Kennedy & Schmitt 2020:311; Skr.2020/21:56:7).

In 2020, the Swedish parliament provided the government with extended rights to give and receive operational military support within the framework of defence cooperation between Sweden and Finland. It enables the Finnish Armed Forces to assist Swedish Armed Forces in case of foreign violation of Sweden territory, and vice versa (Skr.2020/21:56:7). Since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, Sweden and Finland have conducted joint exercises on the island of Gotland, in Stockholm’s archipelago and in the central Baltic Sea, including the Gulf of Finland (DS2022:8:23). In the proposed defence bill covering the periode 2021-2025, the Swedish government particularly highlights the importance of continued integration between the two countries’ Armed Forces as to increase the understanding for respective countries’ methods and doctrines, enabling both troops to be active on each other’s territories (id.8; DS 2019:8:103)

Not long after Sweden entered into a trilateral defence agreement with the US in 2018, Finland and Sweden agreed to joint defence exercises and military access to each other’s territory,
encompassing defence cooperation during peacetime, crisis and war (Skr.2020/21:56:6). A Swedish-Finnish brigade was established for the exercise Northern Wind, a military exercise which saw Finland deploy 1,500 Finnish soldiers, the largest force Finland has deployed outside its territory since World War II (Kennedy & Schmitt 2020:310;DS 2019:8:297).

**The European Union**

The European Union constitutes the foundation for Sweden’s unilateral solidarity policy. Since the establishment of the Common Foreign, Security and Defense Policy in 2009, within the framework of the Lisbon Treaty, various initiatives and mechanisms have enabled and reinforced cooperation in the defence domain. Despite the increasingly integrated structures in the EU’s political domain of defence, the Swedish Defence Commission’s white book for 2021-2025 questions the long-term significance of the EU’s Common Security and Defence Policy for Sweden (id.55). The EU’s role as a common defence integrator is problematic. Security and defence remain a policy area that requires consensus voting according to the current Lisbon Treaty framework. The mutual defence obligation by EU member countries under the solidarity clause does not represent a collective defence obligation. Consequently, the EU is not institutionally set up to act militarily at the level of decisiveness that is required to deal with large-scale threats such as the one posed by Russia. EU’s NATO members would probably rely more on NATO as a collective defence shelter for the defence of their territories (DS 2022:8:26). Furthermore, no other EU member state has returned a declaration of solidarity similar to the one Sweden declared, a sign that relying on defence assistance from the EU would not constitute a robust defence plan (Wieslander 2022:42;Kunz 2015:31).

**Nordefco**

Nordefco was a bottom-up initiative, from military level up to the political level, established by the Nordic countries in 2009 (Petersson 2018:87). The ambition of Nordefco was to develop coordinated defence amongst Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Iceland and Finland primarily in order to achieve cost efficiencies in the production of military capacities. Nordefco does not stipulate any mutual obligations for collective defence. Consequently, the primary driver of Nordefco is cost-efficiency rather than common security (Petersson 2018:87). The Nordefco platform has enabled the militarily non-aligned states Sweden and Finland to integrate into NATO’s defence structure via the cooperation with NATO members Denmark and Norway.
JEF

JEF was launched during the NATO 2014 Wales summit and is a multilateral defence cooperation representing a regional complement to NATO. Sweden and Finland joined in 2017. This Northern European expeditionary force is led by the British Armed Forces and its structure allows for coordinated planning, decision-making, strategic communication, logistics and exercises amongst their members: the UK, the four Nordic countries, the three Baltic States and the Netherlands (Skr2020/21:56:12). The aim of JEF is to conduct annual exercises in the Baltic Sea Region in order to build interoperability amongst its members and project deterrence in the region.

NATO partnership

Although Swedish NATO membership was not considered a security option during the 1990s, Sweden has been an active partner in NATO since 1994, when Sweden decided to join NATO’s Partnership for Peace (PfP) program (Kunz 2015:28). Swedish troops have served in NATO-led military operations ever since and contributed to missions in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo in the 1990s and thereafter in Afghanistan, Libya, as the first non-aligned state to participate in a NATO airpower intervention, and again in Afghanistan (Ydén et al. 2019:12).

Table 1. Swedish troops’ participation in NATO-led operations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1995-1996</td>
<td>Bosnia-Herzegovina, Implementation Force (IFOR/SFOR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Kosovo, Kosovo Force (KFOR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Libya, Operation Unified Protector (OUP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Afghanistan, Resolute Support Mission (RSM)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sweden’s Armed Forces’ contributions to the NATO-led military operations were realised under the umbrella of crisis management and aiming at promoting human rights, fighting poverty, and strengthening democracy, rule of law and gender equality (Petersson 2018:82-87). Sweden partaking in NATO-led military operations did also, however, serve to demonstrate Sweden’s Armed Forces’ ability to conduct NATO military operations and it allowed for higher integration into NATO’s structures (Ydén et al. 2019:14).
Sweden’s relation with NATO through PfP did not, however, include collective defence. Over the last decade, this has changed and Sweden has, together with Finland, moved closer to NATO in collective defence structures than any other NATO partner has (Wieslander 2022:44). At NATO’s 2014 Wales Summit, Sweden’s active contribution to NATO partnership led to the country being awarded “Enhanced Opportunity Partnership” (EOP) status. This award signals that Sweden is one of the most able and willing NATO partners that made “significant contributions to NATO operations” (Petersson 2018:86). The EOP status means tailormade cooperation for Sweden with NATO on matters such as intelligence sharing, exercise planning and participation in exercises (Kunz 2015:28). This cooperation has deepened in step with the deteriorating security order in Europe evidenced by regular exercises and planning between Sweden and NATO on political, military and administrative levels. In 2020, The Swedish government stated that NATO is the sole organisation being able to lead major and challenging military operations to secure the Baltic Sea region (Skr.2020/21:56:18).

During the 2014 Wales Summit, Sweden also signed the Memorandum of Understanding for Host Nation Support Agreement which was ratified by a large majority of the Swedish parliament in 2016. The framework of the Host Nation Support improves the conditions to more efficiently give and receive military support from NATO in times of crisis or war and it covers both military and civil support and serves as a basis for planning of operations, including peacetime exercises, crisis management and wartime military operations (DS 2022:8;27;Kunz 2015:28). The Host Nation Support agreement enables NATO forces to operate and set up logistic support sites for NATO forces during exercises or other military operations on Swedish territory, if mutually agreed (Ydén et al. 2019:13).

Since receiving EOP status in 2014, Sweden has taken part in NATO training and participated in several major exercises. Some of the NATO-led exercises that Sweden has partaken in are: Trident Juncture in 2015, which was NATO’s biggest exercise since 2002, and Trident Juncture 2018, which was located to Norway and trained for an Article 5 collective defence scenario. Sweden was also a part of Trident Jupiter in 2019 and has participated in NATO-hosted cyber exercises (Kennedy & Schmitt 2020:309). Sweden’s participation in both NATO-led military
operations and NATO exercises have led to Swedish Armed Forces adapting to NATO’s military standards and developing NATO interoperability.

Sweden, together with Finland, was considered “the most NATO-integrated NATO partner(s), probably more integrated in NATO on the operational and tactical level than many NATO members and they also contributed more to NATO-led operations than many NATO members" (Petersson 2018:87). From a NATO perspective, counting Sweden and Finland as NATO members makes defending the Nordic and Baltic region far more comprehensive (Chatterjee 2023). The Swedish government, reiterated, however, on several occasions that NATO alignment was not on the agenda as it was not a viable option for Sweden’s security policy because such a radical shift in security policy would bring instability to the Baltic Sea region (Hultqvist & Wallström 2016; Ydén et al. 2019:14).

5.2.3 Swedes’ NATO opinion

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, the majority of the Swedish political establishment and the public opinion continued to strongly adhere to the policy of neutrality, and the opposition towards closer security cooperation with the EU or NATO remained strong (Dalsjö 2015:269). Neutrality has remained a powerful element of “Swedishness” that transcends national identity and has a stronghold in Swedish public opinion, even though research indicates that such Cold War-nostalgia is based on erroneous assumptions (Kunz 2015:10). After Russia threatened Sweden in official statements and the Russian military repeatedly violated Swedish territory during 2013, there was a noteworthy change in Swedish public opinion: the opposition to NATO drastically reduced while the support for NATO membership sharply increased (Bjereld & Ydén 2015:290)
Graph 1. Swedes’ opinion to NATO membership

Percentage of respondents considering NATO membership a: bad proposal (orange), good proposal (black)
Source: SOM-institutet - Vad påverkar det svenska opinionsklimatet.

The SOM (Society, Opinion, Media) Institute publishes annual surveys on the Swedish public opinion on Swedish NATO membership with the question “Should Sweden seek NATO membership?” During the period 1994 - 2012, the public opposition to Swedish NATO membership was overwhelming and fairly stable as two to three times more respondents were opposing NATO membership than supporting it (Bjereld 2014:487).

The turbulent Swedish defence debate of 2013, sparked by the “one week defence” statement of the former Swedish Supreme Commander, shifted the trend by reducing Swedes’ long-term opposition against Swedish NATO alignment (id.). The debate shed light on the meagre implementation of the defence decision taken almost five years prior: Sweden still had no credible external defence shelter to show for nor did the Swedish Armed Forces have the preparedness to receive such external help. This impacted the public opinion’s confidence in Swedish national defence and put a pressure on reinstating conscription and shifting Sweden’s Armed Forces’ smaller expeditionary forces for international missions to focus on territorial defence at home (Bjereld 2014:487). These findings in Swedes’ opinion on national defence resonate with the Hultqvist doctrine’s strategy aiming at buffering up the national defence capacity and securing external defence agreements.

Ulf Bjereld’s 2014 report based on the SOM survey concluded that the causes for this radical shift in public opinion to NATO alignment were not to be found in the external factors of heightened
risk for military conflicts or worries about revisionist Russia’s military build up, nor could it necessarily be explained by the relatively minor diminishing trust Swedes had in their national defence capabilities. The report found, however, a positive correlation between increased support for NATO alignment and increased support for Sweden reinstating conscription and a higher resistance for Sweden to partake in international military operations. These findings indicate that there was a stronger support in the public opinion to enhance the Swedish territorial anti-invasion defence. The report further concluded that an essential explanation to Sweden’s general NATO reluctance can be found in Swedes’ perceptions that a NATO alignment will increase the risk of Sweden getting drawn into war and conflict. This would imply that deteriorated security order in Sweden’s vicinity would cause a stronger Swedish NATO opposition, which implies an opposite causality than shelter theory posits. According to Bjereld, this can be explained by the fact that Swedes’ worry less about Russia attacking Sweden than Sweden getting drawn into military operations directed towards Russia, via a NATO alignment, against Sweden’s will.

In 2015, for the first time since the SOM survey was launched in 1994, the share of Swedes’ supporting NATO membership exceeded the share of Swedes opposing it. The support for NATO was 38% versus 31% in opposition. Although with a slim margin of 7 percentage points, this was a remarkable shift in public opinion. The 2015 SOM survey contained, however, a paradoxical result: approximately 12% of the respondents that supported a Swedish NATO membership also favoured a non-alignment policy which means that those respondents advocate two alternative courses of action that are impossible to combine (Berndtsson et al. 2016:244;Ydén et. al 2019:1). This inconsistency can demonstrate an uncertainty by the public of the meaning of “militarily non-aligned” and “NATO membership”. Another explanation to this public confusion is that the same paradox could be found in the country's security policy itself: the government’s security policy clearly consists of a militarily non-aligned doctrine whilst integrating ever closer with NATO structures, conducting NATO-led military exercises and contributing to NATO military operations abroad (Ydén et. al 2019:16).

During the years that followed, Swedes’ NATO opinion, however, levelled out and reversed to show again a larger percentage of Swedes opposing NATO membership than supporting it, the difference between “support” and “opposition”-sides remained however small. This could be
explained by Swedes’ prioritising of other crises such as the refugee crisis in 2015 and the global pandemic in 2020-2021 (Bjereld & Oscarsson 2023:146).

5.2.4 Parliamentary consensus on NATO

Sweden’s security and defence policy is decided by the Swedish parliament, Riksdagen, and it is based on the government’s proposal on the national defence structure and development for the consequent 10 to 15 years (Kunz 2015:12). These defence bills are adopted approximately every five years. The Defence Commission³, represented by members of all parliamentary parties, identifies key threats, develops a long-term strategic plan for Sweden’s Armed Forces and makes recommendations on spending levels for implementing suggested priorities (Kennedy & Schmitt 2020:294). The findings of the Defence Commission are more of a political compromise but the government takes them into consideration as it proposes its defence bill to Riksdagen (Kunz 2015:13). The Defence Commission serves as a forum for consultations between the government and the parliament with the ambition to reach a broad consensus on Sweden’s defence and security policy. Setting Sweden’s security and defence policy is thus a collaborative process involving all political parties represented in the parliament. This focus on creating a broad base of consensus amongst political parties provides an element of stability in defence planning but this almost institutionalised practice can also be the cause of inertia in shifting security and defence policy as it is based on the lowest common denominator that unites the Swedish parliament.

The sharp reduction in the public’s opposition to NATO membership was similarly recorded amongst sympathisers of all political parties represented in the parliament. The NATO issue followed the right-left party lines where NATO adherence is the strongest amongst the right-conservative block and voters for Social Democrats, the Green party and the Left Party being mostly against Swedish NATO membership (Bjereld 2014:490). By the fall of 2015, all four liberal-conservative opposition parties had abandoned the policy of military non-aligned and were in favour of a Swedish NATO membership while the Social Democrat-Green government held on to the opposing vision (Berndtsson et al. 2016:240).

³ “Försvarsberedningen”, not to be confused with the parliament’s Defence Committee: “Försvarsutskottet”
As defence decisions are in practice decided by a broad consensus amongst political parties, the lowest common denominator that united the Swedish parliament during this period was keeping the non-aligned doctrine.

5.2.5 Findings

Shelter theory’s causal mechanisms for small states security policy are traced by *bi- and multilateral international defence agreements*. During the Hultqvist era, the rapid reproduction of international defence agreements can indeed be referred to as “a spaghetti bowl character of international relation with multiple overlapping agreements”. As shown, there is an abundance of traces of Sweden entering into bi- and multilateral international defence agreements with various countries and organisations, including partnership with NATO, providing ample empirical evidence that small state Sweden was indeed dependent on external shelters in order to secure its territory, sovereignty, population and fundamental values. There is also evidence that the supply of external shelter is enhanced by institutional shelter in addition to bilateral shelter. For instance, Finland and Sweden are parties to a bilateral agreement between them, joint trilateral agreements with USA and Norway respectively, and both Sweden and Finland are part of the EU, NORDEFCO, JEF and partners of NATO.

The observable causal mechanisms for domestic factors are *a shift in domestic opinion towards NATO alignment* and/or *a shift in the parliamentary consensus towards NATO alignment* or *the loosening of the practice of parliamentary consensus in security policy*. The empirical evidence examined shows a change in domestic opinion supporting NATO membership as demonstrated by the sharp reduction of NATO resistance in 2013. It was followed by a shift in 2015, when the public support exceeded the opposition to NATO alignment. The recorded shift in public opinion was however not fully reliable and it was furthermore not sustained in the years that followed. Although greater support towards a Swedish NATO membership was also recorded amongst the parliamentary parties, it was not sufficiently strong to bring the issue on the political agenda and even less to produce an impact for a shift in the parliamentary consensus for a change in security policy.
To sum up, by dismantling the Swedish Cold War anti-invasion territorial defence, Sweden became incapable to single-handedly create deterrence as the scaling-back entailed lower level of cost for an aggressor to invade Sweden (Westberg 2021:220). As the security order deteriorated, the government, with Defence Minister Hultqvist, decided on a twofold security strategy: to upgrade national military capability and multiply Sweden’s cooperation with bi- and multilateral international defence agreements and be an active partner in the NATO partnership. It is puzzling how the Swedish security doctrine could officially remain militarily non-aligned and at the same time demonstrate such a plethora of bi- and multilateral international defence agreements and an active partnership with NATO. This incompatibility was confusing also for the Swedish public which is demonstrated by the fact that 12% of the population concurrently preferred to join NATO and remain non-aligned, two options that are mutually exclusive. In the same way, the government’s security policy could be deemed a paradox. Should the Hultqvist-doctrine be understood as a military non-aligned policy as it was officially claimed to be or was it actually the beginning of an integration process leading up to NATO alignment?

5.3 Sweden’s pivot to NATO - The Shift
If Sweden’s security policy of solidarity represented the first step towards a policy of alliance, the Hultqvist doctrine shifted the pendulum yet closer to a security policy of alignment. Barbara Kunz accurately describes the Hultqvist doctrine as a “workaround for the option currently not at hand: a fully fledged NATO membership” (2015:31).

As Russia invaded Ukraine on 24 February 2022, the Swedish government continued to insist that a NATO application was not on the agenda. The pressure to change stance grew, however, from the opposition parties but also as Finland, Sweden’s by far closest ally, started to signal a fundamental reorientation of its security policy towards NATO membership (Bjereld & Oscarsson 2023:143). The bilateral defence agreement between Sweden and Finland constituted the cornerstone of Swedish defence strategy.

On March 16, the government initiated security policy discussions with the parties of Riksdagen on the changed security situation following Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine and decided to
set up a parliamentary committee to deliberate Sweden’s defence and security policy cooperation, including the issue of a possible Swedish NATO membership (DS 2022:8:3).

On May 13, the parliamentary committee presented its results (DS 2022:8). It did not advise for or against NATO membership but it concluded that the current framework of cooperation did not encompass any mutually binding defence obligations and that Sweden has no security guarantees in the event of an attack. It further concluded that the EU lacked collective defence capabilities and that NATO’s collective defence does not include a partner dimension as Article 5 applies to defence of Allies only. The report also claimed that a Swedish NATO membership would have a deterrent effect in the region:

“Swedish NATO membership would raise the threshold for military conflicts and thus have a deterrent effect in northern Europe. If both Sweden and Finland were NATO members, all Nordic and Baltic countries would be covered by collective defence guarantees.” (DS 2022:8:40).

On 18 May 2022, almost three months after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, Sweden’s application for NATO membership was submitted, together with Finland.

5.3.1 Swedes’ NATO opinion

During the autumn of 2021, several months prior to Russia’s large-scale invasion of Ukraine, the Swedish public opinion was split on the issue of Swedish NATO alignment: 29% finding NATO alignment a good proposal and equally 29% finding it a bad proposal (Bjereld & Oscarsson 2023:146). A stronger public opinion supporting NATO membership was recorded days following the invasion, but it did not, however, gain majority and the support levels even decreased during the month of March (id.; Mellgren 2023). In conjunction with Finland's announcement in April 2022 of possible Finnish NATO membership, the trend in Swedish public support to NATO membership was, however, reinforced (id.). Noteworthy is that 59% of the respondents were of the opinion that Sweden should join NATO if Finland joins (SvD 2022). The pivot in public opinion occurs in opinion polls at the beginning of May 2022, showing a majority of the public in favour of abandoning the traditional Swedish non-alignment security policy to shift to Swedish
NATO membership (Bjereld & Oscarsson 2023:146). Shortly thereafter, on 16 May, the government decided on NATO membership.

Graph 2. Swedes’ opinion to NATO membership Source: SOM-institutet 2023

The question: “What is your opinion on the following proposal? Sweden should apply for NATO membership” The two graphs show the percentage of the respondent answering “good proposal” (blue graph) or “bad proposal” (red graph)

Comment: The Increase of 35 percentage points, from 29% in 2021 to 64% in 2022, is sharpest increase ever recorded (Bjereld & Oscarsson 2023:141)

5.3.2 Parliamentary consensus on NATO

The parliamentary committee that was set up in March 2022 to conduct a security analysis was not unanimous: the Left Party and the Green Party submitted reservations stating arguments for continued Swedish non-alignment. During March and April 2022, the Social Democratic government had, however, started to shift in their opinion due to Finland’s signalling movement towards NATO membership and the pressure from the opposition parties. The shift in public opinion also represented a strong motivation to reconsider NATO membership for the Social Democratic party (Bjereld & Oscarsson 2023:144). Insisting on opposing a NATO membership while the public opinion strongly favoured a NATO membership would constitute a true pickle in the upcoming Swedish elections in September 2022, in particular given the fact that the Sweden Democrats Party had shifted stance and there was consequently a parliamentary majority for a NATO membership (id.).
Table 2. Party sympathisers positive to NATO membership (percent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>2021</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MP</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>79</td>
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<tr>
<td>KD</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Övr</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alla</td>
<td>29</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Percentage of party sympathisers considering NATO membership a “very good” or “rather good” proposal

V=Left Party, S=Social Democrats, MP=Green Party, C=Center Party, L=Liberals, KD=Christian Democrats, M=Conservative Party, SD=Swedish Democratic Party, Övr=Other, Alla=All

Source: The national SOM survey 2021-2022

The main opposition party, the conservative Moderaterna, and its leader Ulf Kristersson voiced the electoral promise that if there is parliamentary majority, the Conservative Party would hand in a NATO application if elected, even if the Social Democrats oppose it (Karlsson 2022). This was a clear break from the practice of consensus-seeking amongst parliamentary parties when forming the Swedish security and defence policy. The conservative party did not take any steps towards shifting Sweden’s security policy while in power with the coalition Alliansen 2006 - 2014. At the time, however, there was no public support for such a shift in security policy. With the demonstrated shift in public support in 2022, the conservative party seemed comfortable going against the broad consensus practice claiming that the Conservative Party would shift Sweden’s security policy to NATO alignment in case of a parliamentary majority.

5.3.3 Findings

Shelter theory’s causal mechanisms for small states security policy are traced by bi- and multilateral international defence agreements. Sweden’s application to NATO membership on 18 May 2022 is clear evidence of small states’ dependency on external shelter.
The observable causal mechanisms for domestic factors are a *shift in domestic opinion towards NATO alignment* and/or a *shift in the parliamentary consensus towards NATO alignment* or the *loosening of the practice of parliamentary consensus in security policy*. The shift of the majority of the Swedish public opinion supporting NATO membership occurred in May 2022. An increase in support did happen after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine but the shift to majority was caused by a shift in Finland’s stance of possibly joining NATO. There was also a *shift in the political consensus* as evidenced by Social Democrats' change of stance, due to Finland’s shifting stance, the shift in public opinion and the upcoming elections. There was evidence of *loosening of the practice of consensus in security policy* demonstrated by the Conservative Party’s electoral promise to seek NATO membership even with a parliamentary *majority*, disregarding the *consensus* practice. These findings beg to ponder if it is the public opinion that drives political decision-making or if it is the governing politicians that lead the public.

To sum up, despite the “abundant spaghetti bowl of external shelters” constituting the Hultqvist doctrine, Sweden had no mutually binding defence obligations with other countries to rely on. After Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, the Swedish government came under severe pressure during March and April 2022 both from the opposition parties and the Swedish public opinion had drastically shifted. The Social Democrat party would have difficulties dealing with a continued party resistance to NATO membership given the upcoming election, in particular as there was a shift in parliamentary majority in favour of Swedish NATO membership. Furthermore, the importance of Finland’s role in Sweden’s defence policy can also be argued to have constituted a major factor of influence for Sweden’s decision to shift to NATO alignment. The government decided to apply for NATO membership on 18 May 2022.
6. Conclusions

The pendulum has swung from one extreme on the security policy spectrum, neutrality, to the opposite extreme, alignment. In that sense, Sweden’s shift from a neutral state during the Cold War to non-aligned after the fall of the Berlin Wall and to seeking alignment in 2022, can be referred to as a remarkable shift. The study shows, however, that the process of integration was indeed long in the making and that the shift towards NATO alignment was enabled only once the government had clear support both by the Swedish public and the parliament.

To conclude, the thesis confirms that shelter theory can explain Sweden’s shift to NATO alignment. The theory explains both the plethora of international defence agreements that constituted Sweden’s security policy and Sweden’s shift in applying for NATO alignment. Shelter theory cannot, however, explain Sweden’s drawn-out behaviour to submit an application to join NATO. The thesis confirms the hypothesis that domestic factors played a role in the shift in Sweden’s security policy to NATO alignment.

Given the thesis’ findings, adding domestic components to the assumptions underpinning shelter theory could allow for a more fully fledged explanation on small states’ security policy.

Hypotheses have been investigated to gain a greater understanding of their explanatory value to the phenomena of Sweden’s shift in security policy specifically and this will hopefully contribute to the understanding of the phenomena of small states’ security policy more broadly. Additional case studies of small states experiencing draw-out processes in joining defence alliances due to domestic circumstances would serve to verify the results of this thesis.

During the study of the empirical material, an interesting driving force that was not the object of the study surfaced: Finland. Would Sweden have applied for NATO membership without Finland doing so, even if the public opinion would have swung as radically as it did? To what extent did Finland’s choice of NATO alignment become Sweden’s choice? The impact on a small state’s shift in security policy arising from a close defence ally’s shift in security policy, is a potential causality to explore in a future study.
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