



From Peaceful Neutrality to Strategic Alignment

A poststructural discourse analysis of Sweden's path to NATO

Fanny Spindler

Thesis, 30 ECTS (hp)

Political Science with a focus on Crisis Management and Security

Master's Programme in Politics, Security and Crisis

Autumn 2024

Supervisor: Simon Hollis

Word count: 19231

Abstract

For over 200 years, Sweden upheld a policy of neutrality and military non-alignment, values deeply ingrained in its national identity. However, the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia in 2022 marked a significant turning point, leading Sweden to abandon its historical stance and pursue NATO membership. This shift is particularly puzzling given Sweden's deeply rooted identity as a non-aligned state, a commitment it maintained even during Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014. To explain why Sweden chose to join NATO when it did, this thesis draws on poststructural discourse theory, emphasizing the role of language in shaping foreign policy. It locates and analyzes four floating signifiers; democracy, security, stability, and solidarity and explores their role in shaping debates in 2014 and 2022. The analysis reveals a significant discursive shift in 2022, wherein the rearticulation of these signifiers provided a particular hegemonic context that enabled the possibility for NATO membership, one that was not present eight years earlier. As such, this thesis highlights the poststructural understanding of identity as fluid and demonstrates how the interplay between discourse, power, and identity influences foreign policy decisions.

Keywords: NATO, Sweden, non-alignment, discourse, poststructuralism, foreign policy

List of political parties and abbreviations

- M Moderate Party (*Moderaterna*)
- S Social Democrats (*Socialdemokraterna*)
- SD Sweden Democrats (*Sverigedemokraterna*)
- MP Green Party (*Miljöpartiet*)
- L Liberals (*Liberalerna*) former People's Party (KD) (*Folkpartiet*)
- KD Christian Democrats (*Kristdemokraterna*)
- V Left Party (*Vänsterpartiet*)
- C Centre Party (*Centerpartiet*)

Table of contents

1 Introduction.....	4
1.1 Aim and Research Question.....	5
2 Literature Review.....	7
2.1 Traditional Small State Theory.....	7
2.2 Small State Alliance Theory.....	8
2.3 Small State Agency and Identity.....	9
2.4 Sweden and NATO.....	10
3 Theory.....	13
3.1 Poststructural Discourse Theory.....	13
4 Methodology.....	19
4.1 Interpretivism as a Research Tradition.....	19
4.2 Discourse Analysis.....	21
4.3 Material.....	25
5 Analysis.....	28
5.1 Democracy.....	28
5.2 Security.....	33
5.3 Stability.....	37
5.4 Solidarity.....	42
5.5 Findings.....	46
6 Reflections.....	49
6.1 Suggestions for further research.....	51
8 Bibliography.....	52
8.1 Primary documents.....	57
Appendix.....	62

1 Introduction

For over 200 years, neutrality and military non-alignment has been a foundational pillar of Sweden's foreign policy. Through this platform, Sweden has shared its values of solidarity and equality, contributing to its reputation as the "moral conscience" of the world (Agius, 2011: 375, Lundqvist, 2022: 96). With this, neutrality became a fundamental part of Sweden's national identity, with literature even suggesting that this deeply institutionalized identity might prevent Sweden from ever joining a military alliance (Cottey, 2013: 465, Åström, 1977: 7). Over time, Sweden implemented various security strategies, and gradually moved closer to NATO, such as joining its Partnership for Peace (PfP) program in 1994 (Cottey 2013; Wagnsson 2011; Brun Pedersen 2020). Yet, despite its closeness to NATO, Sweden firmly upheld non-alignment as NATO membership remained inconceivable.

However, a profound shift occurred following the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. In response to this reality shock, Sweden abandoned its long-standing non-alignment tradition, culminating in its accession to NATO on March 7, 2024. This shift represents a 'U-turn' in Swedish foreign and security policy and an abrupt, determined move, despite obstacles in the accession process. Given that Sweden had upheld its policy of non-alignment when confronted with international aggression in the past, such as the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, one might have expected Sweden to continue its policy in response to the 2022 invasion of Ukraine. Yet, while both events presented significant security challenges, it was only the latter that ultimately led to NATO membership, marking the fundamental shift in national policy. The unexpected decision to join NATO, following over 200 years of neutrality, becomes particularly puzzling given Sweden's seemingly rooted security identity as a non-aligned state, prompting the question – why now?

Wagnsson (2011) observes that Sweden's traditionally idealistic and humanitarian-focused discourse has historically stood in contrast to NATO's realist, militaristic approach to security. She argues that for Sweden to join NATO, these discursive differences would need to be reconciled by reframing membership as participation in a broader, cooperative security framework rather than merely a military alliance (Wagnsson, 2011: 598). Taking this into account, it is reasonable to ask how the decision to pursue NATO membership became

politically feasible in 2022. Answering this question requires examining factors beyond external pressures alone. The shift from non-alignment to alignment is closely tied to state identity and raises critical questions about the direction and nature of its foreign policy. In order to fully understand how this transition came about, the underlying discourses that enabled this remarkable shift need to be analyzed.

To advance these explanations, this thesis will use poststructuralist discourse theory, an approach that has been under-researched in current literature on the Swedish case. Although these theoretical underpinnings will be elaborated on in the theory section, briefly stated, the concept is that discourses shape the boundaries of acceptable statements, functioning as collective understandings that link words and concepts to others within a network of meanings. With its emphasis on fluid, contested discourses, this theory is particularly well-suited to understanding how Sweden's foreign policy could shift so dramatically. A discourse-analytic approach allows for an understanding of how various perceptions are produced, reproduced, and transformed, and how Sweden's decisions have been justified within the discourse. It should be noted that this thesis does not dismiss alternative theoretical explanations, which, as highlighted in the literature review, have offered both insightful and compelling perspectives. Instead, the interest of this approach lies in how specific representations shape meaning in relation to Sweden's national identity, ultimately supporting its application for NATO membership.

1.1 Aim and Research Question

This thesis aims to problematize the transition from non-alignment to military alignment by examining the role of discourse in shaping foreign policy decisions. It examines the discourses shaping membership by analyzing the years 2014 and 2022, providing a baseline to observe changes in representation following the annexation of Crimea and the subsequent full-scale invasion of Ukraine. By employing a poststructuralist discourse theory approach, this thesis explores how meaning is constructed, contested, and reconfigured in discourse and how this facilitated Sweden's sudden departure from its 200-year tradition of military non-alignment. The importance of this approach lies in its ability to provide an in-depth analysis of the processes where the political elite construct and legitimize foreign policy decisions and how this is tied to a social and political identity. While many studies of foreign

policy focus on materialist explanations, such as security concerns or economic benefits, this thesis centers discourse as a driving force in the construction of political identities and strategies. This perspective offers a nuanced understanding of Sweden's decision-making process as well as sheds light on the interplay of identity, power, and language in international relations. Thus, this thesis departs from the research question: *Why did Sweden apply for NATO membership in 2022, despite its long held identity as non-aligned?* By answering this, this thesis aims to explore how discourse influences foreign policy decisions, contributing to a deeper understanding of the Swedish case.

2 Literature Review

In light of Sweden's recent accession to NATO, research on this specific topic remains limited. As a result, this literature review not only examines the literature on the specific case but also explores the broader body of literature on small states and their roles in the international system. By examining existing frameworks and theories regarding state behavior, this review seeks to situate Sweden's NATO membership within the wider academic context.

2.1 Traditional Small State Theory

There is considerable literature devoted to defining small states dating back to the 1950s and the concept has been widely debated, particularly regarding how size correlates with power and agency. Although there is a fragmented understanding of what a small state is, it has been defined by scholars like Thorhallsson (2006) and Crowards (2002) through objective measures like population, GDP, and military strength.

Being a small state is typically associated with security challenges (Vital 1971, Keohane 1969, Knudsen 2002). In the anarchic international system, where power is exercised without regulation, these scholars argue that it is the specific distribution of material resources (i.e., the balance of power) that determines what constitutes rational behavior for small states. Shifts in the balance of power among the major states are seen as driving the strategies that small states are likely or expected to follow. This perspective portrays small states as isolated actors that are vulnerable to the unpredictable influences of stronger states' actions and more focused on survival than great powers because of their limited power. Furthermore, it is often assumed that while domestic factors might shape the foreign policies of great powers, small states do not have this privilege, as they are more affected by the pressures of an anarchic international environment. Consequently, small states are believed to be primarily concerned with responding to external forces dictated by the international system rather than domestic political issues (Walt 1985; Browning 2006).

2.2 Small State Alliance Theory

A key advancement in understanding small state behavior is through alliance theory. Wivel (2021) emphasizes the adaptive and pragmatic nature of small-state strategies. Unlike great powers, small states cannot afford fixed, long-term plans and must instead continuously adjust to shifts in the international environment. Small states rely on diplomacy, multilateral agreements, and international institutions, platforms that offer influence without having the need for hard power. This adaptability is key to their survival and enables them to navigate changing global dynamics without direct confrontation. A central theme in Wivel's analysis is the range of possible strategic options available to small states, with a special focus on bandwagoning, balancing, and hedging. Bandwagoning involves aligning closely with a more powerful state or alliance to gain security, even if this costs them autonomy. Balancing allows small states to counter great power influence by forming alliances with other small or medium-sized states or by boosting their own defenses. Lastly, hedging involves diversifying alliances and partnerships to avoid being dependent on a single power, which provides flexibility. Although small states often are constrained by their size and must operate within the strategic frameworks set by larger powers, a central point in Wivel's argument is that they still can exert influence, particularly through alliances and international institutions. By aligning themselves with organizations like NATO or the EU, small states gain security and, at the same time, become important players in global governance. This means that small states do not have the goals to reshape global order, but instead seek to secure their place within this order. This can be done by aligning with powerful allies, boosting their diplomatic influence, and focusing on specialized areas of international commitments.

Thorhallsson and Vidal's (2023) shelter theory adds an important layer by highlighting how small states also seek political and economic protection through alliances. Their work is particularly relevant in explaining Sweden's foreign policy, where NATO membership is argued to be a result of its long-standing shelter-seeking strategy. Sweden's shelter-seeking behavior is argued to be subtle, embedded within deep cooperation with transatlantic partners while maintaining formal military non-alignment. Thorhallsson and Vidal (2023) suggest that Sweden's historical neutrality can be understood as part of a broader strategy of seeking shelter without formal alliances, but that the increasing Russian threat and Finland's NATO membership in 2022 pushed Sweden toward applying for NATO as well. Therefore, shelter

theory provides a lens through which strategic shifts can be understood as responses to external pressures rather than abrupt changes in policy (Haugevik & Sending, 2020).

While these theories provide useful tools to understand small states' external strategies, they still largely frame small states as reactive actors in response to international pressures. The frameworks put forward by Wivel (2021) and Thorhallsson & Vidal (2023) assume that small states act reactively and uniformly to international pressures, such as the Russian invasion of Ukraine. However, these explanations fall short of accounting for the distinct internal processes and variations between states when faced with similar external threats. Although useful in understanding broad strategic behaviors like bandwagoning and balancing, they overlook the specific decision-making processes as well as the agency of political elites.

2.3 Small State Agency and Identity

Recent scholarship has moved beyond the traditional view that small states are defined by their material limitations. Browning (2006) challenges this by linking the size of states to their capability and influence, arguing that small states are able to craft identities that enhance their strategic positions. In his study, Finland is presented as an example of a small state that has transformed its smallness into a strategic asset. Similarly, Szalai (2017) contends that viewing smallness as inherently limiting tends to overlook the potential for a more interpretive approach, one that focuses on how states define their own identities and roles in the international system. For Szalai, a small state identity does not necessarily lead to weakness or limited capacity for action. This move away from traditional approaches broadens the scope for understanding how small states operate in foreign policy. When smallness is framed positively, it opens up opportunities for these states to exert influence. For instance, Pedersen and Reykers (2019) argue that small states join military coalitions not just for security but also to increase their international status, a point that stands in contrast with traditional realist assumptions of small state behavior.

Building on this, Browning's work (2006) further explores how small states can move beyond such material limitations through strategic identity construction. He highlights the case of Sweden, which has used its self-image as a "moral superpower." This example demonstrates how small states, through flexible and adaptive strategies, can challenge realist assumptions

that assume that they are merely reactive players in the world. By emphasizing the role of identity, these cases highlight a broader shift in international relations theory. A shift that moves beyond power-centric explanations to consider the more nuanced ways in which states shape and are shaped in international relations. Ruggie (1998) also critiques the assumption that state interests are determined solely by material conditions, arguing that culture, history, and self-perception also shape foreign policy. Similarly, Elman (1995) contends that domestic politics cannot be "black-boxed," and internal differences significantly influence state behavior. Together, these perspectives highlight that small states can strategically construct their identities to exert influence beyond what traditional theories have assumed.

While these identity-based perspectives are an important contribution to opening up the "black box" of small state behavior, they still tend to analyze identity at the systemic level, focusing on universal concepts like statehood and international norms. Such an approach may fail to capture the complexities and unique challenges that arise as individual states construct and interpret their identities, potentially overlooking the internally driven processes of identity formation and meaning-making within each state, which play an important role in shaping foreign policy.

2.4 Sweden and NATO

As mentioned in the introduction, Sweden's relationship with NATO has evolved over the years. Möller and Bjereld (2010) point to European integration as playing a critical role in reshaping Swedish foreign policy after the Cold War. They argue that Sweden's participation in the EU's security frameworks, such as the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), significantly blurred the lines of neutrality. Similarly, Löden (2012) identifies external factors such as EU integration, collaboration with NATO, and shifting global norms as key challenges to Sweden's neutrality. According to him, any potential NATO accession would depend on achieving a balanced domestic political consensus and strong public support. This view is supported by Wagnsson (2011), who argues that Sweden's deeply rooted identity of neutrality and skepticism toward great power alliances historically has hindered full NATO membership. However, Wagnsson also highlights that NATO's adoption of humanitarian rhetoric in recent years has facilitated closer alignment between Sweden and the alliance.

A significant body of the existing literature sees Russia's aggression in Ukraine in 2022 as the primary catalyst for Sweden's decision to seek NATO membership. Scholars such as Lundqvist (2022) and Forsberg (2023) argue that this event heightened security concerns in Northern Europe, which led Sweden to seek protection under NATO's security umbrella. A recurring theme in the literature, therefore, establishes a direct link between Sweden's policy shift and external threats, particularly Russian aggression. However, as Edström and Westerberg (2020) observe, Sweden's traditional neutrality and geographic distance from Russia have always contributed to a historically low perception of military threats. Even after Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, Sweden remained hesitant about NATO membership. In contrast, Finland's geographical closeness to Russia and its historical conflicts with the Soviet Union contributed to shaping a stronger focus on territorial defense, which resulted in more pragmatic security strategies and closer cooperation with NATO (Heier, 2018).

Michalski, Brommesson, and Ekengren (2024) further highlight the different paths taken by Sweden and Finland toward NATO membership. Finland's accession reflected elite consensus and widespread public support, while Sweden's process was much slower and shaped by polarized domestic debates rooted in skepticism about NATO's relevance to security as well as its potential impact on Sweden's identity (Lundqvist, 2022). Wieslander (2022), with her neoclassical realism approach to the Hultqvist doctrine, further emphasizes the critical role of domestic factors, such as shifting party positions and changes in public opinion in Sweden's path to NATO. While Finland quickly embraced NATO due to its geographical vulnerability, Sweden's shift was characterized by widespread public and political contestation.

Hagström (2020, 2022) offers a unique perspective on this case by analyzing emotional and identity-driven dimensions of the discourse surrounding the Swedish NATO membership. His findings show how emotional language, which invoked fear, pride, and shame, shaped perceptions of NATO membership as socially acceptable. Additionally, his research reveals deep-seated ontological security concerns, as both proponents and opponents of NATO membership framed their arguments around identity and existential security. While Hagström's work represents a significant contribution and offers valuable insights into the emotional and identity-driven dimensions of the debate, it remains limited to analyzing NATO campaigners and the earlier stages of Sweden's reassessment of its security policy.

This gap underscores how such perspectives remain underrepresented in the literature, highlighting the need to further explore how identity, agency, and discourse shape foreign policy decisions.

In light of this, this thesis addresses this gap by employing a poststructuralist lens to Sweden's NATO accession. Inspired by the works of Nabers (2015), Ostermann (2019), and Glassner and Fuchshuber (2023), it situates Sweden's case within the broader literature on poststructural analyses of foreign policy. Nabers' work highlights the role of discourse in framing threats, allies, and legitimate actions and emphasizes the contingent and contested nature of political identities and policy. Ostermann's study on French foreign policy during the Chirac and Sarkozy presidencies further demonstrates how leaders have the ability to redefine national identity to align with military alliances such as NATO. Similarly, Glassner and Fuchshuber's article on Finland's NATO membership traces how changing security perceptions reshaped national narratives and dominant discourses, which ultimately paved the way for its policy shift.

Building on the work of these authors, this thesis argues that a poststructuralist approach is both underrepresented in current research on Sweden's NATO accession and crucial for understanding the puzzling case. As seen in this review, much of the existing literature emphasizes material factors, external threats, and rational decision-making. In contrast, this thesis highlights the discursive construction of Sweden's identity and behavior. In contrast to the assumption that small states are inherently passive or reactive, the above-mentioned literature reveals that these states creatively can both navigate and redefine their position within these constraints. This perspective deepens the understanding of Sweden's NATO shift and contributes to the field of foreign policy analysis through a poststructural lens.

3 Theory

This section explores the core ideas of poststructural discourse theory and how it challenges traditional views in international relations. It examines the constructed and fluid nature of meaning, identity, and power and how this, in turn, shapes state behavior and foreign policy. In this, key theoretical concepts such as floating signifiers, discursive hegemony, and identity are explored. Additionally, this section outlines how moments of dislocation, such as external crises, can challenge established understandings and lead to shifts in hegemonic discourse. This section forms the theoretical base for understanding why Sweden applied for NATO membership in 2022, despite its long-held identity as a non-aligned state.

3.1 Poststructural Discourse Theory

Poststructuralism fundamentally critiques traditional structuralist assumptions within international relations. By challenging fixed notions of structures such as sovereignty and anarchy it proposes that these constructs are contingent on human actions and discourses and, therefore, open to reinterpretation and change (Foucault, 1972). This theory asserts that while structures like state sovereignty employ considerable power, they are neither permanent or unchangeable. Instead, they are historically constructed, socially sustained, and open to discursive rearticulation. Poststructuralism diverges significantly from mainstream IR theories that often treat language as a neutral tool for representing an objective world by emphasizing the fluid and constructed nature of meaning, identity, and even reality itself. Instead, poststructuralists argue that language is constitutive, shaping reality through relational discourse (Weaver, 2001: 24). Concepts such as identity, power, and state behavior are, consequently, maintained through language, which allows for a unique perspective on foreign policy analysis.

Building on Laclau and Mouffe's ideas, discourse can be understood as a form of social practice that continually integrates and reorganizes diverse elements within changing historical contexts (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985: 96). These formations are naturally limited, uneven, and incomplete. This view acknowledges the existence of material objects and processes but recognizes that our understanding of them is shaped by the symbolic worlds we inhabit. It is only through these symbolic systems that we engage with and understand these

objects (Wendt, 1999: 24). In this context, discourse theory explores how discursive practices, techniques, and mechanisms are constructed and maintained within institutional systems. Discourse as a linguistic framework shapes and reinforces norms of common sense, a process particularly significant in the sphere of politics and policymaking. In order to grasp the expansive framework of discourse theory, this thesis uses the definition put forward by Hajer (1995: 44), which understands discourse as “an ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categories through which meaning is given to social and physical phenomena, and which is produced and reproduced through and identifiable set of practices.”

While poststructuralism posits that discourse constructs social reality, it also acknowledges that certain external events, labeled as "reality shocks," have the potential to disrupt already established discourses. Events such as Russia's annexation of Crimea and invasion of Ukraine serve as examples of crises that can challenge dominant narratives and introduce shifts within hegemonic discourse. When these reality shocks clash with existing discourses, they can lead to significant disruption in narrative structures, causing changes in foreign policy and sometimes resulting in observable shifts in state behavior (Glassner & Fuchshuber, 2023: 48).

The analysis of foreign policy through the framework of poststructuralism has a longstanding academic tradition, as evidenced by the contributions of scholars including Weaver (2001), Hansen (2006), Griggs and Howarth (2019), Ostermann (2019), Wullweber (2019), and Glassner and Fuchshuber (2023), to name a few. It enriches foreign policy analysis by examining how discourse shapes identity and how specific policy actions are framed as necessary or urgent. From this perspective, foreign policy is not merely a reaction to pre-existing issues but a constructed series of representations that provide particular interpretations and justify specific actions as logical and compelling. Poststructuralists interpret foreign policy as deeply rooted in identity formation and meaning-making practices, emphasizing how justifications are crafted, debated, and legitimated through discourse.

Discourse, then, does more than merely reflect policy; it actively constructs the identities, values, and policy goals of nations (Weaver, 2001: 27). Building on Foucault, poststructuralist discourse theory examines how patterns within discourse establish rules, themes, and authority. These discursive formations create “privileged storytellers,” a concept

that will be further explained in the methodological chapter. But explained briefly, these are actors whose positions of power enable them to promote dominant narratives in foreign policy. These storytellers do not influence others in isolation, instead, they are part of and shaped by the broader social and cultural forces around them. Their authority is guided by shared norms, expectations, and limits, which are contextually specific. In democratic societies, for example, leaders must ensure that their messages resonate with shared social norms in order to stay accountable to the public as they need to secure re-election (Glassner & Fuchshuber, 2023: 47).

The role of language

Poststructuralism posits that language does more than represent the world – it actively shapes it. Instead of serving as a mirror to objective reality, language is seen as instrumental in constructing the reality it describes, which is essential to understanding how meaning and identity are formed in international relations (Weaver, 2001: 24). Discourse in this framework, defines the boundaries of knowledge and action, as Foucault (1974: 38) argues, by establishing what can be considered "truth" within specific contexts. This process both highlights certain narratives and dismisses others, which ultimately influence social realities and foreign policy decisions (Glassner & Fuchshuber, 2023: 47). Poststructuralism, therefore shifts focus from language as a communicative tool to its role in constructing norms and identities. Through discourse, language has the power to legitimize or delegitimize actions and identities, making it central to international relations (Hansen, 2012: 94-95; van Hulst et al., 2024: 5). All entities, whether natural, social, or cultural, derive their significance through specific discourses. This shapes and constructs social relations and political identities in meaningful ways (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985: 96). Through these structures, discourse channels power, ideology, and resistance across policy, politics, and society, shaping and reflecting social realities. Through discourse, then, we can examine how societal norms and identities become legitimized or contested.

Floating signifiers

It is within the poststructural discourse theory framework that Laclau (2005) introduces the concept of floating signifiers. A floating signifier exists across multiple contrasting discourses and holds a place within different symbolic frameworks tied to competing political

agendas. These signifiers are flexible elements that are not tied to any specific ideology, which makes them open to different interpretations. Their meaning becomes fully apparent only when tied to particular contexts (Nabers, 2015: 115; Bergström & Ekström, 2018: 261). Floating signifiers, therefore, offer a valuable framework for analyzing how meaning is constructed and fixed (Raptopoulou & Munhall, 2024: 1697-98). If the meaning of the signifier eventually appears stable or defined, this is a result of a dominant discourse that has managed to establish hegemony. By doing so, it has suppressed rival discourses and alternative interpretations, stabilizing the meaning of the signifier. The concept often refers to a specific historical moment where a particular signifier, situated between multiple conflicting and hegemonic projects, becomes a tool in the struggle to establish the "correct" worldview. As noted by Laclau, floating signifiers primarily arise during periods of organic crisis, historical phases when foundational symbolic structures are deeply contested and ultimately reconfigured (Farkas & Schou, 2018: 302; Mijailoff & Burns, 2023: 2). Ultimately, this concept opens up for understanding how hegemonic discourses evolve over time and how they exercise power over individuals, particularly through governing political institutions (van Hulst et al., 2024: 4).

Hegemony

Power is central to discourse theory, but not merely as a repressive force. As Foucault (1984: 61) argues, power operates as a "productive network" embedded in society. It shapes what is deemed acceptable to say or do, influencing perceptions of normality and truth. Power is relational, requiring both an agent who exercises it and a collective endorsement of certain interpretations, such as those surrounding democracy, war, or policy. Even high-ranking officials, such as presidents or prime ministers, rely on the recognition of their legitimacy to wield influence since their authority depends on the audience's acceptance of their perspectives. In light of this, power is less an absolute force and more a temporary hegemony that facilitates policymaking (Ostermann & Sjöstedt, 2023: 106-107).

Poststructural discourse theory emphasizes that the struggle for hegemony is inherent to every society and this shapes the landscape of political relations. The poststructuralist conception of hegemony begins with the ontological premise that the social sphere is characterized by an inherent excess of meaning. No single articulation of social order can fully encompass the infinite possibilities of meaning available within a given context.

Consequently, the discursive field is marked by an unbounded play of differences that undermines attempts at totalization (Leek & Morozov, 2018: 128). Building on Gramsci, it is suggested that hegemony emerges when a group's particular interests are presented as universal, which gathers approval from other groups (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2018: 195). This struggle not only entails the formation of new identities but also, as Foucault argues, the contestation of which identities gain dominance. Hegemony here is a productive power relation, constructing identities within a societal framework rather than acting as an external force (Griggs & Howarth, 2011: 220). Poststructuralist thought emphasizes that hegemony offers a degree of stability, although always temporary, relative, and contested. It involves the creation of universality out of a multitude of particularities, where one articulation of "society" becomes universally valid, even as alternative perspectives challenge its dominance (Mijailoffa & Burns, 2023: 2).

The success of a political project relies on how well it aligns with a society's established norms and practices (Laclau, 2000: 82). While crises disrupt the current order, they cannot entirely erase it. Instead, these moments of rupture expose the fragmentation of the self and necessitate the reconfiguration of existing discursive formations (Nabers, 2015: 152; Leek & Morozov, 2018: 130). Re-establishing hegemony involves recreating a universal framework which enables actors to navigate between right and wrong. These frameworks establish concepts like the "common good" or collective interests which outline political boundaries and construct identities that make it possible to take political action (Leek & Morozov, 2018: 131).

The formation of new hegemonies depends on merging mainstream political discourses into a relatively coherent narrative that reduces dislocation by offering a sense-making framework. This process often involves formal institutional steps to consolidate the decision (Leek & Morozov, 2018: 132). Hegemonic articulations bridge everyday common sense with universal principles while preserving the possibility for alternative interpretations within the broader discursive field. When the range between possible meanings in a discourse is reduced, hegemony is established (Bergström, Ekström, Boréus, 2017: 215). Although decisions cannot completely eliminate dislocation, they bind political actors to particular courses of action (Nabers, 2015: 121; Leek & Morozov, 2018: 135).

Identity

In poststructuralism, identity is seen as inherently relational, shaping national discourse and influencing foreign policy (Weaver, 2001: 24). States and actors define and negotiate their identities in relation to others, constructing representations of themselves and others through discourse. In turn, do these representations influence foreign policy by framing how interests and relationships are understood (Glassner & Fuchshuber, 2023: 46). In this context is identity not a static attribute but a fluid and contingent construct that is continuously redefined through discourse and subject to reinterpretation. Although cultural traditions provide continuity, they only gain relevance when they are actively constructed and maintained through discourse (Ostermann, 2019: 13-14). With this, poststructuralism emphasizes that identities and interests in foreign policy are not fixed but continually rearticulated within discourse. This enables their ongoing redefinition rather than being stable or given.

In conclusion, poststructural discourse theory offers a dynamic framework for understanding foreign policy by emphasizing the fluid and constructed nature of meaning, identity, and power. It challenges traditional approaches by emphasizing the constructed nature of identity and the foundational role of discourse. Through its focus on language, poststructuralism sheds light on how this shapes and legitimizes identity and foreign policy action. In this view, foreign policy is not seen as simply a response to fixed interests but as a dynamic process shaped by continuously shifting identities and discursive practices. The theory underscores the contested and contingent nature of social order and political power by exploring concepts such as floating signifiers and the constant struggle of discursive hegemony. With this, Laclau and Mouffe's notion of discourse theory provides a useful lens for understanding the processes and hegemonic struggles that inherently construct identity. It reveals how moments of dislocation can disrupt established discourses, enabling rearticulations that redefine norms, identities, and policy directions. As a result, the theory allows for a deeper exploration of how foreign policies are rationalized, justified, and enacted within specific discursive contexts (Agius, 2011: 376).

4 Methodology

This methodology section outlines the interpretive framework and poststructuralist lens guiding this thesis. It explains how discourse analysis is used to explore the construction and transformation of meanings in Swedish elite discourse surrounding NATO membership. Additionally, it explains the specific analytical choices, materials, and processes used to identify and examine key floating signifiers and their role in shaping foreign policy debates during two critical periods, 2014 and 2022. By doing so, this section sets the framework for the exploration of the research question: why Sweden applied for NATO membership in 2022, despite its long held identity as non-aligned?

4.1 Interpretivism as a Research Tradition

The interpretivist research tradition seeks to uncover the underlying meanings, experiences, and values embedded within societies and cultures. From an ontological perspective, this tradition views reality as a socially constructed phenomenon in which individuals are inherently embedded within a shared framework. This is complemented by an epistemological approach that emphasizes understanding the social world from an internal perspective (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012: 46). By focusing on the subjective and socially constructed aspects of human experience, interpretivism offers a nuanced lens for interpreting reality and allows for capturing a broad spectrum of people, places, events, and texts, thereby embracing diverse perspectives. Its emphasis on "the meanings that shape actions and institutions" challenges simplistic cause-and-effect explanations for social phenomena, which is suitable for the aim of this thesis (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012: 47).

This research tradition does, however, put great responsibility on the researcher and requires detailed knowledge about the discursive and political setting that is studied (Halperin & Heath, 2017: 344). In order to avoid cherry-picking material to support the arguments made, it is essential for the researcher to have an honest approach to the material. By acknowledging the challenges inherent in knowledge production, one can strive for transparency by employing reflexive practices to examine and clarify the processes. Instead of being confined by what one can observe, interpretive researchers remain critically aware of the limitations of partial knowledge and the coexistence of multiple perspectives. While challenges cannot be

fully eliminated, they can be recognized, engaged with, and analyzed. Reflexivity plays a key role as it allows the researcher to examine their interpretations and question what might be absent or unspoken in their material and explore how that shapes the findings (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012: 111-112).

Building on the interpretivist tradition's focus on the socially constructed nature of reality, poststructural thought, and discourse analysis emerge as critical methods for examining how meanings are produced and sustained. These approaches emphasize the inherently discursive nature of both social phenomena and the methods used to study them. Discourse analysis is challenging both in theory and method since it relies on pre-existing ideas about the nature of things in the world. In order to create trustworthiness and reliability in the research, it must differentiate itself from other methods while addressing the limits and possibilities that shape its empirical findings (Marttila, 2018: 91). Inspired by Evans and Reids (2014) in their preface to the book *Resilient Life*, this thesis will depart from a few guidelines in terms of how to maintain reflexivity in the research process.

- (1) Always challenge what remains unquestioned in existing understandings of a phenomenon.
- (2) The environment the research is conducted within is not regarded as fixed and closed, but rather open and flexible.
- (3) There is no neutral or objective perspective in viewing the world. All interpretations are influenced by biases, such as cultural, personal, historical, and ideological influences. This both enables and limits possible reflections.
- (4) As Foucault notes, we must abandon the expectation of ever attaining complete and definitive knowledge since interpretation is “a never ending task” (Marttila, 2018: 95).
- (5) There is no ultimate or original reality to interpret. What is being studied has already been constructed before the examination, and the discourse analysis is an empirical reconstruction. In light of this, it is crucial for the researcher to acknowledge that they are shaped by the very phenomena they study. We can never fully place ourselves outside it.

4.2 Discourse Analysis

This section explores the methodology used to examine changes in the discourse surrounding Swedish policy over time, as well as their impact on the decision to pursue membership. This thesis adopts a poststructuralist lens to explore how discourse not only reflects but actively constructs identity and foreign policy, making discourse analysis a logical, methodological choice. Through this, it is possible to examine how dominant discourses are both maintained and contested by opposing perspectives, as well as how certain interpretations gain hegemonic power and become “common sense” to us (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002: 25-26). Since poststructuralism views material reality as shaped by discourse, there is no separate "extra-discursive" reality against which the truth of representations can be tested. Instead of assessing whether a representation is accurate, it is found more relevant to consider the political implications of adopting a particular representation (Hansen, 2012: 103).

Discourse analysis provides a critical framework for examining policymaking processes and their outcomes. Drawing on theories of ideology, power, and the philosophy of language, it operates on the foundational idea that “relationships between human beings and the world are mediated by collectively created symbolic meaning systems or knowledge structures” (van Hulst et al., 2024: 4-5). By focusing on shifts within discourses, it can reveal how policymakers adjust their representations in response to current events. This approach provides researchers with tools to interpret how relationships of truth, power, and dominance are both constructed and maintained. With this approach does discourse analysis emphasize the role of discourse as a linguistic construct as well as as a structuring force that shapes foreign policy practices. These practices, in turn, reinforce specific "truths" and norms within policy contexts (van Hulst et al., 2024: 4). Viewed through a poststructuralist lens then, discourse analysis enables a deeper exploration of meaning-making, intersubjective relationships, and the establishment of discursive hegemony. This approach is particularly valuable for understanding how foreign policy shifts occur as new hegemonic discourses emerge, aligning with poststructural perspectives on the mechanisms of political change (Hansen, 2008: 105).

This makes discourse analysis a powerful tool for revealing the structured constraints shaping foreign policy by analyzing public statements, norms, and relationships (Weaver, 2001: 27). Foreign policy discourse is closely linked to foundational concepts such as identity and

nation, which shape policy debates. To achieve discursive hegemony, politicians need to employ language and narratives that resonate within the political consciousness, thereby framing debates in ways that reflect and reinforce shared understandings (Weaver, 2001: 30). As a result, policy debates are not random or purely spontaneous, but emerge from a structured yet adaptable system of concepts and norms that both guide and constrain the policymaking process. Discourse analysis offers a nuanced perspective, highlighting the interplay between identity and political decision-making. By treating discourse as a coherent and meaningful unit of analysis, one can gain insights into what shapes policy decisions, such as the decision by Sweden to join NATO.

Privileged storytellers

A key question in discussions of power is who holds the authority to narrate the widely accepted, recognized, or considered legitimate stories within a given context. As discussed in the theory section, discourse analysis examines how people interpret their social world and investigates how discourse actively shapes and constructs that world. In doing so, it designates specific individuals as “privileged storytellers ...to whom narrative authority is granted” (Campbell in Milliken, 1999: 236). In foreign policy, discourse analysis investigates how an elite’s “regime of truth” enables certain state actions while dismissing others as irrational, unfeasible, or inappropriate (Milliken, 1999: 236). Within specific discursive formations, storytellers engage in strategic discursive actions, competing for hegemony by presenting the problem and policy in an alternative way. This influence extends beyond official contexts, also influencing everyday life and shaping a societal “common sense” (Glassner & Fuchshuber, 2023: 46-47).

Based on these theoretical underpinnings, this thesis argues that Swedish politicians occupy the role of such "privileged storytellers" in the NATO debate. They have a unique power to frame and influence public opinion on NATO membership. This includes members of the *Riksdag* and representatives from various political parties, who shape discourse through policy statements, media engagements, debates, and official communications. By controlling the discourses surrounding NATO membership, these storytellers influence Sweden’s foreign policy and notions of national identity and security. While diverse factors influence these articulations, this thesis emphasizes their role in shaping hegemonic language that leads to foreign policy decisions, as opposed to exploring the personal motivations of individual

leaders (Leek & Morozov, 2018: 133-134).

While other actors, such as the media, can also be argued to occupy the role of privileged storytellers and would certainly make for an interesting study, they are not the subject of analysis in this thesis. This decision is based on two reasons. Firstly, focusing on political elites provides a more focused study, allowing for a more detailed examination of their unique discursive power in shaping foreign policy. Secondly, political elites hold a formal and institutionalized role in decision-making processes, which gives them direct influence over policy outcomes in ways that other actors, such as the media or civil society, do not. By focusing the analysis on the political elite, the thesis seeks to uncover the direct mechanisms by which elite discourse presents NATO membership within Sweden's political and social context. The following section will further explain how this framework will be applied to answer the research question of this thesis.

Research design

To help guide the analysis and explore how NATO membership was discursively constructed, this thesis departs from the concept of floating signifiers. As explained in the theory section, the concept derives from Laclau and Mouffes's poststructural discourse theory. It is an analytical tool through which we can examine the ongoing process of meaning-making and identity formation. Floating signifiers are seen as flexible signs caught in a constant push-and-pull, whose meanings remain flexible and open to interpretation. They are elements within a discourse that are particularly debated and can be understood in various ways, meaning they can be claimed and reshaped by competing political agendas that seek to control their meaning in different times (Bergström, Ekström, Boréus, 2017: 214; Griggs & Howarth, 2019: 113-114). Floating signifiers reflect the poststructuralist view of identity as fluid and context-dependent, shaped by historical, social, and discursive forces. As such, they are crucial for analyzing language, ideology, power dynamics, and identity formation in societies. This thesis examines how contested interpretations of floating signifiers in Swedish elite discourse surrounding NATO reveal underlying hegemonic struggles. By doing so, it seeks to understand how these discursive dynamics enabled Sweden's significant foreign policy shift.

The analysis focuses on Swedish hegemonic discourse, examining how storytellers articulate

and legitimize policy decisions using specific floating signifiers. When doing so, specific analytical choices need to be made. This includes identifying what Hansen (2006) calls "key representations" or what Laclau and Mouffe (1985) refer to as "nodal points", which are central ideas that influence discussions surrounding a foreign policy issue. Although identifying these representations can sometimes be straightforward, it often requires careful analysis to determine which representations have the greatest impact in "structuring" the discourse. Important to note here is that the most significant representations are not necessarily the most frequently used terms, but instead those that reveal the essential links between representations and policies. These representations serve as foundational "building blocks" around which different interpretations are organized. From this base, one can analyze how variations in discourse develop and explore the specific policies each representation allows within a given context (Hansen 2008: 103).

The signifiers were located through an abductive approach to Swedish elite discourse in 2014 and 2022. The abductive process involves the researcher moving back and forth in the material. This process does not occur in distinct steps but is more of a simultaneous engagement, where the researcher explores both empirical evidence and theoretical insights in tandem. Unlike deduction and induction, which follow a linear, step-by-step progression, abduction is more dynamic and circular. This requires engaging with multiple elements at once, leading to a pattern that feels more like a spiral than a straight line (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012: 27-28). This involves analyzing patterns in argumentation and tracing the presence and impact of specific discursive formations over time, with a particular focus on shifts in security perceptions and recommendations for foreign policy actions in 2014 and 2022. The abductive analysis of the Swedish foreign policy discourse in 2014 and 2022 identifies four different floating signifiers in the Swedish elite discourse: *democracy*, *security*, *stability*, and *solidarity*. These signifiers were clearly identified as the sites for primary debate and emerged as central to the discourse since they repeatedly appeared in the political debates and policy documents, which reflects key priorities and tensions in Swedish foreign policy. In contrast, other potential signifiers were excluded because they did not serve as primary sites for debate or key representations of discursive tensions. For instance, while terms such as "neutrality" and "peace" were present, they were less contested and did not

play as significant a role in shaping the overarching discourse. This process ensured a focus on the most influential signifiers shaping the foreign policy debates in 2014 and 2022.

This discursive approach enables two interconnected types of analysis in a two step process. First, the main discourses that legitimize/delegitimize the different policy approaches will be examined in detail. Second, by examining the hegemonic struggle over these discourses we will explore how a particular context was created in 2022, one where Sweden had the ability to approach membership. The table below presents an overview of the floating signifiers identified in the empirical data, which will serve as the foundation for the analysis.

Table 1. Examples of floating signifiers

Floating signifiers	2014	2022
Democracy	Membership hinders Sweden from working globally for democracy, justice, rights, peace, and prosperity.	Sweden has a democratic responsibility to join and fight for democracy.
Security	Military non-alignment contributes to stability and security. Membership would escalate the security situation.	Membership is the only way to keep Western Europe together, and Swedish security will be strengthened by joining.
Stability	Membership will destabilize Europe as well as Swedish identity.	Membership is crucial for stability in the surrounding region and a natural continuation of Swedish foreign policy.
Solidarity	Passive solidarity. Solidarity means upholding a non-aligned Nordic identity.	Active Solidarity. Solidarity means actively engaging in collective defense.

4.3 Material

In examining the shifts in Sweden's political discourse, this thesis analyses key documents, including parliamentary debates, government white papers, political speeches, and media statements, adopting a broad interpretation of “texts.” Recognizing that more formal documents such as government reports and white papers often are carefully edited, political debates offer valuable insights into the Swedish case. These forms of discourse provide a more direct view of discursive shifts, reflecting changing attitudes, current concerns, and

evolving political narratives (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2018: 186). The main material, the political debates, was sourced from the publicly accessible digital archives of the *Riksdag*, which provide comprehensive protocols for parliamentary debates. A systematic keyword search was conducted to identify protocols that were relevant to the thesis. The search terms used included "NATO," "NATO membership," "Ukraine," "Russia," "neutrality," "military non-alignment," and "military alignment." These terms were selected to encompass a wide range of discourse surrounding military alliances, geopolitical positioning, and policy stances. The protocols were then carefully reviewed to identify floating signifiers. These signifiers then formed the basis for a detailed analysis, examining how privileged storytellers interpret and debate these signifiers in Sweden's foreign policy. The material used in this thesis has been translated from Swedish to English with the help of AI tools, and the author has controlled and adjusted the translations. The original quotes can be found in the Appendix.

This material enables an in-depth analysis of the shifts in Sweden's security discourse between 2014 and 2022. The years were specifically selected for their significance in relation to external pressures on Sweden since poststructural discourse theory asserts that floating signifiers primarily arise during periods of crisis when foundational symbolic structures are deeply contested. The annexation of Crimea in February 2014 marked a significant shift in the security dynamics of Europe, which sparked widespread debate about NATO in Sweden throughout the whole year, which is why the entire year will be examined. To ensure full transparency, it is necessary to address a reservation regarding one of the debates included in the 2014 material. The debate referenced as "2014/15:50" occurred on January 22, 2015. While this debate technically took place in early 2015, it is part of the parliamentary year of 2014. As such, it can be viewed as a continuation of discussions established in the fall of 2014. The decision to include this debate in the analysis stems from its relevance to the study. It addresses issues regarding NATO and security policy that were central in 2014 and is, therefore, representative of the political elite's discourse during this period. In line with this reasoning, the debate is considered relevant to the research question.

The invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 reopened the discussion of NATO membership and Sweden's position within a changed geopolitical landscape. By focusing on the months of January to May in 2022 allows for an in-depth examination of the intensified debates that led

to Sweden's decision to apply for NATO membership on May 18, 2022. Discourse analysis focuses on the construction, development, and impact of language in specific contexts rather than following uniform chronological timespans. The selected time periods reflect the moments when discourses relevant to Sweden's NATO membership were most active and influential. This captures critical debates preceding the official application, and these timeframes were chosen to align with the thesis's focus on pre-application discourse rather than post-admission developments. Since the focus is on understanding the transformation of discourses, more than focusing on quantitative comparison, this thesis argues that varying time frames do not compromise the trustworthiness of the analysis. Instead, they enable the thesis to concentrate on the periods most relevant to the research question.

5 Analysis

This analysis explores the evolution of discourses surrounding NATO membership, highlighting how various articulations and the strategic use of floating signifiers shaped the debates in both 2014 and 2022. It further highlights how these discursive formations created a specific hegemonic context that facilitated the policy shift in 2022. As accounted for in the theory section, this thesis does not aim to cover all discursive practices. Instead, it seeks to identify key patterns in how these articulations function within political processes by linking diverse elements together. A poststructuralist policy analysis often finds conflicting interests and strategies, as hegemonic projects rarely follow a single unified strategy. However, the more such projects are framed as serving the common good, the more they gain acceptance. By focusing on the located floating signifiers and the ways in which certain discourses gain hegemony, this analysis illustrates how language legitimizes foreign policy decisions like NATO membership.

5.1 Democracy

2014

Sweden's military non-alignment still serves our country well. It provides a solid foundation for taking active responsibility for both our own security and that of others. Sweden should not seek NATO membership. Instead, a modern Swedish security policy should be based on increased cooperation within the Nordic region, the Baltic Sea area, the EU, and the UN (Stefan Löfven, S Government Declaration, 2014).

In the discourse of 2014, democracy and a democratic responsibility stands out as a central theme, reflecting Sweden's self-perception as a moral superpower. The signifier is presented as a cornerstone of Sweden's national identity while at the same time offering a flexible and adaptable framework for foreign policy decisions. Through the different interpretations and constructions of democracy, storytellers are able to articulate a sense of responsibility that addresses security concerns and influences national identity.

For Sweden to be a strong voice in international affairs and foreign policy contexts, it is important that the policies are coherent – that is, what is said domestically in Sweden aligns with what is conveyed abroad with a strong voice [...] For us to be this strong voice, it must also align with strong credibility in the issues I have mentioned – equality, gender equality, sustainability, and peace [...] (Carina Ohlsson, S 2014/15:20).

The discourse surrounding democracy is deeply intertwined with Sweden's historical role as a neutral and moral actor in the world. Politicians across party lines emphasize Sweden's democratic identity by portraying the nation as a mediating power that is capable of fostering peace, mutual respect, and international stability. Jakob Dalunde (MP) underscores this by arguing that NATO membership would "undermine Sweden's ability to be an independent and constructive mediating party" (2014/15:50). Similarly, Kenneth G. Forslund (S) highlights the inconsistency of aligning with an alliance whose strategic planning involves nuclear weapons by arguing that such a move would contradict Sweden's commitment to the democratic values of disarmament and peace (2014/15:36). Situated in this context, democracy becomes tied to neutrality and credibility, values that enable Sweden to act as a diplomatic bridge instead of aligning with military alliances.

These democratic principles not only function as a domestic value but also as a global responsibility. Margot Wallström articulates this connection by asserting that "human rights [are] one of the cornerstones in Swedish foreign policy" and that foreign policy decisions must be guided by these principles (2014/15:25). Similarly, Carl Bildt emphasizes the integration of democracy into Sweden's international engagements:

Sweden's foreign policy contributes to freedom, peace, and reconciliation in our world. It is founded on the values that uphold our open society and on the interests that are our own. The work for democracy, human rights, and sustainable development permeates our country's relations with other nations and its multilateral cooperation. Our foreign policy has been shaped through broad collaboration and enjoys strong support both among the Swedish people and in this chamber [...] (Carl Bildt, M 2013/14:70).

Here, a democratic responsibility in the world is presented as something that is deeply ingrained in Swedish identity, not just for the country but also among the Swedish people. Hans Wallmark (M) reinforces this link, declaring that "for those of us who stand up for

freedom, democracy, and human rights, Ukraine's cause is our cause”, emphasizing Sweden’s solidarity with those fighting for democratic freedoms (2013/14:86).

Despite the shared emphasis on democracy, there is a visible push and pull in how this democratic responsibility is interpreted by the storytellers, revealing the floating nature of the signifier. There appears to be a shared view regarding Sweden’s responsibility to contribute to and uphold democratic values, peace, and security in the world. However, whether this should be done in cooperation with NATO or not seems to lack consensus. The 2014 discourse also ties democracy to Sweden’s role to a broader European framework, with storytellers like Carl Bildt (M) situating democracy within the context of European unity. Here, the European Union, and not NATO, is presented as the primary platform for promoting democratic values as well as ensuring regional security.

Sweden shall be an active part of a strong, united, and open Europe – a Europe that stands firm in its work for freedom, peace, and democracy, for human rights, and for economic development (Carl Bildt, M 2013/14:70).

This European focus further underscores the contested nature of democracy in Sweden’s foreign policy. While NATO membership is proposed for investigation, it is not widely seen as a viable option. Instead, Sweden’s contributions to peace, security, and democracy are presented through non-military means, such as economic aid, trade, and multilateral cooperation between the EU and the United Nations. The Swedish Armed Forces are positioned defensively, tasked with preventing war and addressing threats to Swedish, Nordic, and European security. While democracy is universally valued, the tools for upholding it are a source of debate, illustrating the push-and-pull dynamics of the signifier.

There is a desire to break with the Swedish tradition that has made our country strong. We take responsibility not only for what happens within our borders but also for events in the world. It would be regrettable if we abandoned that idea (Johan Forsell, M 2014/15:25).

Democracy is also presented as being under threat in an increasingly unstable world and in need of protection through collective action within frameworks such as NATO. In this articulation is democratic responsibility not portrayed as a departure from the values that have defined Sweden’s foreign policy in the past, but rather a continuation of these values.

This further reflects the ongoing tensions in Sweden's approach, as the strategies to uphold democracy, whether military or non-military, remain fluid and contested.

The discourse in 2014 illustrates the flexibility of democracy as a floating signifier. It anchors Sweden's identity as a moral superpower and serves as a guiding principle for its foreign policy. However, the lack of a discursive hegemony does leave its meaning open to competing interpretations. For some storytellers, democracy aligns with neutrality and non-alignment, emphasizing diplomacy and solidarity. For others, a global democratic responsibility implies taking a more proactive role in ensuring international peace, like strengthening the partnership with NATO.

2022

In 2022, the discourse illustrates how democracy is constructed and reconstructed to align with competing political agendas, reflecting both continuity and transformation in Sweden's foreign policy identity.

In foreign policy, Sweden will continue to be a strong actor with both freedom of action and power of action in the future. Our country has a long history of standing up for international law, human rights, and gender equality. That is also our future [...] (Magdalena Andersson, S 2021/22:114).

Much like in 2014 is democracy emphasized as a core element of Sweden's identity and international role. What becomes interesting in the 2022 discourse is that NATO is now being presented as "the defense alliance of the free and democratic world" (Ebba Busch, KD 2021/22:114), and membership, to a greater extent, is linked to Sweden's long-standing tradition of supporting democracy, human rights, and international law. Statements by storytellers like Hans Wallmark (M) and Ebba Busch (KD) argue that joining NATO is a "democratic responsibility" in the face of Russian aggression, portraying it as an extension of Sweden's historical commitment to defending democratic values. For example, Wallmark asserts, "Sweden should be ready to help when European democracy is threatened," positioning NATO membership as essential to safeguarding not only European stability but also Sweden's moral authority as a promoter of democracy (2021/22:67).

I will just conclude by saying that Ukraine's fight for freedom is our fight for freedom. It is as simple as that, they are interconnected. We must understand that it is democracy at stake, nothing else (Lars Thomson, C 2021/22:67).

Ukraine's fight for freedom is also presented as synonymous with Sweden's own democratic ideals. For Sweden, this underscores the idea that standing with Ukraine is also an act of self-preservation for its own democratic principles. This positions NATO membership not just as a strategic or security decision but as a moral obligation tied to the defense of democracy.

These are the kinds of times that define us as a country and as citizens. It is now that we are being judged (Hans Wallmark, M 2021/22:67).

This shifts the conversation from pragmatic concerns to ideological ones, by making NATO membership more a matter of principle rather than policy. The emphasis on Sweden's role as a moral superpower implies a special responsibility to protect and uphold democratic values in the world, which is an image that fits well with its strong foreign policy identity as a small state with great normative power.

We are not alone in our view of democracy and human freedoms and rights but share it with others, not least with other European nations and the USA. Therefore, the step toward NATO membership is a natural one to take (Hans Wallmark, M 2021/22:116).

One interesting finding is that many storytellers effectively articulate NATO membership not as a break from Sweden's foreign policy identity but as an extension of its democratic commitments. With this, membership is presented as a logical evolution of its normative commitment to democracy and its moral obligation to counteract threats to the European security order. The discourse also connects democracy with a shared Western identity, as Jimmie Åkesson (SD) states, "This is about the ability of Western democracies to stand up for themselves", suggesting a redefinition of democracy from an abstract ideal to a practical commitment to collective defense and solidarity among democratic states (2021/22:75).

Despite the dominance of articulations in favor of membership, opposing voices persist in 2022, which reflects the contested nature of democracy as a floating signifier. Critics of

NATO membership argue that aligning with an organization that includes authoritarian-leaning states like Türkiye poses a threat to democratic principles. This resistance is mainly coming from the left party, with Nooshi Dadgostar (V) warning that NATO membership could compromise Sweden's independent voice and weaken its ability to promote democracy and human rights globally, an argument also visible in the 2014 debate (2021/22:114). Opposition discourse also frames military non-alignment as essential to Sweden's success in fostering democracy and peace. Lotta Fornarve (V) argues that Sweden's 200 years of military non-alignment demonstrate the effectiveness of diplomacy over militarization in upholding democratic values (2021/22:67). These critiques represent an alternative construction of democracy, where independence and peacebuilding are prioritized over alignment with a military alliance. However, while these voices highlight the continued discursive struggle, this discourse is seemingly less influential in the 2022 debates compared to 2014.

5.2 Security

2014

The government's assessment is that our current security policy line and the collaborations I described best serve Sweden's interests. An investigation into Swedish NATO membership would create unnecessary uncertainty and polarization in an already uncertain situation [...] (Margot Wallström, S 2014/15:50).

In 2014, there is a visible political resistance to NATO membership. Security is a central argument in this resistance, with NATO membership being presented as a destabilizing force. Instead, Sweden's current security policy, grounded in neutrality and cooperation through existing alliances, is articulated as the most effective means of safeguarding national interests. Jakop Dalunde (MP) illustrates this perspective, asserting that while Sweden should maintain a cooperative relationship with NATO as a partner, membership would "contribute to the escalation of the security situation" (2014/15:50). Here, security is defined not through increased militarization or alliances but through stability and de-escalation, achieved by holding onto Sweden's traditional non-alignment policy.

Many storytellers emphasize multilateral cooperation within already established frameworks, such as the EU, the UN, and Nordic partnerships, particularly with Finland. These alliances

are presented as sufficient for ensuring Sweden's security without the need for NATO membership. Security is portrayed as collective yet rooted in Sweden's historical and regional commitments, emphasizing that cooperation with NATO should remain a partnership instead of full membership in order to avoid provoking aggression. This perspective aligns with Margot Wallström's long-term security approach, which includes maintaining a stable relationship with Russia. Wallström suggests that Sweden's security depends on fostering regional stability, stating that security is presented to be achieved through a long-term perspective in Sweden's relation to Russia (2014/15:50).

[...] It is irresponsible to even talk about moving closer to NATO when it is so clear that Russia is following an imperialist doctrine. This may very well have been a decisive factor for their interventions in both Ukraine and Georgia (Jeff Ahl, SD 2014/15:36).

As discussed, a significant strand of the discourse presents NATO membership as a potential security threat instead of a safeguard. Jeff Ahl (SD) argues it would be irresponsible for Sweden to join NATO, referencing Russian aggression toward Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014, both of which were getting closer to NATO at the time. This argument positions Sweden's non-alignment as a buffer against becoming a target for Russian hostility, with NATO membership framed as a provocation rather than a deterrent.

There is actually only one actor that can provide Sweden with those security guarantees, and that is NATO (Johan Forsell, M 2014/15:25).

It is important to note that some storytellers, though a minority, present security in a different light. In these presentations, Nordic cooperation is regarded as insufficient in order to meet Sweden's security needs. Instead, NATO is portrayed not simply as an alternative, but as the only credible solution for ensuring the nation's long-term security. However, such articulations are far less common, with NATO membership largely dismissed as an unlikely option that is misaligned with Swedish national identity during this period.

2022

In the beginning of 2022, the Social Democrats and other critics of NATO membership grounded security in Sweden's historical policy of military non-alignment, similar to the

discourse found in 2014. This presented non-alignment as a stabilizing force that had ensured Sweden's peace and safety for over two centuries.

Sweden has been safe for two hundred years because we have been militarily non-aligned. That is why the security policy line must remain – today, tomorrow, and for a long time to come (Håkan Svenneling, V 2021/22:58).

Security is tied to continuity, predictability, and Sweden's ability to avoid engagement in military alliances. Ann Linde (S) similarly reinforces this position, claiming that military non-alignment is “a secure line that keeps Sweden out of war” (2021/22:58). This presents non-alignment as a deliberate and responsible choice that minimizes risks of escalation while maintaining Sweden's role as a peaceful actor on the global stage.

However, the Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, marked a turning point in Sweden's security discourse. The Social Democrats, led by Magdalena Andersson, began to rearticulate security in a way that legitimized NATO membership.

On February 24th this year, a new and dark chapter in European history began. [...] The European security order, on which Sweden bases its security, is under attack (Magdalena Andersson, S 2021/22:114).

This points to new discursive formations where the meaning of security is being redefined. Instead of being anchored in non-alignment, security now becomes more synonymous with collective defense and formal guarantees provided by NATO. Sweden's vulnerability outside NATO is also emphasized, illustrated by this statement:

If Sweden were to become the only EU country in the Baltic Sea region that is not a NATO member, we would find ourselves in a very vulnerable position (Magdalena Andersson, S 2021/22:114).

This articulation established a new relationship between security and NATO membership. Relying on non-alignment was no longer sufficient, instead, Sweden needed NATO's Article 5 security guarantees to address the growing military threat from Russia. As Magdalena Andersson states, “The best thing for our country's security is, therefore, for Sweden to seek NATO membership, and to do so now, together with Finland” (Magdalena Andersson, S 2021/22:114).

February 24 and Russia's invasion of Ukraine have fundamentally changed our security policy conditions. The security situation for us has seriously deteriorated. The military threat is tangible. Ultimately, this is about the safety and security of Sweden and the Swedish people [...] (Jimmie Åkesson, SD 2021/22:114).

This represents a fundamental turning point, presenting NATO membership as a matter of immediate safety. Now, the emphasis shifts from the perceived risks of NATO membership to the risks of not joining NATO, with Russia's aggression serving as a central argument. Supporters of NATO membership across party lines emphasized the idea of security as collective deterrence, framing NATO membership as the best path to ensuring safety. As Ebba Busch (KD) states, "The best way to address this threat is to build collective security together with our friends around the Baltic Sea (2021/22:114). This presents NATO as a realistic and necessary solution to Sweden's deteriorating security environment. By aligning with NATO, Sweden could enhance its defense capabilities, reduce regional tensions, and ensure long-term security for both itself and its neighbors.

Swedish NATO membership would raise the threshold for military conflicts, thus providing a deterrent effect in Northern Europe. There are no other realistic alternatives. It is a real strength that the security policy committee is unequivocal on this point. The serious security situation requires collective security guarantees. Swedish NATO membership is necessary for our security and for Sweden's best (Annie Lööf, C 2021/22:114).

In 2014, a discursive hegemony positioned NATO as a potentially destabilizing force, reflecting concerns about its role in the geopolitical balance. By 2022, however, a shift in discourse rearticulated NATO as a provider of security and stability, offering clarity in an increasingly uncertain political landscape. While non-alignment previously was seen as the cornerstone of Sweden's security policy, its relevance and effectiveness were now being questioned. Hans Wallmark (M) explicitly challenges the purpose of non-alignment, labeling it "dangerous" in the absence of a clear security policy rationale (2021/22:67). This illustrates how the meaning of security was being actively rearticulated.

The discourse in 2022 clearly highlights the signifier's contested nature. Within the Social Democrats, for instance, Ann Linde initially reaffirmed the security provided by Sweden's military non-alignment, close cooperation with NATO, and strong defense (2021/22:58). This

was also echoed by Magdalena Andersson (S), stating that “NATO membership would destabilize the security situation” (Magdalena Andersson, SVT 8/3 2022). However, as seen, the Social Democrats later adopted a markedly different stance, presenting NATO as a provider of security, stating that “Sweden needs the formal security guarantees that come with NATO membership” (Magdalena Andersson, S 2021/22:114). The evolving use of security within the Social Democratic Party itself illustrates the fluidity of the term and how its meaning is reshaped in response to external pressures. By spring 2022, the Social Democrats had completed the decisive U-turn, and a new hegemonic security discourse could be distinguished.

5.3 Stability

2014

In 2014, stability emerge as a central floating signifier within the Swedish discourse. In this context, stability is articulated as a cornerstone of Sweden's security policy, closely linked to its historical tradition of neutrality and non-alignment. The discursive construction of stability is tied to the absence of military conflict and the preservation of Sweden’s identity and long-held foreign policy principles.

It is important that we act in a way that contributes to de-escalation and stability. We should not contribute to escalation, which increases the risk of conflict or incidents [...] (Jakop Dalunde, MP 2014/15:41).

A recurring theme in the 2014 debates is the presentation of stability as synonymous with military non-alignment. This articulation emphasizes that Sweden’s neutrality contributes to regional balance, minimizes the risk of conflict, and aligns with Sweden’s tradition of diplomacy and mediation. For instance, Jakop Dalunde (MP) argues that actions contributing to de-escalation and diplomacy, rather than military alliances, are crucial for maintaining stability (2014/15:50).

In Northern Europe, we are partly responsible for the balance of power. A situation is now being built where we have an aggressive Russian state on one side and NATO on the other. Russia has not spoken particularly positively about Sweden and Finland joining NATO. Therefore, from a de-escalation perspective, it is irresponsible to join NATO (Jeff Ahl, SD 2014/15:20).

Similarly, Jeff Ahl (SD) invokes the “balance of power” narrative by claiming that NATO membership would destabilize Northern Europe and provoke Russia, an actor perceived as increasingly hostile. The statement constructs a dichotomy where joining NATO is equated with escalation while remaining non-aligned is presented as a strategy for de-escalation. This understanding of stability positions Sweden as an actor that upholds stability through its role as a mediator rather than aligning with military alliances. Åsa Lindestam (S) reinforces this view by tying stability to Sweden’s proud history of promoting peace, trade, and collaboration through the United Nations (2014/15:39). These statements construct an identity for Sweden that emphasizes moral leadership and responsible international engagement without the need for NATO membership.

We do not change our security or defense policy overnight [...] (Karin Enström, M 2014/15:36).

Another significant aspect of the discourse is the linkage between stability and the continuity of Sweden’s historical security policy. Karin Enström (M) and Peter Hultqvist (S) emphasize the importance of broad political consensus and cautious changes in defense policy. Hultqvist explicitly warns that even investigating NATO membership would signal a “fundamental shift” in Sweden’s stance, which could undermine the stability of its foreign policy framework (2014/15:25). Stability, therefore, is portrayed as following the established norms, processes, and values that have defined Sweden’s identity on the global stage for a long time.

In every situation, the government has to decide what is best for the country. We do not waver in our judgment. Sweden's security policy line is fixed. In the government statement, the Prime Minister said that the military's freedom of alliance still serves our country well (Margot Wallström, S 2014/15:50).

The emphasis on tradition as a source of stability reflects a hegemonic discourse that ties national security to maintaining Sweden’s non-alignment. In this articulation, stability is less

about immediate security concerns and more about safeguarding the coherence and continuity of Sweden's identity as a neutral and peace-oriented nation.

Despite the dominance of non-alignment as the stabilizing framework, there are contestations within the discourse. Göran Pettersson (M) challenges this view by presenting NATO membership as a step toward the “normalization” of Swedish security policy in line with other EU member states (2014/15:20). This articulation of stability shifts the focus from historical tradition to alignment with broader Western norms and collective security frameworks. However, Pettersson's narrative seems to remain marginal as it conflicts with the broader hegemonic discourse that prioritizes non-alignment as a stabilizing force. The reluctance to embrace NATO membership is further strengthened by Margot Wallström (S), who highlights practical collaboration with NATO while at the same time maintaining a non-aligned stance (2014/15:41). This strategic ambiguity allows Sweden to engage with NATO without fully committing to it, which works to preserve stability in its national identity.

2022

It would be directly irresponsible to change our security policy at this time. Like Finland, we value stability, predictability, and ensuring that everyone knows what we say and do [...] This is a responsible security policy (Ann Linde, S 2021/22:67).

In 2022, there is visible initial opposition towards membership, where Sweden's historical policy of military non-alignment is presented as synonymous with stability. In this, storytellers emphasize the advantages of predictability, continuity, and long-term consistency in foreign policy. By upholding these values, Sweden's non-alignment has historically contributed to stability in Northern Europe, and sudden shifts departing from this are presented as having the possibility of creating uncertainty and escalating tensions in the region.

The government assesses that in such a grave situation, Sweden's interests are best served by a long-term, predictable security policy. This approach has served Sweden well historically, keeping us out of armed conflicts. Opinions may differ, but the government's assessment is that consistency and predictability in security policy remain best for Sweden in the current situation (Magdalena Andersson, S 2021/22:72).

The statement by Prime Minister Andersson highlights how Sweden's history of neutrality and non-alignment is viewed as proof that stability is achieved through consistent and cautious foreign policy. This articulation highlights Sweden's history as a peaceful nation, strengthening a shared identity focused on diplomacy and the avoidance of military alliances. The emphasis on consistency as "best for Sweden in the current situation" reflects an attempt to tie stability directly to avoiding abrupt policy changes. This articulation positions continuity as both a smart choice and a stabilizing factor in an uncertain geopolitical landscape. Within this presentation is an implicit critique of alternative approaches, such as the path to membership, which could be seen as destabilizing and contribute to undermining Sweden's long-standing reputation of careful decision-making in foreign policy.

Sweden has a foreign policy line. Applying for NATO membership does not mean we are changing it (Magdalena Andersson, S 2021/22:114).

However, while initially associated with non-alignment, stability is later redefined within the Social Democratic discourse in Spring. By invoking a sense of continuity, the statement above ties NATO membership to Sweden's historical identity, allowing stability to have a flexible meaning that is contingent on context. This further showcases the fluid nature of floating signifiers, illustrating how the strategic use of these contribute to reshape established understandings through discourse.

This will make a significant difference in our defense capabilities and act as a deterrent. It reduces the risk of attacks on Sweden, Finland, and the Baltics. It stabilizes our part of the world. This is an important message for our time (Mikael Oscarsson, KD 2021/22:116).

These types of articulations are found throughout the debates, where stability is redefined to align with collective security frameworks. For these storytellers, stability is no longer

achievable through non-alignment but instead requires Sweden's integration into NATO's security structures. Mikael Oscarsson (KD) and Annie Lööf (C) present NATO membership as a stabilizing force, emphasizing the strengthening of defense capabilities, deterrence, and regional cooperation as necessary conditions for ensuring stability in the Baltic Sea region (2021/22:90; 2021/22:114).

Let me be very clear: Sweden independently chooses its security policy path forward. It is not destabilizing to make it clear in this situation that we should fully belong to the European community within NATO. Sweden should be fully included there (Mats Persson, L 2021/22:95).

This shift further highlights a rearticulation of stability in relational terms, positioning Sweden's actions within a broader regional and international security framework. Here, NATO and the EU are also presented as mutually reinforcing institutions that collectively promote stability. As Magdalena Andersson (S) states, "The EU and NATO complement each other" (2021/22:114).

Some argue that NATO membership would break with our country's foreign policy tradition. That is not true. Our non-alignment was never born out of a notion of neutrality as inherently good. It emerged pragmatically from our nation's ancient aspiration to maintain independence. Throughout history, this overarching goal - our independence - has guided us. At times, this meant choosing non-alignment, and at others, seeking alliances to counter hostile great powers. [...] Sweden's pursuit of NATO membership in response to Russia's revived imperialism is not a departure but an affirmation of our foreign policy's deepest traditions. It echoes past alliances, just as our arms support for Ukraine echoes our support for Finland during the Winter War (Ebba Busch, KD 2021/22:114).

As found in the analysis of previous signifiers, there is a notable discursive shift in 2022. In this year membership is presented as a continuity of Sweden's identity, as opposed to a deviation from its historical path, as exemplified by the above statement. Now, membership is no longer articulated as a destabilizing factor but instead linked to past events that create a sense of a stabilized identity. However, the prevalence of competing articulations opposing membership illustrates the poststructuralist understanding of discursive hegemony as inherently unstable. This opposition is primarily advocated by the Left Party and the Green Party, who still argue that NATO membership would destabilize Swedish security policy. In

this view would membership introduce a level of uncertainty and undermine Sweden's identity as a peace-oriented nation. A similar stance was evident in the 2014 debate, where these parties expressed similar concerns about NATO membership. However, while these competing articulations reflect a broader hegemonic struggle over how stability should be understood in the Swedish context, their influence does not seem to be influential on the dominant discourse.

5.4 Solidarity

2014

In the 2014 discourse, the floating signifier solidarity functions as a moral and strategic concept, deeply embedded in Sweden's identity and guiding its approach to foreign policy. It is presented as a cornerstone of Sweden's defense and security policy, reflecting both a moral imperative and a pragmatic strategy to address global and regional challenges. The discourse presents solidarity as a conflict-prevention mechanism that aligns with Sweden's national identity.

We want Sweden to act in solidarity with the world's vulnerable and war-affected people. We work in a conflict prevention way, and we focus on non-military means to create peace and spread democracy and human rights. This is how we contribute to creating a more peaceful and safer world (Jakop Dalunde, MP 2014/15:50).

Peter Hultqvist (S) expands on this concept by linking solidarity to cooperation, stating that “threats to peace and our security are best averted in community and cooperation with other countries” (2014/15:25). However, this solidarity is carefully bound within existing frameworks such as the EU, the UN, and Nordic partnerships, explicitly excluding membership in NATO as a viable space for such cooperation. This selective application underscores solidarity's contested nature and alignment with Sweden's historical commitments to neutrality and multilateralism.

A recurring theme in the discourse is the connection between solidarity and a Nordic identity. Carl Bildt (M) highlights this by emphasizing the deep ties between Sweden and its Nordic neighbors, particularly Finland: “For Sweden, the Nordic identity is strong and self-evident. We are deepening our foreign, security, and defense policy cooperation” (2013/14:70).

Solidarity is presented as a crucial aspect of Sweden's regional identity, where mutual support among Nordic countries forms the basis for defense and security cooperation.

This Nordic solidarity extends to the Baltic Sea region and aligns with broader European commitments. Kerstin Lundgren (C) articulates this by stating that "Russia's actions against our neighbors are actions against us. Solidarity is about our solidarity with these neighbors", emphasizing the interdependence within Europe and the importance of standing with Sweden's neighbors (2014/15:50). However, while the partnership with NATO is acknowledged as important, it is only as a secondary or complementary relationship. For Sweden, the EU and Nordic security arrangements are considered more legitimate and effective platforms for fostering solidarity and addressing regional security concerns.

A modern Swedish security policy is instead built on increased cooperation within the Nordic region, the Baltic Sea area, the EU, and the UN. Sweden will not remain passive if a disaster or an attack affects an EU country or a Nordic country, and we expect those countries to act in the same way if Sweden is affected [...] (Stefan Löfven, S, Government Declaration, 2014).

What can be distinguished in the discourse is that solidarity is often presented as an interdependent commitment between Sweden and its regional and international partners. As articulated by Carl Bildt and others, it is both an expectation and an obligation. Sweden is portrayed as ready to act in solidarity with its neighbors and allies in times of crisis, such as providing support to EU and Nordic countries during disasters or security threats. The exclusion of NATO reflects a selective commitment that highlights the contested nature of the signifier.

For proponents of non-alignment, solidarity aligns with Sweden's identity, which emphasizes regional and multilateral cooperation through non-military means. For other storytellers, particularly those underscoring European interdependence, solidarity is a strategic imperative to counter regional threats like Russian aggression. Despite these differences, NATO membership remains a dividing line, with solidarity consistently presented within the context of the EU, UN, and Nordic partnerships.

2022

It is, and always has been, together with others that we best build security and safety in our part of the world (Annie Lööf, C 2021/22:114).

In 2022, solidarity is presented as the foundation of Sweden's security policy, supporting its relationships with Nordic countries, the European Union, and NATO. Several storytellers emphasize the importance of solidarity as a binding principle that ensures both national and regional security and stability. Statements such as "our security is built on solidarity" (Kerstin Lundgren, C 2021/22:67) highlight its importance, arguing that without it, Sweden's defense policy would lack coherence and credibility.

Sweden is already part of a security community where it is difficult to imagine that we would remain passive in the event of a crisis or war in our region. But with Sweden as a NATO member, that solidarity would be formalized into legally binding commitments (Magdalena Andersson, S 2021/22:114).

This institutionalization of solidarity represents a significant shift in Sweden's security discourse, aligning it more closely with NATO's collective defense model. Historically, Sweden's policy of military non-alignment was itself associated with a form of solidarity, where neutrality was prioritized as a stabilizing force. However, in 2022, solidarity is reinterpreted to justify NATO membership, reflecting a new interpretation of Sweden's international role. Statements saying that Sweden is "not neutral but solidaristic in the face of Russian aggression" (Kerstin Lundgren, C 2021/22:67) highlight this. This rearticulation aligns solidarity with active engagement in collective defense rather than the passive stance traditionally associated with non-alignment.

When the security order is questioned, when a country in our region invades a neighboring country unprovoked and launches a full-scale war, and when our closest defense policy partner, Finland, chooses to abandon the non-alignment we have shared and upheld together, we must analyze what is best for Sweden's security today and in the future. This is what we Social Democrats have done, and that is why we have decided to apply for NATO membership. Security is best built together (Alexandra Völker, S 2021/22:116).

Similar to 2014, solidarity is presented as an ethical obligation, extending beyond military considerations to encompass broader principles of international cooperation. By invoking solidarity, it positions Sweden as a responsible and proactive participant in shaping regional

and global security. Solidarity is further presented as a part of Sweden's moral responsibility, linking it to values such as freedom, democracy, equality, and sustainability. This articulation underscores Sweden's historical identity as a moral actor, suggesting that solidarity is not merely a strategic necessity but also a reflection of Sweden's commitment to a better world.

For many years, Sweden has based its security policy on solidarity and partnership with others. Sweden is part of a broad political community with our European and transatlantic partner countries. When we joined the EU, we retained our military non-alignment but left neutrality behind. In accordance with our solidarity declaration, Sweden would not remain passive if a country in the Nordic region or the EU were attacked. Sweden has numerous defense collaborations with other countries, which have now been deepened during this crisis. Above all, we have a close defense partnership with Finland, which holds a special position (Magdalena Andersson, S 2021/22:114).

The strong relationship between Sweden and Finland emerges as a key theme in the rearticulation of solidarity in 2022. This partnership represents a long history of shared cultural, historical, and geopolitical ties as well as a symbolic and practical foundation for Sweden's evolving foreign policy. Andersson's articulation of Finland's "special position" in Sweden's defense policy underscores the importance of this relationship in shaping Sweden's security identity. In this understanding, is Finland's move to seek NATO membership crucial for Sweden's process, as it provides a form of discursive anchor that legitimizes Sweden's parallel decision. This presentation enables political leaders to argue that the two nations' security futures are closely connected. This ties Sweden's decision to its security interests and its responsibility to maintain solidarity and alignment with its closest Nordic partner.

It [Swedish NATO membership] strengthens Sweden's defense and security. It also strengthens security, solidarity, and cooperation with our Nordic and Baltic friends (Annie Lööf, C 2021/22:114).

With this, the Swedish-Finnish partnership embodies both practical and symbolic solidarity. Practically, the countries have a history of defense cooperation, including joint exercises and intelligence sharing, which forms a basis for NATO integration. Andersson notes Sweden's "deepened defense collaborations" during the crisis, highlighting how NATO membership builds on already existing ties. Symbolically, Sweden's alignment with Finland underscores a regional unity against external threats. By emphasizing this partnership, NATO membership is presented as a natural extension of Nordic solidarity and shared security goals rather than a

departure from its traditional values. The transatlantic link further shapes the discourse that aligns solidarity with regional collaboration and collective defense. Both Lundgren (C) and Andersson (S) highlight the importance of maintaining strong ties with NATO and the United States, presenting solidarity as essential to Sweden's integration into the broader Western security community.

Despite these dominant articulations, the debate still reveals competing interpretations of solidarity. Maria Ferm (MP) refuses to link solidarity and NATO membership together, advocating instead for a solidarity-based security policy that excludes participation in a nuclear alliance (2021/22:67). This perspective emphasizes alternative forms of international cooperation, such as within the EU and through bilateral partnerships like those with Finland, articulations also found in 2014. However, this position is greatly challenged by questioning the practical implications of such a policy and what it would mean for the region's solidarity if faced with Russian aggression. This highlights the evolving hegemonic formations where NATO membership is increasingly presented as the only viable way to operationalize solidarity when met with external pressures.

5.5 Findings

So what can be said about the discursive formations, and how did they change over time? By locating and examining these floating signifiers, Sweden's meaning-making process and identity formation have been examined. It becomes evident that each signifier showcased a flexible and interpretative nature that was shaped by various storytellers within a given year. Not only was there a visible push and pull over the meaning of the signifiers within the year, but the meanings also changed from 2014 to 2022. This also reveals the inherently fluid nature of national identity, as it was constantly negotiated and adapted through discourse. By 2022, a relative stabilization of discursive hegemony had occurred, which significantly influenced Sweden's ability to say yes to NATO.

Democracy

The use of democracy by these privileged storytellers showcases the flexible nature of the signifier and how this opens up space for various interpretations of its meaning. As seen in the change in discourse from 2014 to 2022, democracy is reshaped by different storytellers

who seek control of its meaning. In 2014, the discourse often presented democracy as a set of values to be upheld independently of NATO. While in 2022, membership is increasingly constructed as an extension and even a necessary component of Sweden's national identity. This marks a reformulation of the signifier, aligning it more closely with Sweden's international responsibility in a time of heightened geopolitical tension, which also served to marginalize alternative constructions of democracy. It gained hegemony by articulating membership as a continuation of a deeply rooted national identity rather than a departure from it. Consequently, the 2022 discourse achieved greater discursive hegemony for NATO membership compared to 2014. Storytellers successfully legitimized membership, presenting NATO as the embodiment of the "common good" that influenced a change in foreign policy.

Security

Similar to democracy, security is interpreted differently both within each year and across the period from 2014 to 2022, highlighting its floating nature. In 2014, there is a visible ambivalence within Swedish politics regarding membership, as evidenced by its multiple and sometimes contradictory interpretations. While security is universally valued, its meaning remains contested. Throughout the discourse, security is repeatedly tied to Sweden's role within its region, with emphasis on cooperation with Finland and other Baltic countries, which reflects a regionalist understanding of security. In 2022, the signifier is being rearticulated by storytellers across party lines, and its meaning is renegotiated to prioritize collective defense and deterrence, presenting NATO as a necessary security guarantee in an increasingly dangerous environment. While contestation within the discourse prevails, there is a broader consensus in 2022 regarding security as a collective defense, positioning membership as a necessary response to Russia's aggression and a natural evolution of Sweden's security policy. This implies greater discursive hegemony regarding how security is constructed in 2022.

Stability

The floating signifier stability is present in the discourse in both years, however, it was more prominent in 2022. In 2014, it appears to be closely tied to Sweden's history of neutrality and non-alignment, reflecting deeply rooted values emphasizing peace and diplomacy. Stability is presented as inseparable from Sweden's identity as a peace-oriented nation, with non-alignment minimizing regional tensions, ensuring predictability, and upholding moral

leadership. Any deviation from this stance is portrayed as a fundamental shift that risks destabilizing Sweden's foreign policy tradition. By 2022, while stability initially holds a strong link to continuity and predictability, its meaning becomes increasingly contested and reshaped over time. More storytellers begin to articulate stability through the lens of collective security frameworks, arguing that membership in NATO can act as a deterrent and enhance Sweden's defense capabilities. In this view, membership is not presented as a break from tradition but as a logical extension of Swedish values and foreign policy. This highlights how the previous discourse loses its hegemonic hold and is partially replaced by a discourse in which stability is placed within broader alliances, reflecting new discursive hegemony.

Solidarity

From 2014 to 2022, the meaning of solidarity in Swedish discourse underwent a significant rearticulation. In 2014, solidarity was presented as a moral imperative and a strategic cornerstone of Sweden's traditional stance of military non-alignment. Rooted in its identity as a neutral and humanitarian global actor, solidarity is presented as a commitment to upholding these values. There is a strong emphasis on interdependence among the Nordic countries as well as regional commitments within the Baltic Sea area. In this, the EU and UN are articulated as the legitimate platforms for fostering this solidarity, while NATO membership remains excluded. By 2022, Sweden's focus on morality and humanitarian values remains important, but the need to ensure national and regional security makes solidarity a binding principle that justifies closer alignment with NATO. In the context of Finland's parallel decision to seek membership, solidarity is rearticulated, shifting from a more passive solidarity to a more active solidarity, such as through collective defense within the NATO framework. The partnership with Finland serves as a key symbol and practical foundation for this renewed sense of solidarity, one where a shared history is connected to mutual security obligations.

6 Reflections

To circle back to the research question, why did Sweden apply for NATO membership in 2022, despite its long held identity as non-aligned? This thesis has addressed this question by tracing discursive formations through poststructural discourse theory, examining the interplay between language, identity and foreign policy. By analyzing the construction and contestation of key floating signifiers such as democracy, security, stability, and solidarity in the years 2014 and 2022, this thesis argues that the discourse in 2022 provided a particular hegemonic context that enabled the possibility for Sweden to make the historic decision to join NATO, a context that was not present in 2014. The following discussion will contextualize the analysis within the broader academic literature on foreign policy, identity, and discourse.

The transformation of the Swedish discourse surrounding democracy, security, stability, and solidarity from 2014 to 2022 illustrates the poststructuralist notion of constant negotiation of meaning and the inherent struggle for hegemony in society. The shifts in meaning highlight the fluidity of floating signifiers and their role in enabling competing articulations of values and identity to gain dominance, while at the same time silencing alternative meanings. As the analysis shows, each signifier's meaning contested and rearticulated over time, reflecting the struggles to establish hegemony between different privileged storytellers. This rearticulation contributed to a broader sense-making that reduced dislocation and created a "common sense" that enabled Sweden to navigate in a changing political landscape. In 2022, this resulted in a notable stabilization of meaning, which enabled Sweden to pursue NATO membership. However, as seen in the literature review, this thesis acknowledges the many complexities inherent in NATO's processes and the relevance and importance of other theoretical explanations. Nonetheless, this thesis's primary contribution lies in its inward-focused perspective that explores the role of language in shaping and constructing foreign policy decisions. By adopting this perspective, the thesis sheds light on the inherent instability of national identity and its constant openness to rearticulation.

Since this section calls for reflections, it is important to reflect on other possible interpretations of the material analyzed. For instance, while some might argue that certain statements could be more about political rhetoric than anything else, this thesis argues that such rhetoric is inherently tied to the discursive structures within which these actors operate.

In line with the poststructuralist approach in this study, the significance does not lie in the content of the statements themselves but in the conditions that allow these statements to emerge as part of the discourse. Poststructuralism, as discussed in the theory section, is more concerned with understanding how dominant discourses create the conditions for particular statements to gain legitimacy, shaping what is viewed as acceptable in a given context. It does not evaluate the truthfulness or ideological content of these statements, but instead examines how the discursive field both enables and constrains them. For instance can the internal shifts within political parties themselves be interpreted as responses to hegemonic struggles over key signifiers. In light of this, does the ability of both the Social Democrats and the Swedish Democrats to reconstruct their stance reflect a broader transformation within the discourse. Therefore, while other theoretical approaches might reach other conclusions by looking at the material from a different perspective, this thesis remains focused on the poststructuralist approach and its emphasis on the discursive conditions that shape and legitimize policy decisions.

Another interesting thing to reflect on is what this shift means in terms of identity. As highlighted in the analysis, Sweden's identity as a "moral superpower" evolved to facilitate its NATO membership. Historically, Sweden's neutrality and non-alignment has been a crucial aspect of its self-image as a promoter of peace, democracy, and human rights. This identity, as discussed in the literature review by Browning (2006) and Agius (2011), enabled Sweden to exert normative influence in international relations despite its material limitations as a small state, pointing to an active and strategic use of this smallness. This thesis has expanded on previous research on small state identity by not only confirming the adaptability of Sweden's identity, but also illustrating the political elites' active role and agency in rearticulating and adapting this identity. By employing a poststructural approach, this thesis shows that state identity is not fixed but fluid, subject to reinterpretation in response to external crises. This is evidenced by the 2022 discourse, where membership was successfully rearticulated to align Sweden's moral identity with a new context, that is, the principles of collective defense and NATO. In order to enable this shift, membership was not presented as a departure from Sweden's normative commitments, but instead as a logical extension of them, a move deemed necessary to protect democracy and stability in Europe. By highlighting the flexible nature of identity, this thesis contributes to the existing literature on state behavior, demonstrating how the interplay of discourse, power, and identity overlap and

affects foreign policy decisions. By challenging materialist assumptions regarding the small states inherent in traditional theories, this perspective highlights the value of poststructuralism in capturing the nuanced and complex processes of their foreign policy.

Now that Sweden has officially joined NATO, the future will certainly bring both challenges and opportunities for this identity. One of the biggest challenges will possibly be how to continue to balance its identity with the collective defense commitments that are required as a NATO member. On the other hand, it now has a greater platform to influence NATO's policy agenda, potentially promoting the very principles that earned Sweden its international recognition in the first place. How Sweden manages this balancing act will be a defining aspect of its identity going forward. The public's perception of NATO membership will further shape how this new identity is embraced. Since poststructuralism views hegemony as temporary, relative, and contested, political elites will need to remain attentive to citizens' concerns regarding membership, and continue to articulate how Sweden's contributions to NATO align with, or even reinforce and develop its core values.

6.1 Suggestions for further research

The recent accession of Sweden to NATO offers many possibilities for further exploration and analysis. While this thesis focuses on the period leading up to membership, it would be very interesting to further explore Sweden's discursive transformations after formal accession, with a particular focus on the post-application period. Doing so could help shed light on the long-term implications of NATO membership, both for Sweden's state identity and its evolving role within the alliance and the broader international system. Another aspect that calls for more attention is the dynamic interplay between elite discourses and public opinion. Understanding how public opinion evolves together with, or in response to, elite presentations could give valuable insights into the Swedish case. In a more extensive study, it would also be valuable to broaden the scope of analysis to include privileged storytellers not examined in this thesis, such as the media. This expansion could offer deeper insights into the interplay between political elites and the media, as well as their collective influence in shaping public opinion.

8 Bibliography

Agius, C. (2013) *The social construction of Swedish neutrality : challenges to Swedish identity and sovereignty*. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press.

Baldur Þórhallsson & Thomas Stude Vidal (2023). Finland's NATO membership: Continuous shelter-seeking strategy. *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 46(3).
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9477.12257>.

Bergström, Ekström, Boréus (2017) "Discourse analysis" in *Analyzing text and discourse* (2017), editor: Boréus & Bergström. SAGE publications. pp. 208-242.

Browning, C.S. (2006). Small, Smart and Salient? Rethinking Identity in the Small States Literature. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 19(4), pp.669–684.
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/09557570601003536>.

Cottey, A. (2013). The European Neutrals and NATO: Ambiguous Partnership. *Contemporary Security Policy*, 34(3), pp.446–472.
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/13523260.2013.842295>.

Crowards, T. (2002). Defining the category of 'small' states. *Journal of International Development*, 14(2), pp.143–179. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1002/jid.860>.

Edström, H. and Westberg, J. (2020). Between the eagle and the bear: Explaining the alignment strategies of the Nordic countries in the 21st century. *Comparative Strategy*, 39(2), pp.191–208. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/01495933.2020.1718994>.

Elman, M.F. (1995). The Foreign Policies of Small States: Challenging Neorealism in Its Own Backyard. *British Journal of Political Science*, 25(2), pp.171–217.
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1017/s0007123400007146>.

Evans, B. and Reid, J. (2014). *Resilient life the art of living dangerously*. Cambridge Polity.

Fairclough, N. & Fairclough, I. (2018) "Textual analysis" in Bevir, M. & Rhodes, R. A. W. (2018) *Routledge handbook of interpretive political science*. London ; Routledge. pp. 186-199.

Farkas, J. and Schou, J. (2018). Fake News as a Floating Signifier: Hegemony, Antagonism and the Politics of Falsehood. *Javnost - the Public*, [online] 25(3), pp.298–314.

doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/13183222.2018.1463047>.

Foucault, M. (1972) *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*.

Pantheon Books, New York. Translated by A. M. Sheridan Smith.

Foucault, M. (1984). *The Foucault Reader*. New York: Vintage Books.

Forsberg, T. (2023). Finland and Sweden's Road to NATO. *Current History*, 122(842),

pp.89–94. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1525/curh.2023.122.842.89>.

Glassner, S. and Fuchshuber, A. (2023). Between NATO and non-alignment. *Journal of International Affairs Editorial Board*, 75(2), pp.45–66. doi:<https://doi.org/10.2307/27231736>.

Griggs, S. and Howarth, D. (2011). Discourse and practice: using the power of well being.

Evidence & Policy: A Journal of Research, Debate and Practice, 7(2), pp.213–226.

doi:<https://doi.org/10.1332/174426411x579234>.

Griggs, S. and Howarth, D. (2019). Discourse, policy and the environment: hegemony, statements and the analysis of U.K. airport expansion. *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning*, 21(5), pp.464–478. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/1523908x.2016.1266930>.

Guzzini, S. (2000). A Reconstruction of Constructivism in International Relations. *European Journal of International Relations*, 6(2), pp.147–182.

Hagström, L. (2020). Disciplinary power: Text and body in the Swedish NATO debate.

Cooperation and Conflict, 56(2), pp.141-162.

doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836720966376>.

Hagström, L. (2022) "Sveriges väg mot Nato, kantad av identitetspolitik och bristfällig analys". Försvarshögskolan, Statsvetenskapliga avdelningen.

Hansen, L. (2006) *Security as practice : discourse analysis and the Bosnian war*. 1st ed. New York, NY: Routledge

Hansen, L. (2012). “Discourse analysis, post-structuralism and foreign policy” in *Foreign Policy: Theories, Actors, Cases*”, editor: Smith, S, Hadfield, A & Dunne, T. Oxford University Press pp. 94-106.

Hajer, M. A. (1995) *The politics of environmental discourse : ecological modernization and the policy process*. 1st ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Hajer, M.A. (2005). Setting the Stage: A Dramaturgy of Policy Deliberation. *Administration & Society*, 36(6), pp.624–647. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/0095399704270586>.

Halperin, S. & Heath, O. (2017) *Political research : methods and practical skills*. Second edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Haugevik, K. and Sending, O.J. (2020). The Nordic Balance Revisited: Differentiation and the Foreign Policy Repertoires of the Nordic States. *Politics and Governance*, 8(4), pp.110–119. doi:<https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v8i4.3380>.

Heier, T. (2018). Avoiding War: How Should Northern Europe Respond to the US-Russian Rivalry? *Arctic Review on Law and Politics*, 9(0), p.267. doi:<https://doi.org/10.23865/arctic.v9.1218>.

Jorgensen, M. W. & Phillips, L. (2002) *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*. 1st edition. London: SAGE Publications.

Julián Daniel Mijailoff and Sarah Lilian Burns (2023). Fixing the meaning of floating signifier: Discourses and network analysis in the bioeconomy policy processes in Argentina and Uruguay. *Forest Policy and Economics*, 154, pp.103039–103039. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.forpol.2023.103039>.

Keohane, R.O. (1969). Lilliputians’ Dilemmas: Small States in International Politics. *International Organization*, 23(2), pp.291–310. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1017/s002081830003160x>.

Knudsen, O.F. (2002). Small states, latent and extant: towards a general perspective. *Journal of international relations and development*, 5(2), pp.182–198.

Laclau, E., & Mouffe, C. (1985). *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. London: Verso.

Leek, M. and Morozov, V. (2018). Identity beyond othering: crisis and the politics of decision in the EU's involvement in Libya. *International Theory*, 10(1), pp.122–152.
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1017/s1752971917000148>.

Lundqvist, S. (2022). A Convincing Finnish Move: Implications for State Identity of Persuading Sweden to Jointly Bid for NATO Membership. *Studia Europejskie - Studies in European Affairs*, 26(4), pp.73–110. doi:<https://doi.org/10.33067/se.4.2022.3>.

Lödén, H. (2012). Reaching a vanishing point? Reflections on the future of neutrality norms in Sweden and Finland. *Cooperation and Conflict*, 47(2), pp.271–284.
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836712445343>.

Marttila, T. (2018). Post-foundational Discourse Analysis: Theoretical Premises and Methodological Options. *Springer eBooks*, pp.17–42.
doi:https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-94123-3_2.

Merlijn van Hulst, Metze, T., Dewulf, A., Jasper de Vries, Severine van Bommel and Mark van Ostaijen (2024). Discourse, framing and narrative: three ways of doing critical, interpretive policy analysis. *Critical policy studies*, pp.1–23.
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/19460171.2024.2326936>.

Milliken, J. (1999). The Study of Discourse in International Relations: A Critique of Research and Methods. *European Journal of International Relations*, 5(2), pp.225–254.

Michalski, A., Brommesson, D. and Ann-Marie Ekengren (2024). Small states and the dilemma of geopolitics: role change in Finland and Sweden. *International Affairs*, 100(1), pp.139–157. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iia244>.

Möller, U. and Bjereld, U. (2010). From Nordic neutrals to post-neutral Europeans: Differences in Finnish and Swedish policy transformation. *Cooperation and Conflict*, 45(4), pp.363–386. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836710386870>.

Nabers, D. (2015). *A Poststructuralist Discourse Theory of Global Politics*. Springer.

Raptopoulou, A. and Munhall, B. (2024). Democracy as a floating signifier: The struggle for legitimization of programming in Swedish schools. *Policy Futures in Education*, 22(8). doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/14782103241235725>.

Ostermann, F. (2019) *Security, Defense Discourse and Identity in NATO and Europe : How France Changed Foreign Policy*. 1st edition. Boca Raton, Routledge.

Ostermann, F. & Sjöstedt, R. (2023) ‘Discourse Analysis and Discourse Theories’, in *Routledge Handbook of Foreign Policy Analysis Methods*. 1st edition Routledge. pp. 101–116.

Pedersen, R.B. (2019). Jumping on the Bandwagon: status seeking as a driver for Sweden’s involvement in NATO-led operations? *International Politics*. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1057/s41311-019-00175-x>.

Pedersen, R.B. and Reykers, Y. (2019). Show them the flag: status ambitions and recognition in small state coalition warfare. *European Security*, 29(1), pp.16–32. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/09662839.2019.1678147>.

Ruggie, J. (1998). What Makes the World Hang Together? Neo-Utilitarianism and the Social Constructivist Challenge. *International Organization*, 52(4), pp.855–885.

Schwartz-Shea, P. & Yanow, D. (2012) *Interpretive research design : concepts and processes*. 1st edition. New York: Routledge.

Szalai, M. (2017). Between Accommodation and Opportunism: Explaining the Growing Influence of Small Gulf States in the Middle East. *The International Spectator*, 52(2), pp.3–18. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/03932729.2017.1298881>.

Thorhallsson, B. (2006). The Size of States in the European Union: Theoretical and Conceptual Perspectives. *Journal of European Integration*, 28(1), pp.7–31. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/07036330500480490>.

Vital, D. (1971) *The survival of small states : studies in small power - great power conflict*. London: Oxford Univ. Press.

- Wagnsson, C. (2011). A security community in the making? Sweden and NATO post-Libya. *European Security*, 20(4), pp.585–603. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/09662839.2011.633514>.
- Walt, S.M. (1985). Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power. *International Security*, [online] 9(4), pp.3–43. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2538540>.
- Weaver, O. (2001) “Identity, communities and foreign policy: discourse analysis as foreign policy theory” in Hansen, L. & Weaver, O. (2001) *European integration and national identity : the challenge of the Nordic states*. London ; Routledge. pp. 20-50.
- Wendt, A. (1999) *Social theory of international politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Westberg, J. (2015) *Svenska säkerhetsstrategier : 1810-2014*. 1. uppl. Lund: Studentlitteratur.
- Wieslander, A. (2022). ‘The Hultqvist doctrine’ – Swedish security and defence policy after the Russian annexation of Crimea. *Defence Studies*, 22(1), pp.35–59. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/14702436.2021.1955619>.
- Wivel, A. (2021). “The Grand Strategies of Small States”. In T. Balzacq, & R. R. Krebs (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Grand Strategy*, pp.489–505. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198840299.013.32>.
- Wullweber, J. (2019). Constructing Hegemony in Global Politics. A Discourse–Theoretical Approach to Policy Analysis. *Administrative Theory & Praxis*, 41(2), pp.148–167. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/10841806.2018.1512339>.
- Ydén, K., Berndtsson, J. and Petersson, M. (2019). Sweden and the issue of NATO membership: exploring a public opinion paradox. *Defence Studies*, 19(1), pp.1–18. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/14702436.2019.1568192>.
- Åström, S. (1977) *Sweden's policy of neutrality*. Stockholm: The Swedish Institute.

8.1 Primary documents

- Aftonbladet (2022). *Magdalena Andersson: ”Jag utesluter inte ett NATO-medlemskap”* - *Aftonbladet TV*. [online] Aftonbladet TV. Available at:

<https://tv.aftonbladet.se/video/341248/magdalena-andersson-jag-utesluter-inte-ett-nato-medlemskap> [Accessed 4 Dec. 2024].

Regeringskansliet (2014). *Regeringsförklaringen 2014*. [online] Regeringen.se. Available at: <https://www.regeringen.se/contentassets/436960c05f524109b8a020b879efd76b/regeringsforklaringen-3-oktober-2014/> [Accessed 2 Dec. 2024].

Regeringskansliet, Försvarsberedningen (2014). *Försvaret av Sverige. Starkare försvar för en osäker tid. Ds 2014:20*. [online] Regeringen.se. Available at: <https://www.regeringen.se/contentassets/7f2ab5930a3c49c38f4ade73eca07475/forsvaret-av-sverige---starkare-forsvar-for-en-osaker-tid/> [Accessed 2 Dec. 2024].

Sveriges Riksdag (2014). *Protokoll 2014/15:20 Onsdagen den 12 november*. [online] Riksdagen.se. Available at: https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-och-lagar/dokument/protokoll/protokoll-20141520-onsdagen-den-12-november_h20920/html/ [Accessed 1 Dec. 2024].

Sveriges Riksdag (2014). *Protokoll 2014/15:25 Torsdagen den 20 november*. [online] Riksdagen.se. Available at: https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-och-lagar/dokument/protokoll/protokoll-20141525-torsdagen-den-20-november_h20925/html/ [Accessed 2 Dec. 2024].

Sveriges Riksdag (2014). *Protokoll 2014/15:36 Torsdagen den 11 december*. [online] Riksdagen.se. Available at: https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-och-lagar/dokument/protokoll/protokoll-20141536-torsdagen-den-11-december_h20936/html/ [Accessed 1 Dec. 2024].

Sveriges Riksdag (2014). *Protokoll 2014/15:39 Tisdagen den 16 december*. [online] Riksdagen.se. Available at: https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-och-lagar/dokument/protokoll/protokoll-20141539-tisdagen-den-16-december_h20939/html/ [Accessed 1 Dec. 2024].

Sveriges Riksdag (2014). *Protokoll 2014/15:41 Torsdagen den 18 december*. [online] Riksdagen.se. Available at:

https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-och-lagar/dokument/protokoll/protokoll-20141541-torsdagen-den-18-december_h20941/html/ [Accessed 1 Dec. 2024].

Sveriges Riksdag (2014). *Protokoll 2014/15:50 Torsdagen den 22 januari*. [online]

Riksdagen.se. Available at:

https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-och-lagar/dokument/protokoll/protokoll-20141550-torsdagen-den-22-januari_h20950/html/ [Accessed 2 Dec. 2024].

Sveriges Riksdag (2014). *Riksdagens protokoll 2013/14:70 Onsdagen den 19 februari*.

[online] Riksdagen.se. Available at:

https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-och-lagar/dokument/protokoll/riksdagens-protokoll-20131470-onsdagen-den-19_h10970/html/ [Accessed 1 Dec. 2024].

Sveriges Riksdag (2014). *Riksdagens protokoll 2013/14:84 Fredagen den 14 mars*. [online]

Riksdagen.se. Available at:

https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-och-lagar/dokument/protokoll/riksdagens-protokoll-20131484-fredagen-den-14_h10984/html/ [Accessed 2 Dec. 2024].

Sveriges Riksdag (2014). *Riksdagens protokoll 2013/14:86 Onsdagen den 19 mars*. [online]

Riksdagen.se. Available at:

https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-och-lagar/dokument/protokoll/riksdagens-protokoll-20131486-onsdagen-den-19_h10986/html/ [Accessed 1 Dec. 2014].

Sveriges Riksdag (2014). *Riksdagens protokoll 2013/14:91 Torsdagen den 27 mars*. [online]

Riksdagen.se. Available at:

https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-och-lagar/dokument/protokoll/riksdagens-protokoll-20131491-torsdagen-den-27_h10991/html/ [Accessed 1 Dec. 2024].

Sveriges Riksdag (2022). *Protokoll 2021/22:58 Tisdagen den 25 januari (Riksdagens protokoll 2021/22:58)*. [online] Riksdagen.se. Available at:

https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-och-lagar/dokument/protokoll/protokoll-20212258-tisdagen-den-25-januari_h90958/html/ [Accessed 3 Dec. 2024].

Sveriges Riksdag (2022). *Protokoll 2021/22:66 Tisdagen den 15 februari (Riksdagens protokoll 2021/22:66)*. [online] Riksdagen.se. Available at:

https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-och-lagar/dokument/protokoll/protokoll-20212266-tisdagen-den-15-februari_h90966/html/ [Accessed 3 Dec. 2024].

Sveriges Riksdag (2022). *Protokoll 2021/22:67 Onsdagen den 16 februari*. [online]

Riksdagen.se. Available at:

https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-och-lagar/dokument/protokoll/protokoll-20212267-onsdagen-den-16-februari_h90967/html/ [Accessed 3 Dec. 2024].

Sveriges Riksdag (2022). *Protokoll 2021/22:72 Torsdagen den 24 februari (Riksdagens protokoll 2021/22:72)*. [online] Riksdagen.se. Available at:

https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-och-lagar/dokument/protokoll/protokoll-20212272-torsdagen-den-24-februari_h90972/html/ [Accessed 3 Dec. 2024].

Sveriges Riksdag (2022). *Protokoll 2021/22:82 Onsdagen den 16 mars (Riksdagens protokoll 2021/22:82)*. [online] Riksdagen.se. Available at:

https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-och-lagar/dokument/protokoll/protokoll-20212282-onsdagen-den-16-mars_h90982/html/ [Accessed 4 Dec. 2024].

Sveriges Riksdag (2022). *Protokoll 2021/22:87 Torsdagen den 24 mars (Riksdagens protokoll 2021/22:87)*. [online] Riksdagen.se. Available at:

https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-och-lagar/dokument/protokoll/protokoll-20212287-torsdagen-den-24-mars_h90987/html/ [Accessed 3 Dec. 2024].

Sveriges Riksdag (2022). *Protokoll 2021/22:90 Onsdagen den 30 mars (Riksdagens protokoll 2021/22:90)*. [online] Riksdagen.se. Available at:

https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-och-lagar/dokument/protokoll/protokoll-20212290-onsdagen-den-30-mars_h90990/html/ [Accessed 4 Dec. 2024].

Sveriges Riksdag (2022). *Protokoll 2021/22:95 Torsdagen den 7 april (Riksdagens protokoll 2021/22:95)*. [online] Riksdagen.se. Available at:

https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-och-lagar/dokument/protokoll/protokoll-20212295-torsdagen-den-7-april_h90995/html/ [Accessed 4 Dec. 2024].

Sveriges Riksdag (2022). *Protokoll 2021/22:114 Måndagen den 16 maj (Riksdagens protokoll 2021/22:114)*. [online] Riksdagen.se. Available at:

https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-och-lagar/dokument/protokoll/protokoll-202122114-mandagen-den-16-maj_h909114/html/ [Accessed 3 Dec. 2024].

Sveriges Riksdag (2022). *Protokoll 2021/22:116 Onsdagen den 18 maj (Riksdagens protokoll 2021/22:116)*. [online] Riksdagen.se. Available at:

https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-och-lagar/dokument/protokoll/protokoll-202122116-onsdagen-den-18-maj_h909116/html/ [Accessed 4 Dec. 2024].

Sveriges Riksdag (2022). *Protokoll 2021/22:121 Tisdagen den 31 maj (Riksdagens protokoll 2021/22:121)*. [online] Riksdagen.se. Available at:

https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-och-lagar/dokument/protokoll/protokoll-202122121-tisdagen-den-31-maj_h909121/html/ [Accessed 4 Dec. 2024].

SVT Nyheter (2022). ”Natomedlemskap skulle destabilisera säkerhetsläget”. *SVT Nyheter*. [online] 8 Mar. Available at:

<https://www.svt.se/nyheter/inrikes/andersson-om-nato-medlemskap-skulle-destabilisera-sakerhetslaget> [Accessed 4 Mar. 2024].

Appendix

Order as they appear in the analysis

Name of protocol and speaker	Statement in original language (Swedish)	Translated statement (English)
2013/14:91. Stefan Löfven (S)	Den svenska militära alliansfriheten tjänar alltså vårt land väl. Den skapar en god grund för ett aktivt ansvarstagande för såväl vår egen som andras säkerhet. Sverige ska inte söka medlemskap i Nato. En modern svensk säkerhetspolitik byggs i stället på ett ökat samarbete inom Norden, Östersjöområdet, EU och FN.	Sweden's military non-alignment still serves our country well. It provides a solid foundation for taking active responsibility for both our own security and that of others. Sweden should not seek NATO membership. Instead, a modern Swedish security policy should be based on increased cooperation within the Nordic region, the Baltic Sea area, the EU, and the UN.
2014/15:20. Carina Ohlsson (S)	Herr talman! För att Sverige ska vara en stark röst i internationella frågor och utrikespolitiska sammanhang är det viktigt att politiken hänger ihop, alltså det som man säger hemma i Sverige inrikespolitiskt och det som man framför med stark röst utomlands [...] För att vi ska vara denna starka röst måste det också hänga ihop med en stark trovärdighet i de frågor som jag har nämnt – jämlikhet, jämställdhet, hållbarhet och fred [...]	For Sweden to be a strong voice in international affairs and foreign policy contexts, it is important that the policies are coherent – that is, what is said domestically in Sweden aligns with what is conveyed abroad with a strong voice [...] For us to be this strong voice, it must also align with strong credibility in the issues I have mentioned – equality, gender equality, sustainability, and peace [...]
2013/14:70. Carl Bildt (M)	Herr talman! Nu ska jag presentera den utrikespolitiska deklARATIONEN. Sveriges utrikespolitik bidrar till frihet, fred och försoning i vår omvärld. Den grundas i de värden som bär upp vårt öppna samhälle och i de intressen som är våra. Arbetet för demokrati, mänskliga rättigheter och hållbar utveckling genomsyrar vårt lands relationer till andra länder och till det multilaterala samarbetet. Vår utrikespolitik har formats i bred samverkan och har stark förankring såväl hos svenska folket som i denna kammare [...]	Sweden's foreign policy contributes to freedom, peace, and reconciliation in our world. It is founded on the values that uphold our open society and on the interests that are our own. The work for democracy, human rights, and sustainable development permeates our country's relations with other nations and its multilateral cooperation. Our foreign policy has been shaped through broad collaboration and enjoys strong support both among the Swedish people and in this chamber [...].
2013/14:86. Hans Wallmark (M)	För oss som står upp för frihet, demokrati och mänskliga rättigheter är Ukrainas sak vår.	For those of us who stand up for freedom, democracy, and human rights, Ukraine's cause is our cause.

2013/14:70. Carl Bildt (M)	Sverige ska vara en aktiv del av ett starkt, enat och öppet Europa – ett Europa som står starkt i arbetet för frihet, fred och demokrati, för mänskliga rättigheter och för ekonomisk utveckling (Carl Bildt M).	Sweden shall be an active part of a strong, united, and open Europe – a Europe that stands firm in its work for freedom, peace, and democracy, for human rights, and for economic development.
2014/15:25. Johan Forsell (M)	Man vill göra upp med den svenska tradition som har gjort vårt land starkt. Vi tar ansvar inte bara för det som händer inom vårt lands gränser utan också i omvärlden. Det vore beklagligt om vi släppte den idén. (Johan Forsell M)	There is a desire to break with the Swedish tradition that has made our country strong. We take responsibility not only for what happens within our borders but also for events in the world. It would be regrettable if we abandoned that idea.
2021/22:114. Magdalena Andersson (S)	I utrikespolitiken kommer Sverige även i framtiden att vara en stark aktör med både handlingsfrihet och handlingskraft. Vårt land har en lång historia av att stå upp för folkrätt, mänskliga rättigheter och jämställdhet. Det är också vår framtid [...]	In foreign policy, Sweden will continue to be a strong actor with both freedom of action and power of action in the future. Our country has a long history of standing up for international law, human rights, and gender equality. That is also our future [...]
2021/22:67. Lars Thomson (C)	Jag ska bara avsluta med att säga att Ukrainas kamp för frihet är vår kamp för frihet. Det är så enkelt som att det hänger ihop. Vi måste förstå att det är demokratin som står på spel, ingenting annat.	I will just conclude by saying that Ukraine's fight for freedom is our fight for freedom. It is as simple as that, they are interconnected. We must understand that it is democracy at stake, nothing else.
2021/22:67. (Hans Wallmark (M)	Det är sådana här tider som definierar oss som land och som medborgare. Det är nu vi bedöms.	These are the kinds of times that define us as a country and as citizens. It is now that we are being judged.
2021/22:116. Hans Wallmark (M)	Vi är inte ensamma i vår syn på demokrati och mänskliga fri- och rättigheter utan delar den med andra, inte minst med andra europeiska nationer och med USA. Därför är steget mot ett Natomedlemskap naturligt att ta.	We are not alone in our view of democracy and human freedoms and rights but share it with others, not least with other European nations and the USA. Therefore, the step toward NATO membership is a natural one to take.
2014/15:50. Margot Wallström (S)	Regeringens bedömning är att vår nuvarande säkerhetspolitiska linje och de samarbeten som jag beskrev är vad som bäst tjänar Sveriges intressen. En utredning om ett svenskt Natomedlemskap skapar onödigt osäkerhet och polarisering i ett osäkert läge [...]	The government's assessment is that our current security policy line and the collaborations I described best serve Sweden's interests. An investigation into Swedish NATO membership would create unnecessary uncertainty and polarization in an already uncertain situation [...]

2014/15:36. Jeff Ahl (SD)	Det är oansvarigt att över huvud taget tala om ett närmande till Nato när det är så uppenbart att Ryssland har en imperialistisk doktrin som de följer, och det kan mycket väl ha varit en avgörande punkt för att intervensera i både Ukraina och Georgien.	It is irresponsible to even talk about moving closer to NATO when it is so clear that Russia is following an imperialist doctrine. This may very well have been a decisive factor for their interventions in both Ukraine and Georgia.
2014/15:25. Johan Forsell (M)	Då finns det faktiskt bara en aktör som kan ge Sverige de säkerhetsgarantierna, och det är Nato.	There is actually only one actor that can provide Sweden with those security guarantees, and that is NATO.
2021/22:58. Håkan Svenneling (V)	Sverige har varit säkert i två hundra år för att vi har varit militärt alliansfria. Det är därför den säkerhetspolitiska linjen ska ligga fast – i dag, i morgon och för lång tid framöver.	Sweden has been safe for two hundred years because we have been militarily non-aligned. That is why the security policy line must remain – today, tomorrow, and for a long time to come.
2021/22:114. Magdalena Andersson (S)	Den 24 februari i år inleddes ett nytt och mörkt kapitel i Europas historia [...] Den europeiska säkerhetsordningen, som Sverige bygger sin säkerhet på, befinner sig under angrepp.	On February 24th this year, a new and dark chapter in European history began. [...] The European security order, on which Sweden bases its security, is under attack.
2021/22:114. Magdalena Andersson (S)	Om Sverige skulle bli det enda EU-landet i Östersjöregionen som inte är medlem i Nato skulle vi hamna i ett mycket utsatt läge. Det kan inte uteslutas att Ryssland ökar pressen på Sverige.	If Sweden were to become the only EU country in the Baltic Sea region that is not a NATO member, we would find ourselves in a very vulnerable position.
2021/22:114. Jimmie Åkesson (SD)	Den 24 februari och Ryssland invasion av Ukraina har förändrat våra säkerhetspolitiska förutsättningar i grunden. Säkerhetsläget för oss är allvarligt försämrat. Det militära hotet är påtagligt. Herr talman! Ytterst handlar det såklart om Sveriges och svenska folkets trygghet och säkerhet [...]	February 24 and Russia's invasion of Ukraine have fundamentally changed our security policy conditions. The security situation for us has seriously deteriorated. The military threat is tangible. Ultimately, this is about the safety and security of Sweden and the Swedish people [...]
2021/22:114. Annie Lööf (C)	Ett svenskt Natomedlemskap skulle höja tröskeln för militära konflikter och därmed ge en konfliktavhållande effekt i norra Europa. Det finns inga andra realistiska alternativ. Det är en verklig styrka att den säkerhetspolitiska kommittén är otvetydig på den punkten. Det allvarliga säkerhetspolitiska läget kräver kollektiva	Swedish NATO membership would raise the threshold for military conflicts, thus providing a deterrent effect in Northern Europe. There are no other realistic alternatives. It is a real strength that the security policy committee is unequivocal on this point. The serious security situation requires collective security guarantees. Swedish

	säkerhetsgarantier. Ett svenskt Natomedlemskap är nödvändigt för vår säkerhet och för Sveriges bästa.	NATO membership is necessary for our security and for Sweden's best.
2014/15:41. Jakop Dalunde, (MP)	Det är viktigt att vi agerar på ett sätt som bidrar till avspänning och stabilitet. Vi ska inte bidra till upptrappning, som ökar risken för konflikt eller incidenter [...]	It is important that we act in a way that contributes to de-escalation and stability. We should not contribute to escalation, which increases the risk of conflict or incidents [...]
2014/15:20. Jeff Ahl (SD)	I norra Europa ansvarar vi delvis för den maktbalans som finns. Det börjar nu byggas upp en situation där vi har en aggressiv rysk stat å ena sidan och Nato å andra sidan. Ryssland har inte uttalat sig särskilt positivt om att Sverige och Finland skulle gå med i Nato. Således är det ur ett avspänningsperspektiv oansvarigt att gå med i Nato.	In Northern Europe, we are partly responsible for the balance of power. A situation is now being built where we have an aggressive Russian state on one side and NATO on the other. Russia has not spoken particularly positively about Sweden and Finland joining NATO. Therefore, from a de-escalation perspective, it is irresponsible to join NATO.
2014/15:36. Karin Enström (M)	Vi byter inte vare sig säkerhetspolitik eller försvarspolitik över en natt [...]	We do not change our security or defense policy overnight [...]
2014/15:50. Margot Wallström (S)	Regeringen har i varje läge att avgöra vad som är bäst för landet. Vi svajar inte i vår bedömning. Sveriges säkerhetspolitiska linje ligger fast. I regeringsförklaringen sa statsministern att den militära alliansfriheten alltjämt tjänar vårt land väl.	In every situation, the government has to decide what is best for the country. We do not waver in our judgment. Sweden's security policy line is fixed. In the government statement, the Prime Minister said that the military's freedom of alliance still serves our country well.
2021/22:67. Ann Linde (S)	Direkt oansvarigt skulle det vara att just nu ändra vår säkerhetspolitiska linje. Precis som Finland värnar vi stabiliteten. Vi värnar förutsägbarheten, och vi värnar om att alla ska veta vad vi säger och vad vi gör. [...] Det är en ansvarsfull säkerhetspolitisk linje.	It would be directly irresponsible to change our security policy at this time. Like Finland, we value stability, predictability, and ensuring that everyone knows what we say and do [...] This is a responsible security policy.
2021/22:72. Magdalena Andersson (S)	Regeringens bedömning är ju att det i ett sådant här mycket allvarligt läge bäst gagnar Sveriges intressen att vi har en långsiktig och förutsägbar säkerhetspolitisk linje. Det är en linje som också har gagnat Sverige sedan lång tid tillbaka.	The government assesses that in such a grave situation, Sweden's interests are best served by a long-term, predictable security policy. This approach has served Sweden well historically, keeping us out of armed conflicts. Opinions may differ, but the

	Det har hållit oss utanför väpnade konflikter. Man kan ha olika synpunkter på det, men regeringens bedömning är att det bästa för Sverige i det här läget är att vi har en fortsatt konsekvent och förutsägbar säkerhetspolitisk linje.	government's assessment is that consistency and predictability in security policy remain best for Sweden in the current situation.
2021/22:114. Magdalena Andersson (S)	Sverige har en utrikespolitisk linje. Det faktum att vi ansöker om ett Natomedlemskap gör inte att vi kommer att ändra vår utrikespolitiska linje.	Sweden has a foreign policy line. Applying for NATO membership does not mean we are changing it.
2021/22:116. Mikael Oscarsson (KD)	Detta kommer att göra enorm skillnad i vår försvarsförmåga och även fungera avskräckande. Det minskar risken för angrepp mot Sverige, Finland och Baltikum. Det är stabiliserande för vår del av världen. Det är ett viktigt budskap i vår tid.	This will make a significant difference in our defense capabilities and act as a deterrent. It reduces the risk of attacks on Sweden, Finland, and the Baltics. It stabilizes our part of the world. This is an important message for our time.
2021/22:95. Mats Persson (L)	Låt mig vara väldigt tydlig: Det är Sverige självt som väljer sin säkerhetspolitiska väg framåt. Det är inte destabiliserande att i detta läge vara tydlig med att vi bör tillhöra den europeiska gemenskapen i Natosamarbetet. Där bör Sverige ingå fullt ut.	Let me be very clear: Sweden independently chooses its security policy path forward. It is not destabilizing to make it clear in this situation that we should fully belong to the European community within NATO. Sweden should be fully included there.
2021/22:114. Ebba Busch (KD)	Herr talman! Det finns de som hävdar att ett medlemskap i Nato skulle vara ett brott med vårt lands utrikespolitiska tradition. Det är inte sant. Vår alliansfrihet är inte född ur någon idé om neutralitet som ett gott i sig självt. Den föddes som en pragmatisk konsekvens av vårt lands uråldriga strävan att bevara sin självständighet. Genom vår historia är det detta överordnade mål, vår självständighet, som har varit vägledande för oss. I vissa tider har Sverige därför valt alliansfriheten, och i andra tider har vi sökt allianser för att finna stöd mot fientliga stormakter. Det är så vi har kunnat säkra 500 år av självständighet, 200 år av fred och 100 år av demokrati. Att vårt land nu, som en följd av Rysslands	Some argue that NATO membership would break with our country's foreign policy tradition. That is not true. Our non-alignment was never born out of a notion of neutrality as inherently good. It emerged pragmatically from our nation's ancient aspiration to maintain independence. Throughout history, this overarching goal - our independence - has guided us. At times, this meant choosing non-alignment, and at others, seeking alliances to counter hostile great powers. [...] Sweden's pursuit of NATO membership in response to Russia's revived imperialism is not a departure but an affirmation of our foreign policy's deepest traditions. It echoes past alliances,

	nyväckta imperialism, söker medlemskap i Nato är alltså inte en brytning med utan ett instämmande i den djupaste av linjer i vår utrikespolitik. Det är ett eko av forna tiders allianser, på samma sätt som vårt stöd i form av vapenleveranser till Ukraina är ett eko av vårt stöd till Finland under vinterkriget.	just as our arms support for Ukraine echoes our support for Finland during the Winter War.
2014/15:50. Jakop Dalunde (MP)	Vi vill att Sverige ska agera i solidaritet med världens utsatta och krigsdrabbade människor. Vi arbetar på ett konfliktförebyggande sätt, och vi fokuserar på icke-militära medel för att skapa fred samt sprida demokrati och mänskliga rättigheter. Så bidrar vi till att skapa en fredligare och säkrare värld.	We want Sweden to act in solidarity with the world's vulnerable and war-affected people. We work in a conflict prevention way, and we focus on non-military means to create peace and spread democracy and human rights. This is how we contribute to creating a more peaceful and safer world.
Government Declaration, 2014 Stefan Löfven (S)	En modern svensk säkerhetspolitik byggs i stället på ökat samarbete inom Norden, Östersjöområdet, EU och FN. Sverige ska inte förhålla sig passivt om en katastrof eller ett angrepp skulle drabba ett EU-land eller ett nordiskt land, och vi förväntar oss att de länderna agerar på samma sätt om Sverige drabbas. Vårt land ska kunna både ge och ta emot såväl civilt som militärt stöd.	A modern Swedish security policy is instead built on increased cooperation within the Nordic region, the Baltic Sea area, the EU, and the UN. Sweden will not remain passive if a disaster or an attack affects an EU country or a Nordic country, and we expect those countries to act in the same way if Sweden is affected [...]
2021/22:114. Annie Lööf (C)	Det är, och har alltid varit, tillsammans med andra som vi bäst bygger trygghet och säkerhet i vår del av världen.	It is, and always has been, together with others that we best build security and safety in our part of the world.
2021/22:114. Magdalena Andersson (S)	Sverige är redan i dag en del av en säkerhetspolitisk gemenskap där det är svårt att föreställa sig att vi skulle förhålla oss passiva i händelse av kris eller krig i vårt närområde, men med Sverige som medlem i Nato skulle den solidariteten sättas ned i rättsligt bindande form.	Sweden is already part of a security community where it is difficult to imagine that we would remain passive in the event of a crisis or war in our region. But with Sweden as a NATO member, that solidarity would be formalized into legally binding commitments.
2021/22:116. Alexandra Völker (S)	När säkerhetsordningen ifrågasätts, när ett land i vårt närområde helt oprovocerat invaderar ett grannland och inleder ett fullskaligt krig och när	When the security order is questioned, when a country in our region invades a neighboring country unprovoked and launches a full-scale war, and when our

	<p>vår närmaste försvarspolitiska samarbetspartner Finland väljer att lämna den alliansfrihet vi delat och gemensamt upprätthållit, då måste vi analysera vad som är bäst för Sveriges säkerhet i dag och i framtiden. Det är det som vi socialdemokrater har gjort, och det är därför vi landat i att ansöka om ett medlemskap i Nato. Säkerhet bygger vi bäst tillsammans.</p>	<p>closest defense policy partner, Finland, chooses to abandon the non-alignment we have shared and upheld together, we must analyze what is best for Sweden's security today and in the future. This is what we Social Democrats have done, and that is why we have decided to apply for NATO membership. Security is best built together.</p>
<p>2021/22:114. Magdalena Andersson (S)</p>	<p>Sedan många år tillbaka bygger Sverige sin säkerhetspolitik på solidaritet och gemenskap med andra. Sverige ingår i en bred politisk gemenskap med våra europeiska och transatlantiska partnerländer. När vi gick med i EU behöll vi vår militära alliansfrihet, men vi lämnade då neutralitetspolitiken bakom oss. Och i enlighet med vår solidaritetsförklaring skulle Sverige inte heller förhålla sig passivt om ett land i Norden eller EU angreps. Sverige har ett stort antal försvarssamarbeten med andra länder, och de har nu fördjupats i den här krisen. Men framför allt har vi ett nära försvarssamarbete med Finland. De har en särställning.</p>	<p>For many years, Sweden has based its security policy on solidarity and partnership with others. Sweden is part of a broad political community with our European and transatlantic partner countries. When we joined the EU, we retained our military non-alignment but left neutrality behind. In accordance with our solidarity declaration, Sweden would not remain passive if a country in the Nordic region or the EU were attacked. Sweden has numerous defense collaborations with other countries, which have now been deepened during this crisis. Above all, we have a close defense partnership with Finland, which holds a special position.</p>
<p>2021/22:114. Annie Lööf (C)</p>	<p>Ett svenskt Natomedlemskap gör precis detta. Det stärker Sveriges försvar och säkerhet. Det stärker också säkerheten för och solidariteten och samarbetet med våra nordiska och baltiska vänner.</p>	<p>It [Swedish NATO membership] strengthens Sweden's defense and security. It also strengthens security, solidarity, and cooperation with our Nordic and Baltic friends.</p>