



“An Armed Attack Against Sweden or our Allies Cannot be Ruled Out”

Applying Mälksoo’s Ritual Deterrence Theory and Resilience to the Case of Sweden

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Abstract

Purpose: This thesis will explore Sweden's approach to deterrence policy from the start of the Cold War up until the latest defence proposal and how it is presumed to take form. This means that the thesis will not analyse how Swedish deterrence functions in practice but rather how its implementation is envisioned by the government.

Method: The two methods used in this thesis are document and discourse analysis. These are utilised in conjunction to provide a comprehensive understanding of the different proposals that the Swedish government has provided since the Cold War regarding Sweden's deterrence policy. Together, document analysis and discourse analysis offer a robust framework for understanding the complexity of the Swedish Deterrence Policy.

Theory: The thesis combines two theories. The first theory is the Ritual Deterrence theory developed by Maria Mälksoo, which provides a new perspective on Sweden's deterrence policy. The second theory is Resilience, with the purpose of understanding how resilience affects deterrence.

Material: This thesis analyses policy documents that are sourced directly from the Swedish government's database, which include defence proposals put forward by different governments from the start of the Cold War to the Defence Document of 2024, and other official documents. In addition, the thesis analyses press releases, which come from the government's database.

Conclusion: This thesis examines the nature of the Swedish deterrence posture from the Cold War until the latest defence document passed in December 2024. My analysis shows how Swedish deterrence has changed from focusing on having a strong defence during the Cold War before reducing it due to the belief of peace after the fall of the Soviet Union, and finally rebuilding once again after security threats in Sweden's vicinity. Sweden has also been focusing on international peace support missions as a form of performative deterrence. The analysis concluded that civil defence and military defence plays a prominent role in how performative deterrence takes form. It is through different performative actions, such as political statements and military exercises, that Sweden deters its potential aggressors.

Keywords: Deterrence Policy, Total Defence, Civil Defence, Military Defence, Ritual Deterrence, Resilience

List of Abbreviations:

NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization

EU: European Union

UN: United Nations

PfP: Partnership for Peace

MSB: Myndigheten för Samhällsskydd och Beredskap

ISAF: International Security Assistance Force

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1. Introduction

Swedish security policy has undergone major changes in recent decades. From having a strong defence during the Cold War to making cuts around the year 2000 and then building it up again after the Russian invasion of the Crimean Peninsula. Due to the recent increase in security threats around the Baltic Sea and in Eastern Europe, the Swedish security strategy has become increasingly important. The concept of “Deterrence”, according to Freedman, aims to deter a potential enemy from wanting to attack. In the long run, this means that the party deterring will try to convince the attacking party that the attack will either fail or be too costly to be worth it.² This can be done, for example, by clearly signalling state preparedness and showing that the country can defend itself. In the case of Sweden, this means a combination of both military and civil defence. This combination of military and civil defence is in Sweden called the Total Defence and includes everyone who lives within the country, both citizens and foreigners, between the ages of 16 and 70.

The Swedish “Total Defence” is a matter of importance to everyone who lives in Sweden, including foreigners. Total defence affects Sweden’s entire society from authorities and businesses to farmers and healthcare workers. Sweden has a high willingness to defend the country, where 81% (per cent) of its population claim to be ready to help defend Sweden and participate in the total defence to the best of their ability.¹ The Swedish total defence includes everyone living in Sweden and is regulated through the Total Defence Act. The total defence includes the civilian defence as well as the military defence, as they are supposed to work together in defending Sweden from a potential aggressor.

The Swedish concept of deterrence has evolved considerably since the end of the Cold War. Following the Cold War’s ending and the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Swedish and global political landscape has undergone significant transformation and thereby forced countries to change and rethink their own defence policy and international alliances. After the end of the Cold War, Sweden, along with large parts of Western Europe, entered a period where conflicts with foreign powers were considered unlikely. The risk of a foreign attack on Sweden was considered very low and near impossible. This resulted in discussions about what the

¹ Myndigheten för samhällsskydd och beredskap (MSB). Försvarsvilja och samhällets skyddsvärden. *Kantar Public*. <https://www.msb.se/contentassets/7674bc5a867143e2825b7a55b8d07fd7/kantar-public-forsvarsviljaoch-samhallets-skyddsvarden-juni-2022.pdf> (Hämtad 28/10-2024)

² Freedman, Lawrence. 2004. *Deterrence*. Cambridge: Polity Press. p 27

Swedish Armed Forces would be used for and where they would be used. Quickly, it was proposed that Sweden should help on an international level with different kinds of international peace support operations, and that was later where the focus was shifted, even though it was still on the agenda to defend the Swedish territory.

Following Russia's aggression against Georgia in 2008², Crimea in 2014³ and the invasion of Ukraine in the beginning of 2022⁴, decision-makers in Sweden began to rethink how the country's defence forces should be structured and what they would do. Instead of mostly focusing on international efforts and helping different organisations in international peace support operations, the focus shifted back to defending the Swedish territory and the country's independence from potential aggressors.

Before joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Sweden had been neutral since the invasion of Norway in 1814.⁵ After Karl XIV Johan's assault on Norway, he established a neutrality policy that would keep both Sweden and Norway from war during the Union and kept Sweden neutral for over 200 years before joining NATO in March of 2024.⁶ It can be discussed whether the neutrality policy was followed or not, but that is not the purpose of this thesis, and therefore, the thesis will assume that it was applied until Sweden joined NATO.

Sweden has long maintained an anti-nuclear stance; it originally launched its very own nuclear program in 1945 but later shut it down in 1972.⁷ Since then Sweden has been a prominent actor in nuclear disarmament. The Stockholm Initiative for Nuclear Disarmament from 2019 is one of these examples. Sweden's historical stance on nuclear weapons also fits well with the country's foreign policy of advocating peace and security. It is also through foreign policy that

² Collin, Lotten. Georgiekriget kom överraskande. Sveriges Radio, 2008-08-19
<https://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=83&artikel=2261027> (Accessed 2024-10-31)

³ Regeringen. Ukraina. *Regeringskansliet*. <https://www.regeringen.se/sveriges-regering/utrikesdepartementet/sveriges-forbindelser-med-omvarlden/europa-och-centralasien/ukraina/>. Accessed 2024-10-31)

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Dick Harrison, "Då Var Sverige Senast i Krig," *Svenska Dagbladet*, september 9, 2024, <https://www.svd.se/a/BW8vJE/dick-harrison-da-var-sverige-senast-i-krig>. And: Dick Harrison, "Då Var Sverige Senast i Krig," *Svenska Dagbladet*, september 9, 2024,

⁶ Swedish Government. (n.d.). *Sverige i Nato*. Regeringen.se. Retrieved October 30, 2024, from <https://www.regeringen.se/regeringens-politik/sverige-i-nato/>

⁷ Larsson, Christer, "Historien om en svensk atombomb 1945-1972" (The history of a Swedish Atomic Bomb 1945-1972), Ny Teknik, 1985-1986

Sweden can advocate for a global disarmament of nuclear weapons and can thus have a leading position for a world free of nuclear weapons.

1.1 Research Problem

Traditionally, Sweden has maintained a policy of military neutrality, avoiding formal alliances and relying on its own military and diplomatic efforts to ensure national security. However, in recent years - particularly following Russia's increasing military assertiveness in Europe, including the invasion of Ukraine in 2022 - Sweden has moved toward closer cooperation with NATO culminating in its application for full membership in 2022. Swedish deterrence has evolved from trying to develop a nuclear bomb in the 1960s to disarming the Swedish armed forces in the millennial shift of the 1900/2000s to once again rebuilding it after Russia's annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in 2014. While much attention has been given to Sweden's policy of neutrality, less is known about the evolution of Sweden's deterrence strategy. Deterrence is not limited to military capabilities, including performative actions that signal strength and resolve to both domestic and international audiences. Understanding these symbolic actions is necessary to fully grasp Sweden's evolving security posture. However, it remains unclear to what extent these performative aspects influence Swedish deterrence strategy and whether Sweden's actions are primarily driven by strategic necessity or symbolic actions. This uncertainty presents a puzzle that this thesis seeks to answer.

1.2 Thesis Gap

While existing research covers Sweden's policy of neutrality as well as its close collaborations with the European Union and the United Nations, there is limited research to the evolution of the Swedish deterrence policy – particularly there is none in relation to performative aspects. Most research focuses on neutrality rather than how Sweden's deterrence policy has been adapted over time. Furthermore, there is no existing research that has applied Mälksoo's theory of ritual deterrence to Sweden's evolving deterrence policy. This leaves an important gap in understanding how the Swedish deterrence policy functions in terms of both strategic and symbolic actions.

Ritual Deterrence, as proposed by Mälksoo, emphasizes the symbolic nature of deterrence—how states use actions to perform power and deterrence as a social practice, rather than relying solely on military capabilities. This thesis aims to address the gap in existing literature by applying Mälksoo's framework to Sweden's evolving deterrence strategy, thus exploring how

Sweden's deterrence actions function as social and diplomatic signals, rather than military responses alone. By analysing Sweden's deterrence policy through this lens, the thesis will provide new insights into how Sweden has navigated the changing security dynamics in its region and examine the role of performative actions in shaping its new deterrence strategy.

1.3 Research Questions and Aim

This thesis answers two questions:

- To what extent does the theory of Ritual Deterrence by Mälksoo help us understand the performative aspects of Sweden's deterrence policy?
- How has Sweden presented its policy of deterrence to work since the beginning of the Cold War?

This thesis has three aims. The first is to explore Sweden's evolving approach to deterrence policy and how it is presumed to take form. This means that the thesis will analyse how its implementation is envisioned by the government by examining Sweden's shift from military neutrality to closer alignment with NATO instead of how it functions in practice.

The second aim is to analyse how different security issues in Sweden's direct vicinity has changed the country's policy of deterrence and the proposals that the government puts forward. This also includes the anticipated role of various actors within the Swedish Total Defence.

The third aim is to examine the applicability of Mälksoo's theory of "Ritual Deterrence" to the deterrence policy of Sweden. The study will explore how this theoretical framework manifests in the case of Swedish deterrence policy as well as the nuances of its implementations.

1.4 The Limitation of the Thesis

The main limitation of this thesis is its focus on the proposals for changes in Sweden's deterrence policy. This means that the thesis will exclusively focus on analysing the proposals that different governments have put forward regarding Swedish deterrence policy. The thesis will not evaluate how or if the different proposals were effective, successfully implemented or simply did not work. By limiting the scope to the proposals themselves, this thesis does not address their impact or their effectiveness. The thesis will instead focus on the proposals themselves. This approach provides a clearer picture of the reasons why these proposals were made at the time they were and how they could be justified. Thus, while the scope of the study may be limited, it seeks to contribute to the broader discussion about deterrence principles and the policy-making processes within the Swedish context.

1.5 My Contributions to the Field

In analysing the policy shifts, this thesis makes three contributions to the academic field of war studies. Firstly, the thesis will provide a new way of looking at Sweden's deterrence policy and how it has developed since the start of the Cold War. This will be done by analysing the deterrence policy changes with the help of Mälksoo's theory and thus determining whether Sweden's policy of deterrence is mainly performative and whether it has developed over time. This includes how the proposals regarding the integration of the civil defence and military defence are presumed to be carried out.

Secondly, the research will provide insights into how a small, historically neutral state has adapted to changing security dynamics in its geographic sphere. The analysis will focus on Sweden's deterrence policy following the end of the Cold War, with particular emphasis on the Swedish government's assumptions regarding its implementation.

Lastly, the research shows that resilience in society can help increase the country's deterrence capability. It becomes evident that it is through preparedness and collective identity that Sweden can withstand and recover from threats.

1.6 Structure

This introductory chapter of the thesis presented the background information relevant to the thesis and further presented the research problems that the thesis will cover as well as its purpose and questions. Chapter two presents the previous research that the thesis relies on, where parts of Sweden's historical deterrence policy are described. Chapter three presents the theoretical framework to which the study relates as well as the gap that the thesis aims to fill. Chapter four deals with the methodological approach the thesis uses and the selection process that was used to find relevant information. Chapter five presents the empirical material that the study deals with and the analysis the thesis carries out. The final chapter provides a summary of what the study has concluded and proposes some areas of further research on the subject.

2. Previous research

This chapter aims to review the previous academic literature that addresses the evolution of Sweden's deterrence policy posture. A central theme and an important part of Sweden's history is its historical context of both neutrality and the policy of non-alignment. Furthermore, the factors that influenced the gradual and historical shift toward NATO membership and the break of the 200+ year neutrality policy. The following section will provide an overview of the evolution of Sweden's nuclear weapons history, non-alignment policy as well as the shift toward closer cooperation with NATO.

Helge Jung, the Swedish Supreme Commander between 1944 and 1951, wrote a book about Swedish defence and his vision for the future of it.⁸ Jung explains that Sweden shortly after the Second World War, was not a relevant target for nuclear bombs due to its large surface area and low population density. However, Jung argued that the capital and other larger cities needed to take measures to reduce the side effects if a potential atomic bomb were to be dropped.⁹

In his book "Alliansfrihet och atombomber" Agrell talks about the Swedish stance on nuclear bombs during most of the Cold War and the Swedish change from having a nuclear program to shutting it down.¹⁰ Agrell discusses the chapter on nuclear weapons that exists in Supreme Commander Jung's book. According to Agrell, Supreme Commander Jung's omission of nuclear weapons in his book on Swedish defence was not because he saw nuclear weapons as a central theme in his argument. Instead, the book reflected his views on nuclear weapons as a new and devastating type of warfare.¹¹ Before Agrell's book the research on nuclear bombs in Sweden was relatively small. This was because most of the sources that Agrell used had previously been classified documents. Agrell further argues that Sweden was controlled by a political doctrine that was divided into three main categories: alliance freedom in peace, a deterrent defence, and total defence.¹²

⁸ Helge Jung, *Vårt framtida försvar: överbefälhavarens förslag* (Stockholm, 1947), 267.

⁹ Jung 1947, p 123

¹⁰ Wilhelm Agrell, *Alliansfrihet och atombomber: kontinuitet och förändring i den svenska försvarsdoktrinen från 1945 till 1982* (Stockholm: LiberFörlag, 1985), 408.

¹¹ Agrell 1985, p 195

¹² Agrell 1985, p 278

Following the Second World War, the Swedish Supreme Commander considered nuclear weapons to be necessary for Sweden in case of an escalating conflict. Later in the 50s, the risk that Sweden would be drawn into a large-scale war was not considered as great, which is why it was then assumed that nuclear weapons were no longer as necessary.¹³

Finding previous research on Swedish deterrence policy is challenging. The research available is on the security strategy where the mention of deterrence is relatively small. There is however an agreement that the Swedish deterrence has made several changes throughout history and has gotten a more strategic role since the end of the Cold War.¹⁴ Since the Swedish political landscape is full of contradictions, the Swedish deterrence policy has not been able to get a foothold within Swedish security strategy.¹⁵ Edström and Gyllensporre argue that the vast changes in the Swedish security policies were made due to the current changes in the surrounding world.¹⁶ They also argue that it was this change in the world that was the reason behind Sweden dismantling most of its standing defence during the start of the 21st century.¹⁷

It is not clear what kind of deterrence Sweden has been using. Depending on what source you look at, you will get a different answer. According to Dalsjö, Sweden used a combination of different kinds of deterrence during the Cold War and into the 1990s.¹⁸ Axelsson however, who does not identify the same pattern as Dalsjö, argues that Sweden during the 2010s only had a small idea of deterrence by denial.¹⁹ The Swedish deterrence policy throughout the Cold War and in the new millennia is therefore unclear, making it difficult to understand exactly what kind of deterrence Sweden really used.

¹³ Agrell 1985, p 173

¹⁴ Axelsson, Jörgen, Sörenson, Karl och Ångström, Jan. (2016). Strategisk teori: bidrag till förståelse av svensk säkerhets- och försvarspolitik. Statsvetenskaplig tidskrift. Vol.118(4):445- 470; Dalsjö, Robert. (2019). Sweden and its deterrence deficit: Quick to react, yet slow to act. I Vanaga, Nora och Rostoks, Toms (red.). *Deterring Russia in Europe: Defence Strategies for Neighbouring States*. Routledge: p. 105-106.; Edström, Håkan, Gyllensporre, Dennis och Westberg, Jacob. (2019). *Military Strategy of small States Responding to External Shocks of the 21st Century*. Abingdon: Routledge.

¹⁵ Dalsjö 2019, p. 93, 105-106

¹⁶ Edström, Håkan och Gyllensporre, Dennis. (2014). *Svensk försvarsdoktrin efter kalla kriget*. Stockholm: Santérus Academic Press. p. 131-132

¹⁷ Edström and Gyllensporre 2014, p 131-132

¹⁸ Dalsjö 2019, p. 99

¹⁹ Axelsson et. al. 2016, p 457

According to Agrell, Sweden and other states had secret military collaborations during the Cold War. The United States was the most valuable partner, and the collaboration can be seen as an extended deterrence.²⁰ Since 2010, Sweden has been more open with their defence collaborations as it is an important part of Swedish security strategy. Furthermore, Pyykönen et.al argues that different kinds of collaborations can be seen as a form of collective deterrence.²¹

Sweden has had a long-standing tradition and policy of being “neutral” in every major conflict during the last 200+ years due to not having a formal military agreement with other states. Sweden's biggest part of this policy was to be military non-aligned, something that made Sweden a major stabilizing force in Northern Europe that could rely on different diplomatic channels and independent military capacity. Sweden’s policy of neutrality and military nonalignment has undergone several major changes during the last decades. The biggest shift was the joint application (with Finland) to NATO in May of 2022.²² This meant that the longstanding neutrality policy and military non-aligned that Sweden had had come to an end.

Both Sweden and Finland, as previously explained, simultaneously applied for membership in NATO on the 18th of May 2022. Before this, Michalski et al. explained that both countries had a longstanding tradition of being military non-aligned. One reason that is mentioned for joining the alliance is the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine earlier in 2022.²³ The Swedish Moderate party had wanted to join NATO for a long time but wanted consensus within the parliament which explains why Sweden did not join during the previous Moderate led government.

The Swedish foreign- and security policy had its first major change in 1995 when the country joined the European Union. This was a major change in Swedish international politics. The defence policy, however, remained the same since the neutrality policy had been deeply rooted

²⁰ Agrell, Wilhelm. (2012). Kontinentaldrift i svensk - säkerhetspolitik efter 2001. Internasjonal politikk. Vol.70(1):105-113.

²¹ Pyykönen, Juha och Forss, Stefan. (2019). Deterrence in the Nordic-Baltic region: the role of the Nordic countries together with the U.S. Army. Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute and U.S. Army War College Press. p. 39; Westberg, Jacob. (2016). Säkerhet utan alliansfrihet: Svenska alliansstrategiers teori och praktik. Statsvetenskaplig tidskrift. 118(4): p. 438

²² NATO, ‘Finland and Sweden submit applications to join NATO’, 18 May 2022, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_195468.htm. (Accessed 2024-09-10)

²³ Michalski, Anna, Niklas Bremberg, and Mikael Wigell, "Small States and the Dilemma of Geopolitics: Role Change in Finland and Sweden," *Journal of International Relations*, 2024, 12. S. 139

in Sweden's identity and political rhetoric. The ever-changing security landscape in Europe particularly the Russian annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in 2014 made it evident that the non-alignment policy might no longer be sufficient in guaranteeing Sweden's security.²⁴

During the social democratically government of Stefan Löfven between the years 2014-2018, Sweden started to cooperate less with both the EU and NATO to instead start a deeper cooperation with the United Nations (UN). During this period, Sweden launched what came to be called a feminist foreign policy. The new feminist foreign policy of Sweden emphasized the global agenda that the UN had for climate change and sustainable development.²⁵

Michalski et al.²⁶ explore the geopolitical shifts and what impact it has on small states. This article discusses Sweden and Finland and focuses on the evolving position on the deterrence policy of NATO and the collective guarantees that each member is entitled to within the framework of NATO and Article 5. Michalski et al. argues that the new foreign policy of Sweden boosted the country's role in international relations and reminded the world of the Olof Palme doctrine in the 1970s.

Before joining NATO, when Sweden still had a discussion on whether to join or not, many were worried that Sweden would lose their autonomy in their foreign policy due to its close standing with NATO. Two parties in the Swedish parliament, The Left party and the Green party, did not want to join the alliance while other parties saw it as a necessity due to the Russian escalation and invasion of Ukraine.²⁷

It is worth mentioning that when the article by Michalski et al. was written, Sweden was not a full member of the alliance. Turkey and Hungary still had to ratify before Sweden could be considered as a full member. Lastly, Michalski et al. conclude that when a power-based order takes over, small liberal states like Sweden and Finland feel unsafe which could motivate a change of political position and the breaking of the non-alignment policy.²⁸

²⁴ Michalski et al. 2024, s. 139;140;153-154

²⁵ Michalski et al. 2024, s. 154

²⁶ Michalski et al. 2024

²⁷ Michalski et al. 2024, s. 155

²⁸ Michalski et al. 2024, s. 157

3. Ritual Deterrence Theory

The theoretical framework this thesis will apply to answer the research questions is Ritual Deterrence Theory developed by Maria Mälksoo. As the name of the theory suggests, Ritual Deterrence Theory is a combination of two concepts- “ritual” and “deterrence”. This chapter will explain these two concepts and the theory of resilience. Furthermore, it will explain how these two theories can work together.

3.1 Ritual

Theories about rituals are embedded deep within different kinds of larger discourses. Throughout these discourses, it is widely debated whether ritual is a phenomenon that is portrayed all over the world or simply a theoretical construct. The difference between the phenomenon and the concept is that the former refers to the behaviours and actions of a group or individuals that are structured in a symbolic manner.²⁹ These actions that the group or an individual is doing are often repeated over time. Ritual, as a concept, is more of a theoretical perspective. The concept is used to understand the underlying meanings of the various actions of a group or an individual. As a concept, ritual can help explain the role of repetition as well as tradition within the human behaviour.³⁰

Throughout history, scholars have been concerned that the objectivity of ritual must be maintained within the same definitions.³¹ This means that there are different definitions of what a ritual is depending on which discourse one looks at. An example of this is that something that is a ritual for someone, like washing your hands after the bathroom, is merely a basic step of hygiene for someone else. Since ritual is explained as a tool, it is very important that the analyst does not let the tool slip out of his hand, so the data gets interpreted.³²

3.2 Deterrence policy

As Freedman explains, Deterrence policy is about trying to make another party unwilling to attack. Furthermore, it is about inducing another party to act in the way you want them to or to

²⁹ Catherine M. Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009),

³⁰ Bell 2009

³¹ Bell 2009, p 13

³² Bell 2009, p 13

refrain from attacking you in the beginning. The party deterring will try to convince the attacking party that the attack will either fail or be too costly to be worth it. The idea is that the costs will be so significant that they will exceed the supposed gains that the attack was supposed to give.³³ Economic, humanitarian and political are some of the calculated costs.³⁴

3.3 Mälksoo's Ritual Deterrence

Maria Mälksoo focuses on a ritual approach to deterrence and offers new insights into how approaches to deterrence can be understood. The way that Mälksoo uses it is to understand the performance of deterrence as a social practice instead of traditional strategic actions. When strategic actions are aimed at preventing the hostile behaviour of an aggressor, Mälksoo's work instead suggests that deterrence is more than just military capabilities. She explains that identity, symbolic action, and social rituals are equally as important.³⁵ The Swedish concept of "Totalförsvaret" (total defence strategy), which combines both the civilian defence as well as the military defence of Sweden fits well into Mälksoo's theory on deterrence as a collective with ritualized practices. As previously mentioned, The Swedish total defence involves all of society participating in the defence efforts of the country. It's worth mentioning that the Swedish "Total Defence Service Act"³⁶ states that everyone, including foreigners, living in Sweden between the ages of 16 and 70 must help Sweden in case of an invasion. This is something that can reflect both unity within a nation as well as a strong resilience. Mälksoo's theory states that deterrence practices that are embedded in the community lead to the reinforcement of collective identity.³⁷

Mälksoo's ritual approach to extended deterrence is explained as "sense of a game"³⁸. The approach is built upon a series of explicit and dramatic (ceremonial) ritual spectacles as well as more minutiae methods and practices to signalling a threat, a promise and one's membership within a military alliance, which in the case of Sweden is NATO.³⁹

³³ Freedman, 2004. p 27

³⁴ Mearsheimer, John. 1983. *Conventional Deterrence*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. p 23

³⁵ Mälksoo, M. (2021). *A ritual approach to deterrence: I am, therefore, I deter*. *European Journal of International Relations*, 27(1), 53-78.

³⁶ SFS 1994:1809 om totalförsvarsplikt. *Svensk författningssamling*.

³⁷ Mälksoo 2021

³⁸ Mälksoo 2021 p 62

³⁹ Mälksoo 2021 p 62

Table 1. Rituals of extended deterrence.

	Overt rituals/spectacles	Ritual-like everyday practices (overt and covert)
Political	Defence summits High-level political statements	Quotidian working-level communication
Military	Large-scale military exercises Passing the baton ceremonies of multinational missions	Presence/movement of troops Training ('drill') Simulations ('war games')

Mälksoo, M. (2021). *A ritual approach to deterrence: I am, therefore I deter*. p 63

The ritual performances that Mälksoo talks about can range from large-scale military exercises (see table 1) to different kinds of symbolic commitments, like helping in international peace support operations, as well as other political statements. Furthermore, the movements of troops and different kinds of simulations within a community, as well as normal everyday communication on a working level is also examples of ritualistic performance.

Common military practices can, according to Mälksoo, help to generate a performative cohesion regarding a collective actor trying to be a deterrent. This is a key effect of ritual deterrence for the deterrent community.⁴⁰

The unique ability of ritual, where living together within the same community with both differences and ambiguity, does not imply that the population within the community have the same common identity. It does, however, suggest that “a certain amount of consensus over what an ideal identity or way of life should be”⁴¹.

On the ritual performance of extended deterrence, Mälksoo explains that:

“The ritual performance of extended deterrence and the ritualization of particular elements of the actor’s response to the perceived threat, for instance, via large-scale military exercises and high-level political statements, make the abstraction of deterrence empirically available, affectively relatable and effectively ‘real’ for the deterring community.”⁴²

⁴⁰ Mälksoo 2021 p 63

⁴¹ Zubrycki G (2016) *Beheading the Saint: Nationalism, Religion, and Secularism in Quebec*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. p 25

⁴² Mälksoo 2021 p 63

This quote by Mälksoo highlights how extended deterrence operates as more than just a strategic perspective and as a performative act. She argues that deterrence becomes tangible and emotionally resonant when used through ritualized actions. These actions, e.g. large-scale military exercises and high-level political statements, shows that deterrence is visible and relatable to both the deterring community (collective identity) as well as the actor being deterred.

By emphasizing both performative and ritualistic dimensions, Mälksoo shifts the focus of deterrence as only something strategic or theoretical to a social and psychological phenomenon. Ultimately, Mälksoo's understanding shows that rituals are critical in maintaining credible deterrence strategies.

Mälksoo's Ritual Deterrence provides a compelling framework for understanding deterrence as a performative practice. It does however not fully address how societal resilience contributes to creating a credible deterrence. Mälksoo's focus remains on symbolic and ritualistic displays such as military exercises, political statements, and alliance commitments, without considering how a nation's ability to endure, adapt, and recover from threats strengthens deterrence in practice. Since resilience is deeply embedded in the concept of "Total Defence", something that is very important in Sweden, Mälksoo, by not factoring in the theory of resilience, risks missing vital aspects of how Swedish deterrence policy functions. Hence, the next section that introduces resilience is a necessary complement to Ritual Deterrence, since it helps to bridge the gap and provides a more comprehensive understanding of the Swedish deterrence policy.

3.4 Resilience

Together with Mälksoo's theory of "Ritual Deterrence" the theory of resilience will be applied. The combination of the theories is to see if a strong resilience within a country, in this case Sweden, can lead to a stronger and more credible deterrence. While Mälksoo's theory of Ritual deterrence is valuable for understanding the symbolic dimensions of deterrence, Mälksoo missed a key point. Creating a collective identity requires that people feel included in society, which is something that Mälksoo doesn't elaborate further on. Adding resilience can therefore add the context that Mälksoo is missing in creating a collective identity and how it together with ritual deterrence might be able to explain how it can lead to a more credible deterrence.

The meaning of the term “Resilience” differs depending on which academic discipline you are from. Looking at the word, Resilience comes from the Latin word “*Resilio*” where the closest translation would be “To bounce back”.⁴³ From a social science point of view, resilience is one's ability to withstand various types of disturbances from a normal situation as well as being able to recover from unforeseen circumstances. An important aspect from the social science perspective is that the consequences of the situation a society should recover from is neither clear nor predictable. Some examples of situations where resilience within a society might be necessary are refugee crises or some kind of natural disaster. A country that can keep on going and withstand crises (e.g. natural disasters or war) can be an indicator of a stable society.⁴⁴ In the case of Sweden, the concept of resilience might refer to the country's ability to manage different kinds of setbacks in an unclear situation. One example might be the long ratification process of NATO membership while Russia threatens Europe with more consequences if Sweden joins. This means that it will be essential for the civilian population within a country to adapt to a changing security posture.

3.5 Motivation

This thesis is grounded in the concept of Ritual Deterrence by Mälksoo, as have been introduced above. Ritual Deterrence emphasises the symbolic nature of deterrence rather than solely focusing on military capability and traditional means. Ritual deterrence presumes that states can engage in deterrence practices to not only prevent a potential aggressor but also to reinforce a collective identity. Mälksoo's way of looking at deterrence provides the opportunity to think beyond the traditional strategic framework. It also brings an opportunity to examine deterrence in a performance-based way and through a social practice deeply embedded in national identity and collective actions. Her perspective is particularly relevant when it comes to Sweden, a country that actively combines both civil and military defence in what they call "Total Defence".

Since Mälksoo misses a key part in her theory and the creation of a collective identity. This thesis aims to expand on her theory by integrating the concept of resilience. Resilience in the context of deterrence refers to a state's capacity to adapt and recover from external or internal

⁴³ Mark de Bruijne, Arjen Boin, A. & Michel van Eeten. *Resilience: Exploring the concept and its meanings*. I Comfort, L. K., Boin, A. & Demchak, C. C. (red.) *Designing resilience: preparing for extreme events*. (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press 2012) s. 13-32.

⁴⁴ Longstaff, P. H. *Security, resilience, and communication in unpredictable environments such as terrorism, natural disasters, and complex technology*. (Cambridge: Harvard University 2005)

threats., something that can ensure national security through societal cohesion and civil preparedness. This integration with ritual deterrence and resilience offers a unique perspective of how the Swedish deterrence policy has changed since the beginning of the Cold War.

Ritual Deterrence is relevant in the case of Sweden since it highlights how the country's deterrence efforts function not only to integrate civilians but also to strengthen the internal resilience and social cohesion within the country. Furthermore, it can help to understand how these things combined can dissuade potential adversaries to attack Sweden if the deterrence is high and functioning. Mälksoo's focus on performance in deterrence and symbolism helps to understand why different kinds of practices, like Aurora 17 and Aurora 23, and the involvement of civilians in the total defence (See Total Defence Act⁴⁵) might be important for the country.

The application of Mälksoo's Ritual Deterrence Theory also suits the thesis well considering the time we live in. The current geopolitical challenges that Russia poses with the invasion of Ukraine make it even more important, and so the Swedish Total Defence strategy becomes more important as well. By exploring deterrence through a ritualistic lens, the hope is that Mälksoo's theory can explain how Sweden's practices can reinforce the credibility it has as a defensive actor through ritualistically performing to better prepare its readiness as well as strengthen its resilience. Therefore, Mälksoo's approach together with the theory of Resilience is highly relevant to understand the presumed deterrence policy of Sweden as well as what implications it is presumed to have on the military and the civilian defence. Furthermore, it can offer insight to how resilience within a society together with ritualistic actions can contribute to a credible deterrence policy.

⁴⁵ SFS 1994:1809

4. Methodology

4.1 Motivation of Methodology

In this thesis, two different kinds of qualitative methods were applied. Firstly, a document analysis with the usage of governmental documents. Secondly, a discourse analysis to see what is said about our deterrence policy in e.g. press conferences and interviews.

Document analysis suits those whose purpose is to review and analyse documents from various sources and to clarify their content. The methodology of the documents can contribute to the investigation of the information in the documents and, at the same time, help the author of the thesis to make a deeper analysis of the text's meaning.⁴⁶ During this study, documents from various Swedish governmental organizations will be analysed together with peer-reviewed articles on deterrence policy.

Discourse analysis is an important method due to the importance of discourse.⁴⁷ Discourse plays a central role in shaping our social life, communication and the interaction one has with each other. Discourse is not just a reflection on reality, it plays a major role in shaping it. It is through discourses that groups and individuals create beliefs, values and social norms.

4.2 Document Analysis

A document analysis was used to fulfil the main purpose of the thesis, as well as gather most of the information needed to answer the research questions. The document analysis that this thesis will apply is of an explaining character and will include 27 documents issued by the Swedish government or its ministries. Furthermore, the documents are all primary sources that are representative of what the Swedish government says.⁴⁸ This method of analysis allows the researcher to do a comprehensive review of several official government documents which helped with creating a deeper understanding regarding the presumed deterrence policy of Sweden. Focusing on documents provided by the Swedish government, its ministries, and its

⁴⁶ Peter Esaiasson, Mikael Gilljam, Henrik Oscarsson & Lena Wängnerud, *Metodpraktikan. Konsten att studera samhälle, individ och marknad*. 5 Uppl. (Visby: Wolter Kluwer, 2017 s.211-212

⁴⁷ James Paul Gee and Michael Handford, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

⁴⁸ Kari Karppinen & Hallvard Moe. *What we talk about when we talk about document analysis*. I Just, N. & Puppis, M. (red.) *Trends in Communication policy Research: New Theories, Methods, and Subjects*. (Bristol: Intellect 2012)

authorities, enabled a deeper understanding and made it easier to relate to the research questions. The analysis of these documents as primary sources ensured the reliability of the thesis as well as credibility due to the use of data.⁴⁹

The documents that have been selected for this thesis provide valuable insights into how Sweden's deterrence policy has changed over time. The documents highlight the presumption of how the Swedish government wants the deterrence policy to work in Sweden both on a civilian as well as on a military level. Through these documents, the thesis explores how the Swedish government presumed Sweden's deterrence policy to work instead of how it works.

Documents can be used in different ways depending on what kind of thesis you are doing. The most important thing to keep in mind is to explain how the implementation of the analysis takes place.⁵⁰ During this thesis, the documents will be analysed thoroughly with a special focus on the content to identify which documents are most relevant to the thesis purpose and research question(s).

The document analysis is of an explaining nature, which means that the analysis process has a function which is to identify the relevant information. Therefore, the focus will be to find documents that contribute information that is relevant and interesting for the thesis. According to Karppinen, this analytical process is suitable because document analysis of official documents is believed to be a reliable and accurate source of information.⁵¹

A weakness of document analysis is that there can be a lack of contextual understanding of the documents. This means that the researcher must understand the social and political context to be able to analyse the document topic correctly. Furthermore, there is also a risk that the researcher's own perspectives and assumptions affect the interpretation of the documents, which can potentially lead to a biased result.⁵²

⁴⁹ Karppinen et.al 2012. p 189

⁵⁰ Karppinen et.al 2012. p 189

⁵¹ Karppinen et.al 2012. p 185

⁵² Karppinen et.al 2012.

4.3 Discourse Analysis

The philosopher Mats Furberg says in his unpublished pro Memoria, “Att läsa resonerade texter”, that one must read texts actively and ask the text several questions to see if either you or the text can answer them. Furberg’s general recommendation is to compare similarities and differences in representation over time. A qualitative discourse analysis can get close to questions about norms and the changes they make over time. Another important point that Furberg makes is that one can look at the chain of argumentation. This includes questions such as “What is the point of the text?”, “Is the point supported?”, “What are the arguments and on what premises do the closing arguments rest?”.⁵³

Discourse analysis is the study of language and how it is used. Sometimes, it is also defined as the study above the level of a sentence.⁵⁴ Another way to look at discourse analysis is that it examines the different meanings that humans allocate to the language and how it is used in different contexts.⁵⁵ One of the biggest strengths of discourse analysis is that every way is considered the right way to analyse it. This means that every form of discourse analysis will contribute to a new interpretation.⁵⁶

Discourse analysis is aimed at both mapping and discussing connections between different kinds of concepts as well as themes found within the selection of the collected material. More specifically, discourse analysis delves into linguistic patterns and how these patterns reflect and shape different ways of thinking and behaviour patterns in a society. Through a careful examination of the language used in for example an interview, discourse analysis uncovers the underlying factors as well as structures that are communicated and in what way this shapes our understanding. By using discourse analysis one can better understand how language both reflects and impacts the dynamics of power, identity, and ideology in everyday interactions. It is because of this that discourse analysis is an essential method during this thesis since it can

⁵³ Esaiasson et.al 2017. p 212-213

⁵⁴ Mikael Hjerm, Simon Lindgren, and Marco Nilsson, *Introduktion till samhällsvetenskaplig analys* (Malmö: Gleerups Utbildning AB, 2014), p. 32; Gee and Handford. 2012

⁵⁵ Gee and Handford. 2012

⁵⁶ Gee and Handford. 2012

help with providing a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between language and social behaviour.⁵⁷

Discourse analysis has its challenges. One of the bigger challenges is that context can influence the meaning of a discourse. This can make it challenging to isolate specific variables or relationships. Furthermore, discourse analysis relies on the researchers' interpretation of language and the meaning behind it. This means that different researchers might draw different conclusions from the same discourse. Another problem is that it might be time-consuming depending on the size of a document or the number of documents that the researcher wants to use.⁵⁸

4.4 Implementation

This chapter outlines the qualitative research design that the thesis employs to explore the Swedish deterrence policy through the lenses of both ritual deterrence as well as resilience. To address the research questions examining both the performative aspects of Sweden's deterrence as well as its historical evolution since the beginning of the Cold War, this thesis utilizes a combination of both document analysis and discourse analysis. These two methods complement each other by providing both a structural understanding of different policy shifts as well as providing a nuanced interpretation of the framing of deterrence in the documents. This thesis is examining proposals and not the outcome, therefore I did not consider whether the ruling political parties influenced the change in Swedish deterrence.

Document analysis: The Document analysis identifies key shifts in the Swedish deterrence strategy by examining official government documents regarding the Swedish defence and total defence. This approach allows the researcher to do an assessment of the gathered material and understand institutional dimensions of the Swedish deterrence policy.

Discourse analysis: The discourse analysis focuses on how the Swedish government has framed deterrence both rhetorically and symbolically. Attention has been paid to the stated meaning and significance of the documents, which were determined through a detailed examination of their language, context, and underlying themes. The intended audience of the

⁵⁷ Mikael Hjerm, Simon Lindgren, and Marco Nilsson, *Introduktion till samhällsvetenskaplig analys* (Malmö: Gleerups Utbildning AB, 2014), p. 32; James Paul Gee and Michael Handford, *The Routledge Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (New York: Routledge, 2012),

⁵⁸ Gee and Handford. 2012

documents has also been given particular attention, the audience in this case being the Swedish citizens. Additionally, language that constructs deterrence as a social practice, with references to resilience and collective identity, was specifically analysed. This analysis helps determining to what extent Sweden's deterrence has been performative or not, using Mälksoo's theory alongside the theory of resilience.

4.5 Selections

Choosing documents that are relevant to the thesis is difficult. It is however very important that they suit the purpose of the thesis so that the document analysis can be done correctly. To find the relevant documents, several searches were done on political decisions by the Swedish government concerning the Swedish Defence and the Total defence, as well as on the propositions which formed the basis of the decisions.

As previously mentioned, this thesis uses a qualitative research design by utilizing both document analysis and discourse analysis to examine the evolution of Sweden's deterrence strategy. The study is based on 27 official government reports regarding the Swedish defence. The selection was based on three different criteria.

Relevance to the Swedish deterrence policy: The document should directly address the strategic defence posture that Sweden envisions as well as be from the time period between the Cold War and in the present, 2024.

Inclusion of key policy shifts and key word: The document shall reflect significant moments in the evolution of Sweden's deterrence. For example, the post-Cold War drawdown or the response to Russian aggression. Furthermore, the document shall include at least one of the following key words: Deterrence Policy, Total Defence, Civil Defence, Military Defence or Resilience.

Stated envisions: The reason for choosing policy documents is because they usually contain detailed descriptions of the intended political outcome of the decisions. This may lead to a deeper understanding of the policy documents and why the government wants to implement them.

After using the selection as mentioned above the documents included became 27. The decision to include exactly 27 documents were not driven by a predetermined target, rather they adequately fitted the selection criteria required. Expanding beyond this number would not have contributed to the change the overall agreement in this thesis since the 27 included documents was deemed sufficient to construct a well-supported argument and reach meaningful conclusions.

5. Analysis

This chapter analyses the empirical material gathered in this thesis. The analysis is divided into five different time periods: the Cold War (1947-1989), the 1990s, the 2000s, the 2010s and the 2020s. This is done to make it easier to understand what different governments have proposed during different time periods. Another reason for why the analysis is divided into five different time periods is to clarify how different decisions were affected due to the various security issue developments, such as Russian attacks against neighbouring countries, that took place in Sweden's immediate vicinity during the different time periods. Each time period will end with a shorter summary, so the reader gets a clear overview of the most important changes during each time period. Each time period will also be applying Mälksoo's theory of Ritual Deterrence and the theory of Resilience.

5.1 From Nuclear Programme to Strong Neutrality

Since the Cold War extends over a long period of time, it is difficult to include everything that happened during this period as well as all the proposals that the politicians put forward during that time. Therefore, only what the author considers most essential to the period will be addressed. Sweden had, during most of the 20th century, a 12-year planning horizon regarding its defence. This was done to have a long-term defence plan and suited the current geopolitical challenges in a divided world with NATO on one side and the Warsaw Pact on the other.

During the Cold War, for Sweden's neutrality to be considered credible, a strong defence was needed. Large parts of society were proposed to be included in the defence plan which included both the military and the civil defence. The proposals for strengthening the defence forces would be so powerful that it would result in Sweden becoming independent from other states and being able to rely on themselves to get military equipment both during peacetime and wartime.⁵⁹ Sweden's defence was strong and since it included most of the Swedish population with its civil and military defence it could form a collective identity within Sweden. In the long run this gave Sweden a credible deterrence since it would cost too much to attack Sweden for a potential aggressor.

⁵⁹ Gyldén, N., Sweden's security and defence policy – through the Cold War and towards the Turn of the Century, Stockholm: Ministry of Defence (1994), p.12

In a bill from 1963, the existing government with Sven Andersson as Minister of Defence, proposed that the benefits for soldiers and conscripts should increase and be better. At the same time, it was also proposed that various parts of the armed forces should be restructured and receive personnel reinforcements. The Navy and the Air Force were the parts of the armed forces that would be most affected by the restructuring and would receive more personnel for their respective regiments.⁶⁰ Building up the defence at this time can be explained by the existence of both NATO and the Warsaw Pact. The movement of troops and higher presence of troops is extended deterrence, as seen in Table 1. At the same time, I would argue that it is also performative since it shows that Sweden is ready if an aggressor comes and that it once again will cost a lot for someone to attack.

The proposals in the defence document from 1963 can be seen as a consolidation of what was proposed to begin the year before. At the time, the idea was that several regiments around Sweden would be converted to mixed armoured regiments instead. Furthermore, it is also proposed that the training for the armoured units should be streamlined so that it becomes more effective and that the armed forces should thus be able to avoid high transport costs. Training and simulations are a big part of the deterrence policy in Mälksoo's theory and are also important in performative deterrence as well as in creating a credible defence. It can also contribute to a collective identity, if the deterrence practices are embedded within the community. Furthermore, a wish is expressed from the government that there should be access to sufficient practice and shooting ranges for training at each regiment.⁶¹

During parts of the Cold War, Sweden chose to have its own nuclear weapons program. Development of the program began at the end of World War II and continued throughout much of the Cold War. It was proposed that plutonium laboratories would be built in Ursvik outside Stockholm, and the program was developed to the level that it was proposed that it would take 6 months for Sweden to be able to develop a nuclear weapon.⁶² With the 1968 defence decision, it was proposed that Sweden should shut down its nuclear weapons program and instead rely on conventional means for its defence. Shutting down the nuclear program might not seem like

⁶⁰ Kungl. Maj proposition nr 110 år 1963. *Proposition till riksdagen angående medelsbehoven under försvarsgrenarnas avlöningsanslag för budgetåret 1963/64*. Stockholm, 1963.

⁶¹ Kungl. Maj proposition nr 173 år 1962. *Proposition till riksdagen angående pansartruppernas och pansarinfanteriets fredsorganisation*. Stockholm: Kungliga Boktryckeriet, 1962.

⁶² Swedish Armed Forces. *Foajaure: Den stora smällen*. <https://www.forsvarsmakten.se/sv/information-ochfakta/var-historia/artiklar/foajaure-den-stora-smallen/> Accessed 2024-10-28

a performative form of deterrence. Since it would mean that Sweden's defence became significantly weaker and lost a major form of weapon that perhaps would have been necessary in a potential war. But at the same time, if Sweden wanted to be taken seriously with its neutrality policy it made sense to shut it down. I would argue that it can be seen as a performative act since Mälksoo's theory states that deterrence practices that are embedded in the community lead to the reinforcement of collective identity.

During the same time the proposal to shut down the nuclear program came, it was also suggested that Sweden should sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty and that the Air Force should be given a higher priority. Even though Sweden was proposing to end its nuclear weapons program, the Commander-in-Chief emphasized that Sweden must be prepared to defend itself against nuclear attacks. Therefore, it was also suggested that many more shelters should be built and that the civilian population would need to be trained in crisis preparedness.⁶³ Training the civilian population and making sure that they know what to do in case of a war is a strong form of performance that can lead to a strong resilience within the community. Mälksoo's theory on deterrence as a collective with ritualized practices fits well into what the Commander-in-Chief suggested since the training could lead to a collective identity. Throughout the Cold War, Sweden had a strong principle of neutrality, something that the country had had for a long time and planned to continue to have for a long time to come. This was made clear with the proposal to shut down the nuclear weapons program.

When Sweden entered the 1980s, it became clear that Sweden wanted to keep its defence capacity strong and autonomous. Proposals were made to keep Sweden independent regarding its own military equipment and independency. There were several proposals to invest in new advanced weapons systems as well as further development of Sweden's combat aircraft. The proposal for the development of the Swedish fighter jet was to develop the JAS 39 Gripen. The proposals were that the Gripen plane would be developed quickly so that it could begin to be used during the 1990s.⁶⁴

⁶³ Kungl. Maj proposition nr 110 år 1968. *Proposition till riksdagen angående vissa anslagsfrågor rörande det militära försvaret och civilförsvaret*. Stockholm: Kungliga Boktryckeriet, 1968.

⁶⁴ Government bill 1986/87:95, *Totalförsvarets fortsatta utveckling* Stockholm: Ministry of Defence; Government bill 1982/83:22, *Om totalförsvaret inför 1980-talets slut* Stockholm: Ministry of Defence

The last major defence decision during the era of the Cold War came in 1987. In this defence decision, it was proposed that the Swedish total defence still should continue to be based on general conscription to ensure enough personnel to the Swedish defence. At the same time, it was proposed that the personnel supply of the total defence should rest on each citizen participating in the position that gave the total defence the greatest benefit.⁶⁵ This would mean that if they work in healthcare, they will do the best there and those who work in childcare will do best there. The principle will be to support the parts of society that will be considered most important in a stressful situation. This proposal is what resilience is all about: making sure that people know what is expected of them and where they should be in case of a war or crisis. If people know what is expected of them, Sweden will have a better chance of handling the situation and the ability to recover from unforeseen circumstances.

Applying Mälksoo to Sweden's deterrence policy during the Cold War is hard because it spans over such a long period of time. But in general terms, Sweden's deterrence policy during the Cold War period was to display its neutrality and make sure that civil military integration worked as well as making sure that Sweden was prepared in case of an attack. A prominent example of the neutrality policy is Sweden's refraining from its nuclear programme. I would argue this because if Sweden wanted to be taken seriously with its neutrality policy, it would not make sense to have a weapon of mass destruction that could be a potential threat to an aggressor. Despite having the capability to produce a bomb, Sweden chose not to do so. This can be seen as a performative act building on its commitment to neutrality while at the same time prioritizing its civil defence with e.g. bunkers, thus, creating a collective defence posture which is embedded in a shared national identity.

5.2 New Defence and Third World Politics

In the middle of the 1990s, Sweden changed from its 12-year defence planning to instead focus on short-term defence planning with a 5-year horizon. In addition to the change, the defence motions have often been changed during this new period due to different political and/or economical reasons. These changes have made the defence planing very different from what it had been earlier during the 1990s. The Swedish Armed Forces and the politicians within the Swedish Government have often disagreed about what the military expenditure should be with regards to the current threats as well as the security issues in the world. This has resulted in the

⁶⁵ Government bill 1986/87:95,

politicians “determining” how serious these threats are and then making sure that it suits the proposed defence budget. This is called the “policy of adaption”.⁶⁶ The policy of adaption that Sweden had during this time came with different and bigger effects. The plan during this time was to demilitarize Sweden since many people were under the impression that the world was going to be more stable and secure after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union. There were talks of a long peace since the World Order now consisted of the USA as the only Great Power and the fall of the Soviet Union meant that there could be peace in Europe. This motivated a new defence policy as well as shifted the defence agenda to something new.

In the government’s proposition 1991/92:102⁶⁷ it is stated what the government of that time wanted to do during the financial year 1992/93 to 1996/97. According to the proposition, the Swedish Armed Forces should move from the large-scale military it had during the Cold War and instead focus on an adaptable and streamlined approach. Throughout the bill, it is emphasized that the Swedish Armed Forces will have to go through structural changes and some of the military units in the country will be shut down as well as others being downsized in personnel.⁶⁸

In the beginning of the proposition, Prime Minister Carl Bildt stated that the core of Swedish defence should still be the Swedish principle of military non-alignment to be able to remain neutral in this way if a new major war breaks out in our immediate vicinity. This is because, according to Carl Bildt, "no one else defends Sweden, and we only defend Sweden".⁶⁹ Bildt’s expression on defence could fall under what Mälksoo defines as performative since the idea is to show that Sweden will be defended by Swedes no matter what.

The bill states that the Armed Forces are presumed to be able to withstand an attack on Sweden regardless of where it comes from. The expectations of the Armed Forces, according to bill 1991/92:102, is that there must be a reassuring ability to quickly mobilize the defence and be

⁶⁶ Rydén, B., Principen om den anpassningsbara försvarsförmågan – ett implementeringsperspektiv på svensk försvarspolitik under försvarsbeslutsperioden 1997-2001, Diss., Örebro University (2003), p.31

⁶⁷ Government bill 1991/92:102, Totalförsvarets utveckling till och med budgetåret 1996/97 samt anslag för budgetåret 1992/93, Stockholm: Ministry of Defence

⁶⁸ Government bill 1991/92:102, p 5

⁶⁹ Government bill 1991/92:102, p 8

able to defend vital functions in the country (for example command systems and leading parts of the total defence). It is also expressed that it is essential for Sweden to show that the country does not accept any type of intrusion from a foreign power on Swedish territory, even in peacetime. It is also proposed that the protection against underwater violations should be expanded.⁷⁰

The overall approach in Government Bill 1991/92:102 can be seen as a Swedish move towards a more performative form of deterrence, as Mälksoo talks about in her theory. This is because of the existence of an advanced military that Sweden wanted to keep even if the size of the Armed Forces would be reduced, it would signal strength. The signalling of strength that Sweden would have with its new form of defence and focusing on the ability to quickly mobilize its military and defending vital functions can show that its performative. Looking back at table 1 this would fall under “Ritual-like everyday practices” which is an extended form of deterrence.

By the time of the next defence period, Sweden had changed its government and returned to a Social democratic-led government. The new time period started in the Government bill 1996/97:4.⁷¹ This time, it was a defence proposition for the years 1997-2001. Once again, like the defence decision 1991/92:102, major changes would be proposed during this time as well. Most importantly, it was suggested that Sweden should actively increase its cooperation to have a broader regional security promotion in the Baltic Sea area, where cooperation with the new free states from the Warsaw Pact was included. This time too, it was also proposed that the Armed Forces should be further reduced in number. Instead of the previous 16 army brigades, it would now be reduced to 13.⁷² Sweden’s military non-alignment policy was still very important and clearly stated in the proposition:

“Sweden's military non-alignment aimed to remain neutral in case of war in our vicinity remains. It implies that we have an adequate defence capability. By maintaining a credibility for our long-

⁷⁰ Government bill 1991/92:102, p 4

⁷¹ Government bill 1996/97:4. Totalförsvaret i förnyelse – etapp 2, Stockholm: Ministry of Defence

⁷² Government bill 1996/97:4

term strength and adaptability of our defence, it will in turn contribute to security and political stability in the northern European region."⁷³

In addition to this, Sweden would also focus more on international peace promotion and humanitarian efforts around the world.⁷⁴ A reason for this focus could be that since there was not any direct threat to Sweden in its direct vicinity, Sweden could focus on helping other parts of the world instead and show its strength by displaying its military in these efforts. Something that fall under "Overt rituals/spectacles" in Mälksoo's table. Sweden's deterrence policy during the bill is somewhat subtle but it aligns with the broader policy that Sweden adopted after the Cold War. The Swedish way of showing deterrence would be by participation in various international efforts, including also via NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP).⁷⁵

Sweden's Ministry of Defence stated that a Swedish membership in NATO's PfP would play a crucial role in having a credible and sufficient level and on an effective level be able to participate in the different humanitarian peace support operations that both the UN and the European Union (EU) conduct.⁷⁶ Helping in PfP and other humanitarian efforts projects power and shows potential aggressors that Sweden can, through diplomacy, show its performative deterrence with others and at the same time project strength which can deter potential aggressors from attacking.

Regarding the Total Defence, it is stated in the document that:

*"The Total Defence shall not only protect our country's freedom and independence and safeguard the population in times of war and crisis, but its resources shall also contribute to our ability to face severe strains in peace and to carry out peace-promoting and humanitarian efforts."*⁷⁷

The Total Defence strategy that is described in the Government Bill 1996/97:4 aims to protect Sweden's sovereignty but at the same time enhance its ability to contribute to stability and peace on an international level. One could see this approach as performative since it emphasizes a dual role of the resources of the Armed Forces. They should both defend the

⁷³ Government bill, 1996/97:4

⁷⁴ Government bill 1996/97:4

⁷⁵ NATO's relation with Sweden http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_52535.htm

⁷⁶ Hederstedt, J., *Internationalisera försvaret!* Stockholm: Ministry of Defence (1999) p 17

⁷⁷ Government bill, 1996/97:4

country in case of an invasion but still, at the same time make sure to enhance its reputation as a reliable partner in helping the world get international security.⁷⁸

Integrating Mälksoo's insight into performative deterrence helps in understanding Sweden's evolving defence strategy during the 1990s. Since both ¹Government Bill 1991/92:102 as well as Government Bill 1996/97:4 emphasize adaptability and international cooperation it reflects a shift from Sweden's traditional deterrence strategies and instead signals a new approach. The new way Sweden wanted to take illustrates that the country's deterrence policy after the Cold War did not just focus on the military might, instead a big focus was given to projecting power through diplomacy and different international peace support operations with different partners. This all aligns well with how Mälksoo talks about performative deterrence. One could also say that the performative elements of international engagements with PfP could lead to bolster Sweden's security through non-traditional means since it is a new way for Sweden of showing deterrence and unity for the country.

5.3 From National Defence to Global Engagement

Around the turn of the millennium, the biggest proposals for restructuring the Swedish defence took place. In various proposals, a sharp reduction in personnel was proposed and the defence would be restructured in terms of the organization from invasion defence to focusing instead on international state defence.⁷⁹ The proposals to reduce the personnel strength in the Armed Forces were both clear and significant. It was proposed in Government bill 1999/2000:30, that the number of brigades should be reduced from the 13 that had been proposed in Government bill 1996/97:4, to 6 army brigade commands instead. With this proposal and the previous one with a shift from invasion defence to intervention defence, it also meant that the Swedish Armed Forces were expected to dismantle the brigades as an organizational form.⁸⁰ Reducing the defence as fast and as big as the proposals intend might not seem like a performative way of deterrence and perhaps it is not. However, since helping in different international peace support operations can be seen as a performative way of deterrence the reduced size of the military isn't necessary a problem. It can even be justified by the security development in Sweden's direct vicinity.

⁷⁸ Government bill 1996/97:4

⁷⁹ Government bill 1998/99:74 *Förändrad omvärld – omdanat försvar*; Stockholm: Ministry of Defence

⁸⁰ Government bill 1999/2000:30 *Det nya försvaret*, Stockholm: Ministry of Defence

Something that could possibly justify the government's proposal for a total restructuring and dismantling of the Armed Forces was that there was a belief in long-term peace in the world since both the Berlin Wall and the Soviet Union had fallen 10 years earlier. It was also judged that an armed attack against Sweden, regardless of what form it takes, was considered unlikely in at least a ten-year horizon because the country's direct proximity was considered to be characterised by both stability and security.⁸¹ Since an attack on Sweden was considered unlikely it would make sense that Sweden changed its deterrence policy to instead focus more on an international approach and show their strength in another country. By doing so, the Swedish defence policy would still be performative by Mälksoo's understanding because Sweden still deters potential aggressors and displaying what they can do by helping somewhere else.

The new Swedish way of helping in international peace support operations that was proposed at the end of the 90s was supposed to continue. Due to the developments that took place in the Balkans and in Kosovo, it was suggested that Sweden should immediately strengthen its ability to be able to help in various international situations, something that could strengthen the Swedish deterrence policy and thereby be able to handle new crises.⁸² Something that was also proposed to be developed further with Government bill 2004/05:5. In this bill, the government at the time expressed that, thanks to the positive development of the security situation around Sweden, the Armed Forces personnel could be further reduced and that there would be an even greater focus on international operations.⁸³

As I have stated, it was considered best for Sweden's deterrence policy to help in international peace support operations. In view of this, the government suggested that Sweden should contribute with military personnel to the impaired development in Afghanistan. Some of the reasons why it was proposed that Sweden join the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) was to partly protect Swedish interests, further develop the Swedish deterrence policy by helping abroad, as well as helping the Afghan people.⁸⁴ In the beginning, the proposal was that Sweden would send 45 Swedish officers and specialist soldiers who would be in

⁸¹ Ds 2003:8. Säkrare grannskap – osäker värld. Stockholm: Ministry of Defence.

⁸² Government bill 1999/2000:30 *Det nya försvaret*

⁸³ Government bill 2004/05:5 *Vårt framtida försvar – en sammanfattning*, Stockholm: Ministry of Defence, p11

⁸⁴ Government proposition 2001/02:60, *svenskt deltagande i en multinationell säkerhetsstyrka i Afghanistan*, p 5

Afghanistan for 6 months. Since the situation in Afghanistan got worse, the Swedish mandate was proposed to be extended several times. In 2008, a proposal was made which meant that Sweden's participation in ISAF would be greatly increased. With the new proposal, Sweden intended to send approximately 500 soldiers to the northern part of Afghanistan. The Swedish minister of defence, Sten Tolgfors, pressed that despite the proposals that Sweden would increase their presence in Afghanistan, the military's efforts would still be of a humanitarian effort.⁸⁵

Also, at the beginning of the 21st century, it was proposed that there should be a major change in the Swedish total defence. The proposal concerns a major restructuring, which would mean major savings on activities within the area of total defence. At this time, there still was no sign of a potential attack on Sweden and the security in its direct vicinity was still good. In the bill 2005/06:133, it was stated that natural disasters in Asia and the storm Gudrun in Sweden pointed to the need to clarify what responsibility the government has and what responsibility should lie with the individual when it comes to facing different types of crises in society. The clarification was not only necessary regarding natural disasters but also as a whole in crisis management.⁸⁶

Since security affects the whole of society, the role of the civilian population needed to be clarified around 2005. Although the state was still intended to have the main responsibility, the civilian population also had an important role to play. It was suggested that the civilian population should have a responsibility to stay informed about the risks and threats that existed in society and that they should take the protective measures that were considered necessary and possible.⁸⁷ Some examples would be to have a radio at home as well as some candles if there was a longer blackout. By applying the theory of Resilience, one can see that if people are aware of what is expected of them, the country will have a higher possibility to bounce back to what is considered "normal" in case of a war or crisis. At the same time, it can also be seen as a form of "quotidian working-level communication" as mentions in table 1. This would mean that informing the society of what is expected of them can be seen as a form of performative deterrence.

⁸⁵ Josephi, N., "Bakgrund Afghanistan: Svensk trupp på plats sedan 2001", Sveriges Radio, (2010-11-24), <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/gruppsida.aspx?programid=3304&grupp=6240&artikel=4202005>

⁸⁶ Government bill 2005/06:133 *Samverkan vid kris - för ett säkrare samhälle* Stockholm Ministry of Justice

⁸⁷ Government bill 2005/06:133 p 73

In the Government bill 2008/09:140 it is said that the Swedish defence should be more useful and accessible than before. The new focus is proposed to be on rapid response readiness both within the country's own borders and on an international level. The proposal would mean that there were no longer different forces for international and on a national level, but all units could be used both inside and outside the country's borders.⁸⁸ One explanation for the shift in focus is believed to be that in August 2008 Russia chose to attack Georgia to support the pro-Russian regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. In addition to the change of focus, a new operational organization is also proposed, which will consist of both permanent units and contract units. This is then proposed to be completed with a qualifying home guard. All units must be fully manned and have the material required to be ready to quickly contribute to efforts without any need for recall.⁸⁹ A higher presence of troops falls under what Mälksoo defines as a performative way of deterrence. A combination of having troops on a national and international level where both do the same is a form of performative deterrence. This is because we know that helping in international peace support missions is a form of performative deterrence and higher presence of troops at home is also a form of performative deterrence.

Probably the biggest change that was proposed in Government bill 2008/09:140 is that Swedish conscription should no longer be based on duty when there is peace in the country. Instead, it is proposed to become voluntary. The reasoning behind the proposal is like many of the proposals to cut down on the defence forces because it is considered unlikely that Sweden would be exposed to an attack in the foreseeable future.⁹⁰ It might seem non-performative to take away conscription if a country want to have a credible deterrence. But at the same time, since there were no signs of a potential attack on Sweden and because the focus was to reduce the defence, it made sense to make this decision at that time. If it was naive of the Swedish government to do so is up for discussion. I would argue that it was naive to believe that Sweden would not need a big defence. But I sit with the result of what happened and thus it is easier to argue against it.

By applying the theory by Mälksoo one can see that Sweden's proposed deterrence policy during the 2000s increasingly aligned with her theory of Ritual Deterrence. This is because of

⁸⁸ Government bill 2008/09:140. Ett användbart försvar, Stockholm: Ministry of Defence p 48

⁸⁹ Government bill 2008/09:140. p 37

⁹⁰ Government bill 2008/09:140. p 77ff

Sweden's focus on international operations which can be seen as a performative way of deterrence, as well as trying to integrate the civilian population into the Total Defence by making sure they know what is expected of them. If people know what is expected of them during a hard time, the resilience within the country will be higher and embedded in the community which according to Mälksoo could lead to the reinforcement of collective identity. All of these actions can be seen as performative elements of deterrence and empathy for resilience. Furthermore, since the performative elements can show a collective identity, it may contribute to making the Swedish deterrence policy beyond mere military capabilities and means.

5.4 Russian Attacks, Rebuild the Defence

After the Russian annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in Ukraine the idea of the everlasting peace that Sweden had hoped for died. In the Government bill, 2014/15:109 the next step for The Swedish Armed Forces and the new way of Deterrence is proposed. A big change that the Swedish government and Defence Minister Peter Hultquist proposed was to reinstate the obligation to do refresher training for military reservists.⁹¹ This was a performative change and something that both could boost moral within the Swedish Armed Forces as well as building a stronger collective identity. Furthermore, it fits into what Mälksoo says about extended deterrence since its both the presence/movements of troops as well as training is considered ritualistic performance.

Another important change proposed by the government was to reinstate the planning of the civil defence. Until this proposal, the civil defence had been severely limited since the end of the Cold War, when it was believed to be unnecessary because many believed in the long-term peace. In the Government bill, 2014/15:109, it is proposed that the civil defence should help protect the civilian population, ensure that socially important functions are secured and functioning, for example, electricity supply and water and that the civil defence is expected to help and support the Armed Forces in the event of an eventual armed attack against Sweden.⁹² Once again the "Quotidian working-level communication" that can be seen in Mälksoo's table 1 fits in. Furthermore, making sure that resilience works in the country is important and a part of the civil defence. If people know what to do, the country's defence will be stronger, and the

⁹¹ Government bill, 2014/15:109: *Försvarspolitisk inriktning – Sveriges försvar 2016–2020* Stockholm: Ministry of Defence, p 65,69,91

⁹² Government bill, 2014/15:109, p104

military can focus on defeating an aggressor instead of taking care of people who do not know what to do.

The Swedish Total Defence is an important part of the country's defence. It is made clear in proposition Ds 2017:66. This proposition is the proposal for Civil Defence between the years 2021 and 2025. But since the proposition is from 2017, it is relevant to mention here.

“The basis for The Total Defence is ultimately made up of Sweden's population. The population's willingness to defend, their resilience and ability to handle a war situation are crucial to achieve a credible total defence”⁹³

Saying this shows that the Swedish government had significantly reconsidered what kind of Defence the country needed. To shift the focus from relying mostly on the Swedish Armed Forces to integrating the civilian population in a much bigger way can make a country's deterrence better. I would argue that making sure that people know what are expected of them in a war situation is of great importance and it will build up a strong resilience as well as hopefully leading to a strong collective identity which in the long run would make a more credible deterrence.

Because of the Russian annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in Ukraine, the new voluntary system that Sweden had introduced when conscription disappeared in 2010⁹⁴ was considered not enough to fill the personnel resources required in the Armed Forces. Because of this the government proposed that conscription would once again be introduced in Sweden.⁹⁵

The Armed Forces expressed that they would not be able to complete their task without help from the Swedish population, which may explain why the proposals to both reintroduce conscription and clarify civil duty were put forward. The government explained in the Government bill, 2014/15:109, that unity in society would primarily be achieved through people being involved and engaged in society. Engaging people in society would according to

⁹³ Ds 2017:66. *Motståndskraft Inriktningen av totalförsvaret och utformningen av det civila försvaret 2021-2025*. Stockholm: Ministry of Defence, p 32

⁹⁴ Government bill, 2008/09:140. p 77ff

⁹⁵ Regeringskansliet. (2017). Regeringsbeslut 3, 2017-03-02. Regeringen.se. Available at: <https://www.regeringen.se/globalassets/regeringen/block/fakta-ochgenvagsblock/forsvarsdepartementet/regeringsbeslut-3-2017-03-02.pdf> (Accessed 2024-10-23).

Mälksoo build a strong collective identity. This strong identity could also lead to stronger deterrence in the country. Increasing the personnel supply to the Armed Forces was considered one of the solutions that could be implemented and was therefore proposed.⁹⁶ Together with Mälksoo's theory and a stronger collective, the theory of resilience can further help. This is because engaging people in society will help building a stronger collective. It can also help with making sure that the resilience in the society is stronger due to people knowing what to do.

In the report, DS 2014:20, Swedish Security Politics is proposed to operate within the framework of ensuring the country's security and preventing war. The idea is that security policy should work through the UN to contribute to the creation of global peace.⁹⁷

As earlier mentioned, in the Government bill, 2014/15:109 it was proposed that the civil defence would be reinstated. In addition, a pamphlet called "Om krisen eller kriget kommer" was created and sent to every household in Sweden. The pamphlet was made by Myndigheten för Samhällsskydd och Beredskap (MSB) on behalf of the Swedish Government. In this pamphlet, it is stated what MSB, and the government thinks and propose that everyone living in Sweden should have at home in the event of a crisis or war in the country. The pamphlet clearly states what you as a civilian are expected to do and what will be required of you.⁹⁸ It is also stated in the pamphlet that if Sweden is attacked by another country, Sweden will never give up. It is clearly stated that all information about the end of the resistance is false.⁹⁹ Sending out the pamphlet and making sure that people know what is expected from them is as previously explained crucial and could lead to a more credible deterrence since integrating people can boost and create a collective identity.

Earlier in the analysis it was mentioned that Sweden used to have its own nuclear weapons program. This was later proposed to be shut down and it was proposed by different governments over time that Sweden should instead be a leading country that would actively work for the disarmament of nuclear weapons around the world. As a co-founder of the "Stockholm Initiative for Nuclear Disarmament" together with 16 other nuclear-weapon-free

⁹⁶ Government bill, 2014/15:109, p 18

⁹⁷ DS 2014:20. *Försvaret av Sverige – Starkare försvar för en osäker tid*. Stockholm: Ministry of Defence

⁹⁸ Myndigheten för samhällsskydd och beredskap (MSB), *Om krisen eller kriget kommer*, 2018

⁹⁹ MSB p 12

countries around the world, an agenda was proposed that would be ambitious but at the same time realistic to work for nuclear disarmament.¹⁰⁰

” We are one year away from the 50th anniversary of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the cornerstone of the global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. The treaty has been undisputedly successful in preventing the spread of nuclear weapons, laying the foundation for significant reductions in nuclear arsenals and facilitating the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. It has also established an international safeguards system and fostered the creation of nuclear-weapon free zones. Notwithstanding those successes, the role of nuclear weapons has been increasing recently against the background of a deteriorating international security environment.”¹⁰¹

Since Sweden still called itself a neutral country and a military non-aligned country it made sense to be a part of the “Stockholm Initiative for Nuclear Disarmament”. Sweden still wanted to be taken seriously with its neutrality and by engaging in something that perhaps could lead to a safer world made sense with its history of engaging in international peace support operations. Looking at Table 1 in Mälksoo’s theory, making a high-level political statement to make sure that nuclear disarmament should be a reality all over the world, is considered a form of performative deterrence. I would further argue that the “Stockholm Initiative for Nuclear Disarmament” can be seen as a performative act as Mälksoo’s theory states that deterrence practices that are embedded in the community lead to the reinforcement of collective identity.

In this case, since Sweden for a long time have pressed for nuclear disarmament, one can argue that this belief is embedded in the Swedish community and therefore could lead to a stronger collective identity within Sweden, by pushing for nuclear disarmament. According to Gee and Handford, regarding discourse analysis, they say that context can influence the meaning of a discourse.¹⁰² This means that in this context, nuclear disarmament may be seen as a performative act but not in another context.

¹⁰⁰ Government Offices of Sweden, *Ministerial Declaration: The Stockholm Ministerial Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament and the Non-Proliferation Treaty* (Government.se, 2019),

¹⁰¹ Government Offices of Sweden, *Ministerial Declaration*, 2019. p1

¹⁰² Gee and Handford. 2012

In 2017 it was proposed that the Swedish Armed Forces should have its largest military exercise in over 20 years. In total, it was planned that over 20,000 people would participate and practice in various parts of Sweden. Essentially, exercises were planned to take place around Stockholm, Gotland and Gothenburg. As it would also be the first exercise of this calibre in over 20 years, it was expected that various types of friction could arise. Furthermore, the government planned that exercises like Aurora 17 would be held every three years to be able to practice and see what shortcomings future defence decisions may need to propose changes to.¹⁰³ Looking at Mälksoo's theory, military exercises like Aurora 2017 fits perfectly in and engage large parts of the country. Going back to table 1, we see that it fits nearly everything in military part of both "Overt Ritual/spectacles" as well as "Ritual like everyday practices" and would therefore be a big form of performance according to Mälksoo's theory.

Mälksoo's theory works well on Swedish deterrence policy even in the 2010s. This is because Sweden constructs its identity based on that everyone is needed to help in case of a crisis or a war. This builds a collective action and identity that is needed to both build up a strong resilience within a country as well as to build a credible deterrence. Furthermore, the rebuilding of the civil defence and taking back conscription can create a stronger identity. If it does, it would lead to a greater deterrence. Military exercises like Aurora 17 also serve as a ritual spectacle which will demonstrate Sweden's readiness as well as foster an internal cohesion amongst the Swedish population.

5.5 Alone is Weak, We Need NATO

It is late 2020 when the Government bill 2020/21:30 is proposed by the government with Defence Minister Hultqvist. This time the proposals are perhaps the biggest changes during this millennium. In earlier government bills, like 1991/92:102 and 1999/2000:30, it was proposed to greatly reduce the number of personnel in the Armed Forces and to close most regiments around the country. In the new proposals put forward with Government bill 2020/21:30, the idea is that most of the previously closed regiments would now be reopened.¹⁰⁴ The proposals to reopen several of the former regiments around Sweden are not particularly surprising in themselves as it follows the previous prediction that Hultqvist proposed during

¹⁰³ Sveriges Television, "Aurora 17 – största militärövningen på 20 år," *SVT Nyheter*, published september 8, 2017, <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/lokalt/ost/aurora-17-storsta-militarovningen-pa-20-ar>. (Accessed 2024-10-23)

¹⁰⁴ Government bill 2020/21:30 *Totalförsvaret 2021-2025* Stockholm: Ministry of Defence, p5

his time as Minister of Defence. Everything follows a clear path to rebuilding the Swedish defence and creating a credible deterrence. In reopening a lot of old regiments in combination with that conscription is back, the government hopes that these two things will create a bigger deterrence and lead to an aggressor not wanting to attack. Furthermore, it is eminent that these proposals are in line with Mälksoo's theory and will lead to being a more performative way of conducting deterrence. This is because there will be a higher presence of military in more parts of the country as well as leading to more training. This will also be visible for potential aggressors that Sweden is massively rebuilding its defence and thereby creating a stronger deterrence.

In the report DS 2019:8¹⁰⁵, the defence committee states that during this time, Sweden's War Organization was not designed in such a way that it would be able to face an armed attack. Something that clearly justifies why the government in Government bill 2020/21:30 clearly proposes major changes to the restructuring of the War Organization.¹⁰⁶ If the defence committee feels that Sweden would not be able to withstand an armed attack, I would argue that the defence planning has failed. It is important to remember that Sweden changed its defence due to the current security development in its vicinity. If there was not any risk of an attack against Sweden, something that many politicians thought, it could be an argument to instead spend the money on other areas that were considered more important. I would argue that Swedish politicians were naive. Even if it is a beautiful thought to have everlasting peace, Sweden should have been able to predict that a defence still would be necessary.

In the same bill, the government says that:

“The Military defence needs to continue being strengthened, and the operational capability needs to be increased. The military defence is designed and dimensioned to be able to face an armed attack against Sweden. The endurance of the war organization needs to be strengthened and a better balance between support and action joints is achieved. Basic defensive capabilities need to be ensured over time. A new war organization should be organized from 1 January 2021 and successfully filled up during the 2020s”¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Ds 2019:8. *Värnkraft – Inriktningen av säkerhetspolitiken och utformningen av det militära försvaret 2021/2025*. Stockholm: Ministry of Defence

¹⁰⁶ Government bill 2020/21:30 p 99

¹⁰⁷ Government bill 2020/21:30 p 98

Looking at this section from the Government bill 2020/21:30 p 98 this is a high-level political statement and a clear description of what the government is expecting of the armed forces. Making these kinds of high-level political statements and proposing something that will lead to a higher presence of troops within Sweden is a prominent example of performative deterrence. Both these examples can be seen in Mälksoo's table 1 on what performative deterrence is.

A proposal that the government made in the government bill 2020/21:30 that intended to increase Swedish deterrence was to make sure that all personnel within the Armed Forces who will be needed during high alert are proposed to be deployed for war. Something that not only could lead to an increased deterrence but also clarity for those involved.¹⁰⁸

During the conference "Folk och Försvar" In January 2024, Sweden's Minister for Civil Defence, Carl-Oskar Bohlin, gave a speech. During this speech, he said, "There could be war in Sweden". The point of Bohlin's speech was not to scare people, but his point was to make sure that the civilian population was aware of the current situation in Europe. Further in the speech, Bohlin explained which proposals are to be implemented and what is expected of the general population. In addition to that, during part of the speech, Bohlin addressed the civilian population directly. He wondered if people had taken responsibility for their own home preparedness and if people had considered joining a voluntary defence organization. If this had not been done, Bohlin made a call for action: "Get Started".¹⁰⁹ This high-level political statement from Bohlin is also a form of performative deterrence as seen in table 1. It also falls under the theory of resilience since Bohlin wants the civilian population to know what is expected of them and that they need to have preparations made at home to limit the pressure on the society in case of a war or crisis.

Both Sweden and Finland simultaneously applied for membership in NATO on the 18th of May 2022. Something that meant that Sweden would break its longstanding policy of being military non-aligned and therefore come to a new path in its defence rebuild.¹¹⁰ By joining NATO

¹⁰⁸ Government bill 2020/21:30 p 98

¹⁰⁹ Government Offices of Sweden. (2024). *Anförande av minister för civilt försvar Carl-Oskar Bohlin vid Folk och Försvars rikskonferens 2024*. <https://www.regeringen.se/tal/2024/01/anforande-av-minister-for-civiltforsvar-carl-oskar-bohlin-vid-folk-och-forsvars-rikskonferens-2024/>

¹¹⁰ NATO, 'Finland and Sweden submit applications to join NATO', 18 May 2022, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_195468.htm. Accessed 10 Sept 2024

Sweden would have to show a new form of Performative deterrence. Mälksoo says that extended deterrence is a “sense of a game” and in this game Sweden is supposed to show unity with its allies within NATO. Something that perhaps can be hard since Sweden has not been part of a military alliance for over 200 years.

In October 2024, the latest defence decision was handed over to Sweden's Riksdag (parliament). It includes the latest proposals that the government and Defence Minister Pål Jonson intend to implement. What distinguishes this defence decision from previous ones is that Sweden must now also adapt its defence measures to meet the criteria set by NATO. Following what Bohlin said during “Folk och Försvar”, the government bill also stated that Sweden can get attacked by another country.

“Civil defence needs to be developed and strengthened to contribute to a higher overall capability within the total defence. An armed attack against Sweden or our allies cannot be ruled out. Nor can it be ruled out that military means of force or threats of such might be used against Sweden or our allies”¹¹¹

By saying this, Sweden shows that it is ready to aid its allies in case of an armed attack. Looking at table 1, this could fall under “High-level political statement” which is also a form of extended deterrence and in the long run a form of performative deterrence by showing unity with the country’s allies.

Several of the proposals in Government bill 2024/25:34 clearly show that Sweden is on its way to building up its defence properly again. The military part of the total defence is proposed to be quickly built up and there is a clear goal from the government's side that there should be four operational brigades by 2030. In addition to this, it is also proposed that refresher training should be increased because of the security situation in Sweden's immediate vicinity.¹¹² In Mälksoo’s theory this could both lead to a more credible deterrence since it would show training and movements of troops as well as leading to a bigger resilience since more people will know what are expected of them.

¹¹¹ Government bill 2024/25:34 *Totalförsvaret 2025-2030* Stockholm: Ministry of Defence, p108ff

¹¹² Government bill 2024/25:34 p 75, 64

Government bill 2024/25:34 emphasizes the importance of strengthening the cooperation between the civil society, voluntary organizations and public authorities to be able to strengthen civil defence. The government sees civil society as a vital factor in being able to help in society and spread information during crisis situations. For example, it is proposed that the civil defence should help the armed forces in matters such as logistics and transport of materiel.¹¹³ Resilience in society is further described as important to strengthen the country's resilience. At the same time, it is explained that increased societal resilience and the preparedness of civil actors is in line with NATO's article number 3.¹¹⁴ The theory of resilience fits perfectly with government bill 2024/25:34 since it mentions a lot of about what the civil defence can do in case of a war and how to prepare for it. Making sure that people know what is expected of them will make it easier to get back to what is considered normal after a war or crisis.

As a continuation of the step to clearly show that civil society is an important and vital part of total defence, MSB released a new version of the pamphlet "If the crisis or war is coming" which is supposed to end up in Swedish mailboxes around the middle of November. What distinguishes this pamphlet from the one that came out in 2018 is that it is significantly larger and emphasizes other things that were not as clearly presented before. Among other things, the pamphlet has been extended to describe how people are expected to act in various situations that may arise. In the beginning, various opportunities are described for people to get involved to strengthen the common preparedness in society. Among other things, it is mentioned that you can join a voluntary defence organization that has tasks within total defence or become a blood donor.¹¹⁵ A lot of the proposals in the pamphlet fall in line with what Mälksoo talks about to build a collective identity and with that both a stronger resilience as well as a stronger deterrence.

During a press conference from the government when they were to present Government bill 2024/25:34, Bohlin concluded the press conference in a way that clearly shows what the new government demands of people and what they expect people to do.

¹¹³ Government bill 2024/25:34 p 144

¹¹⁴ Government bill 2024/25:34 p 110

¹¹⁵ Myndigheten för samhällsskydd och beredskap (MSB), *Om krisen eller kriget kommer*, 2024

“And then let me just state, in conclusion, that the Total Defence is all Swedish citizens. That's ten million people, and in serious times, it will make a higher claim on all of us.”¹¹⁶

Again, Mälksoo's theory works in Sweden. This is because, during the 2020s, the country invested in further integrating the civilian population into its total defence and clarifying what role it expects the civilian population to play. Clearly going out and saying that people should have clear preparedness at home can strengthen resilience in society and thus strengthen collective identity. Since Sweden previously decided on large military exercises every three years, this also increases this identity. Lastly, the proposal that several old regiments are proposed to reopen could strengthen the internal resilience and social cohesion within the country.

¹¹⁶ Government Office, *Nytt totalförsvarsbeslut för ett starkare Sverige*, video statement, 15 oktober 2024, (31:56)

6. Conclusions

This thesis aims to analyse how Swedish deterrence policy has evolved from being neutral during the Cold War to closer align with NATO in 2022, with a specific focus on the performative aspects of deterrence. While applying the theory of Ritual deterrence by Mälksoo and integrating the concept of resilience, this research addresses the central question of how performative deterrence works in the case of Sweden.

The theory by Mälksoo in combination with the theory of resilience helps us understand Swedish deterrence policy to a greater extent than before. This is because when Mälksoo talks about ritual performances it includes large-scale military exercises like Aurora as well as international peace support operations, which Sweden has been actively engaged in for a long time, one prominent example of this is the ISAF operation in Afghanistan. Furthermore, Mälksoo's theory suggests that political statements like the ones made by Bohlin during "Folk och Försvar" work as overt signal of deterrence. Another overt signal of deterrence that Sweden has used is the movement of troops within the country, Sweden has done this many times when they shut down and reopened different regiments. All these things combined shows that Sweden's deterrence policy has been mainly performative from Mälksoo's perspective.

Sweden has changed its policy of deterrence considerably since the Cold War. Sweden changed from having a big and strong defence during most of the Cold War with a large civil defence that could withstand a potential attack from an aggressor. However, everything changed after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Soviet Union. Sweden believed in an everlasting peace and thought that defence should be a secondary matter. When Russia annexed the Crimean Peninsula the Swedish dream of an everlasting peace was lost. Sweden decided to rapidly try to rebuild the defence again taking back refreshers training and sending out pamphlets to make sure that civilians knew what to do in case of war or crisis.

My analysis shows that Swedish deterrence strategy is characterized by both practical defence measures as well as symbolic performances. For example, both military exercises like Aurora and the different international peace support mission that Sweden has engaged in, serves as overt signals of deterrence as explained by Mälksoo. However, where Mälksoo's theory fails to address how societal resilience contributes to creating a credible deterrence, the Swedish integration of civil defence and the concept of Total Defence Act, demonstrates how resilience serves a crucial role in reinforcing Sweden's deterrence policy. This dual approach of Sweden's

not only deters potential aggressors, but it also signals a military readiness as well as fosters a collective national identity, which enhances the credibility of Swedish deterrence.

This thesis expands on Mälksoo's framework of Ritual Deterrence by highlighting the role of resilience in deterrence strategy. Mälksoo emphasizes the role of performative aspects in deterrence strategy by integrating symbolic actions. Mälksoo's framework does however not fully account for how societal preparedness as well as the civilian population's integration in the defence can contribute to creating a more credible deterrence. By integrating resilience into Mälksoo's framework, this thesis offers a more comprehensive understanding of how a historically neutral and small state like Sweden can navigate security threats by utilizing both symbolic and structural means.

This thesis further highlights how deterrence strategy has evolved during the 21st century by showing how symbolic actions, like civil-military integration, and performative displays of resilience are equally as critical for deterrence strategy as the traditional military strengths. By bridging the gap between Mälksoo's ritual deterrence and resilience, this thesis offers new insights into how a small state can construct a credible deterrence by changing strategies in response to the ever-changing geopolitical dynamics.

Looking beyond the Swedish context, this thesis contributes to the broader field of War Studies by emphasizing the importance of resilience in modern deterrence strategy. The thesis findings suggest that deterrence cannot solely rely on military capabilities or strategic alliances. The society and civilian population must be given the opportunity to be able to withstand as well as recover from potential threats. The thesis shows that integrating resilience into deterrence strategy has significant implications in understanding of how a small state with a history of neutrality can deter aggressors effectively by integrating the civilian population in a greater defence.

6.1 Future Research

Focusing on performative deterrence over a broad span in history may miss parts that would have been interesting to consider. The Swedish deterrence policy went through significant changes during the millennia shift. Because of this, it would be interesting to further explore how the Swedish deterrence policy worked in the different international peace support missions.

Looking at performative deterrence during these specific missions might provide a more thorough explanation of how it looked during this time.

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