

## **SWEDISH NEUTRALITY AND ITS ABANDONMENT<sup>1</sup>**

**F.Fulya TEPE<sup>2</sup>**

### **ABSTRACT**

*One thing that Sweden is famous for is its long standing neutrality. In this paper, I first gave an overview of Swedish neutrality during the twentieth century and then examined it during the period starting with 2000 and ending with 2004. For this second aim, I studied the Swedish foreign policy statements belonging to this period. Findings of this research tells that a remodelling of the Swedish security policy took place in this period. One important aspect of this remodelling is the abandonment of the policy of neutrality. The general shape that this remodelling took is both related to the traditional objectives of the Swedish security policies, the changing external conditions, threats and risks.*

*Keywords: Swedish neutrality, Swedish security policy*

### **İSVEÇ NÖTRALİTESİ VE TERKİ**

#### **ÖZET**

İsveç uzun sürmüş olan notralite politikasıyla ünlü bir ülkedir. Bu makalede, önce yirminci yüzyıldaki İsveç notralitesinin bir genel özetini veriyorum ve arkasından da 2000 ile başlayan ve 2004 ile sonlanan dönemde İsveç notralitesini inceliyorum. Bu ikinci amaç için bu döneme ait, İsveç'in dış politika demeçlerini inceledim. Bu araştırmanın bulguları bu dönemde İsveç'in güvenlik politikasının yeniden modellendiğini ortaya koydu. Bu yeniden modellenmenin önemli bir yönü notralite politikasının terkedilmesidir. Yeniden modellenmenin aldığı genel biçim hem İsveç güvenlik politikalarının geleneksel hedefleriyle hem de değişen dış koşullar, tehditler ve risklerle ilgilidir.

*Anahtar Kelimeler: İsveç notralitesi, İsveç güvenlik politikası*

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<sup>2</sup> Ph.D. student in sociology department of İstanbul University.

## **1. BACKGROUND: SWEDISH NEUTRALITY DURING THE TWENTIETH CENTURY**

### **1.1. Swedish Neutrality During the First World War**

When the war started in July–August 1914, Sweden had enjoyed a peaceful century. On the first days of the war, Swedish position concerning the war was not made clear, for the government was not sure whether Germany would accept Sweden's neutrality (Wahlbäck, p. 23). A few days later, Sweden, with the full support of the parliament, declared neutrality regarding the war between Austria–Hungary and Serbia. A renewed declaration of neutrality regarding all ongoing wars followed on 3 August, when Germany had declared war on France and Russia. Russia's defeat was important for Swedish interests, and hence Swedish ministers "therefore had good reason to tilt [Sweden's] neutrality in Germany's favour. The Foreign Minister privately assured the Germans of Sweden's "benevolent neutrality", while Germany's enemies were only promised "strict neutrality" (Wahlbäck, p. 23). Later, there came joint declarations of neutrality in which Sweden was accompanied by Norway and Denmark.

Sweden's neutrality was not violated by any of the belligerents during the First World War. This could be regarded as a result of the Hague Conventions of 1907 which legalized neutrality rights and duties of states in relation to warfare both on land and at sea (Wahlbäck, p. 23–24).

The First World War also involved a trade dimension. However, the legal aspect of neutral trade and shipping was not that clear; this lack of clarity created problems for Sweden when Britain wanted to weaken Germany also with respect to trade and closed the North Sea to trade with that intention (Wahlbäck, p. 24). This was, of course, being done by breaking international laws. A further step for Britain was to restrict neutral trade with Germany. This restriction would have negative consequences on Swedish economy. Prime Minister Hammarskjöld initially chose to resist Britain emphasizing international law and this attitude was supported by Swedish public opinion, too (Wahlbäck, p. 25).

Especially after the British government closed the North Sea to trade, US support for declarations of neutrality was sought, but the American government was not highly responsive to these demands.

Under these conditions, while, for instance, Norway was forced to adjust to the effects of British total naval war as regards its trade, "Sweden, until 1917, was to all practical effect Germany's neutral ally" (Malmberg, p. 113). However, under the impact of serious supply problems (Wahlbäck, p. 25), the Swartz-Lindman conservative government had to orient itself toward the Entente in 1917. This reorientation was maintained by its liberal-social democratic successor.

A study made by Steven Koblik focusing on Sweden's political position in 1917–18 provides another explanation. In Koblik's study it is argued that there was a lack of consensus regarding foreign policy issues within the policy-making community:

Political manoeuvring by various party leaders who were attempting to influence the policy making process dominated the foreign policy scene. The popular support that the policy of neutrality enjoyed at the outset of the war was diminished as the war progressed until, in 1916, the united front cracked. Because Sweden lacked domestic consensus, Koblik asserts that its foreign policy during the World War I never became clearly defined. During Germany's control of the Baltic, Sweden's neutrality was benevolent toward the Axis (sic!) powers. When the tide of the war turned – marked with the withdrawal of Russia and increased participation by the United States – Sweden's policy gravitated toward the West and away from Germany. (Steene, p. 182)

## **1.2. Swedish Neutrality in the Inter-War Period**

At the end of the First World War, the two traditionally great powers, Germany and Russia, had been defeated. Finland, the Baltic states and Poland gained independence. Denmark regained the Danish speaking part of Schleswig. Sweden became surrounded by small states, and all the Nordic countries were now free from ties to surrounding great powers.

In the new era, Malmberg notes,

the neutrality tradition was substantially transformed, for domestic as well as for international reasons. While the choice before the war had been between national neutrality and military alliance with a great power, the alternative was now to what extent Sweden should have trust in collective security. (Malmberg, p. 127)

Sweden joined the League of Nations starting from its foundation in 1919–20. However, the ideas of collective security propagated within the League came to be an obstacle to the policy and principle of neutrality:

The clearly hostile attitude of victorious powers toward neutrality, as a general principle, placed the small states under pressure to reconsider their policies. Neutrality was in principle incompatible with collective security (...). Sweden and other states ceased using the term "neutrality" to depict their foreign and security policies and in the League of Nations they often went under the label "ex-neutrals" (...). Another factor that theoretically rendered neutrality obsolete was the legal proscription of aggressive war in the Briand-Kellogg Pact of 1928 (...). Neutrality ideology lost its ground when the League of Nations introduced a system of collective security (...). (Malmberg, pp. 127–128)

When the League of Nations failed to function in the case of Italian conquest of Ethiopia, Sweden departed, in 1936 with other Scandinavian states, from the principles of collective security that the League of Nations represented (Steene, p. 168). Following this, Sweden tried to build a limited Nordic defence but failed. Under the conditions of a deteriorating international climate, Swedish political parties, in 1939, came to an agreement on the need for a strongly armed defence of neutrality.

### **1.3. Swedish Neutrality During the Second World War**

When the war broke out on 1 September 1939, the Swedish Government issued a declaration of neutrality. A second Scandinavian declaration was made on 3 September jointly by the Danish, Norwegian and Swedish governments. Sweden continued its trade relations with belligerents until 9 April 1940 when the Swedish trade with the West was interrupted, as a consequence of the German occupation of Denmark and Norway. Especially after this interruption, Swedish and German economies became intertwined. Malmberg comments that no non-occupied country played such a vital role in the Nazis' economic new ordering as neutral Sweden (Malmberg, p. 137).

After 1939, Sweden's peace was disturbed by the conflicting factors of Swedish commitment to Nordic solidarity and the German aggression. Sweden had to make deviations from neutrality on three critical occasions: the Winter War in 1939–1940, the German occupation of Denmark and Norway in 1940 and the German attack on the USSR in 1941. "On all these three occasions it was deviations from neutrality rather than neutrality itself that maintained Sweden's cohesion and saved the country from war" (Malmberg, p. 138). In the Winter War, Sweden had to review its neutrality and declared a 'non-belligerent' status for herself as she wanted to provide humanitarian aid and a supply of volunteers to Finland (Steene, p. 169). Herolf and Lindahl adds that Sweden also sent extensive amounts of weapons and material to Finland on this occasion. Moreover, a Swedish air unit fought on the Finnish side (Herolf & Lindahl, p. 160). In the German occupation of Denmark and Norway, Germany demanded that soldiers on leave, war material, ammunition and provisions should be transported through Sweden to Norway. Malmberg states that the demands were presented in such a way that a negative reply would be regarded as a hostile act (Malmberg, p. 140). The government had to accept German demands in order for Sweden to stay out of war. Beginning with an agreement between Germany and Sweden of 8 July 1940, these went on for three years. The third deviation from neutrality in favor of Germany took place in connection with the German attack on the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941.

The same day the Germans submitted a request to the Swedish government to transport a division from Norway to Finland through Sweden, and made clear that a rejection would be interpreted as a hostile act (...). These German demands caused the "midsummer crisis" in the Swedish government. (Malmberg, p. 141)

In the end, the Swedish government allowed Germany to use Swedish railways and roads for transportation of troops and military equipment provided that this would not compromise Swedish sovereignty. Beside these three occasions in which Sweden made divergences from neutrality, Wahlbäck mentions one more occasion when in December 1941, Swedish government rejected a German proposal concerning the transfer of German soldiers, going on or returning from leave, in

Finland over Sweden (Wahlbäck, p. 63). However, it can be said that later in the discussion process, a compromise was made regarding this request:

In March 1942 Hitler sent a message to King Gustav V in which he assured him that Germany intended to respect Sweden's "neutrality", a choice of words which implied a reduction in the magnitude of German demands for Swedish support. In the summer of 1942 Sweden proposed that, because of technical difficulties connected with the workings of the Swedish railway system, there should be some reduction in the number of German soldiers from Norway passing through Sweden, and the Germans accepted this proposal in part. (Wahlbäck, p. 63)

During the later stages of war, Sweden again faced demands, this time from the Allies (Steele, p. 170). Britain and the US demanded that Sweden should end its transit agreement with Germany and drastically reduce its trade with Germany (Wahlbäck, p. 64). As stated earlier, Sweden cancelled the transit agreement of July 1940 on 29 July 1943. As regards trade, especially the export of iron ore and ball-bearings were important. In April 1944, US and British governments wanted Sweden to reduce its exports of these items below the level agreed on half a year earlier. Sweden rejected this demand but privately led US to the Swedish firm which was the main producer of ball-bearings. On 8 June, according to an agreement made with the company, export of ball-bearings to Germany was reduced (Wahlbäck, pp. 65–66). Later, the western powers wanted Sweden to cut diplomatic relations with Germany and this was refused by Sweden. However, in September 1944, Sweden decided to ban all foreign shipping from Swedish territorial waters and this ended almost all trade between Sweden and Germany in practise (Wahlbäck, p. 66).

It should also be noted that among the breaches of neutrality in Sweden's part in favour of the allied countries were the continual British use of Swedish air space when attacking Germany and the organized military training of Danish and Norwegian refugees under the pretense of police training. Later in 1944–45 American aircrafts were used for the transportation of these Norwegian 'police forces' from Sweden to Northern Norway (Herolf & Lindahl, p. 161).

For an evaluation of the performance of Swedish neutrality in the Second World War, we may quote Herolf and Lindahl:

It is obvious that it was not the declaration of neutrality that kept Sweden out of World War II. It was rather its isolated geopolitical position behind German frontiers, and the German interest in a continued access to the iron ore from Swedish mines. The mistrust was deep on the German side, however, and a number of plans for attack were made. From 1943 the successive strengthening of the Swedish defence constituted a restraining factor, however. (Herolf & Lindahl, p. 161)

The practice of war-time neutrality politics also had domestic consequences:

The experience of the two world wars forged a consensus in Swedish politics and intellectual life on the need for an independent armed national neutrality, in the absence of universal collective security. (Malmberg, p. 143)

Malmborg compares the Swedish neutrality policy applied during the First World War with the one applied during the Second World War:

While Hjalmar Hammarskjöld's neutrality in the First World War had been rather stubbornly legalist, in the Second World War Swedish diplomacy developed more flexible methods of dealing with the great powers. By a sophisticated use of ambiguities a kind of informal code of behavior occurred which increased the neutral's room for manoeuvre. This took concrete expressions such as the efforts to conclude bilateral trade agreements with the potential belligerents in anticipation of war and the construction of a system for regulating the economy in close cooperation with private industry, interest organizations and popular movements, and the formation of a national government with the support of virtually the whole parliament that conducted foreign policy from 1939–1945. It also included a recourse to symbolic actions, such as declaration or not of neutrality, use or not of the word 'neutrality', buying time by awaiting the weakening of Germany before responding to the demands of the Allies, and playing with the distinction between public affairs, which fell under neutrality laws and private affairs, which did not. The tradition of formulating foreign policy in a legal technical manner that developed before and during the First World War was further enforced by the Second World War. (Malmborg, p. 144)

#### **1.4. Swedish Neutrality in the Post-Second World War Period**

Sweden joined the United Nations in 1946. Although it was not a charter member, Sweden pursued a highly visible policy within the organization. During the initial post-war period, Sweden also tried to establish a joint Scandinavian defence arrangement. However, largely as a result of divergent attitudes toward NATO, the negotiations ended in 1949. After some political debate, Sweden chose to continue the traditional policy of neutrality, defining it as non-alliance in peace aiming for neutrality in war (Steene, p. 172).

#### **1.5. Swedish Neutrality and the Cold War**

After the revelation of archival findings and interviews in the past decade, it has been made clear that there was a considerable discrepancy between official political statements about Sweden's position in the Cold War and the defence planning, socio-economic interdependence, and ideological and emotional affiliation of the majority of the population. These findings caused a revisionist debate with accusations of double standards, Swedish 'free riding', and systematic misinformation'. Strong relations with NATO members and a readiness for receiving military assistance might, in this context, lead to the question whether Sweden should be seen as NATO's seventeenth member rather than neutral (Malmborg, p. 148).

Jacob Gustavsson touches on the same issue, referring to revisionist claims that question Swedish neutrality in the Cold War era. According to these claims although the government proclaimed a policy of neutrality in public, Sweden was in fact in extensive cooperation with the Western bloc regarding trade policy, the Western embargo against the Soviet Union and its allies, secret military cooperation,

preparations for receiving Western assistance in case of an attack from the East and close relations with NATO (Gustavsson, p. 75).

However, the official view, as presented in the 1994 report of the Commission on Neutrality Policy, is that there were no breaches of neutrality during the period 1949–1969:

The Commission on Neutrality Policy, charged with the task of investigating possible preparations to receive military assistance, found no evidence of formal contacts to have taken place between Sweden and NATO on this matter during the investigated period, 1949–69. Some Swedish preparations had taken place, however, aimed at making cooperation possible, as such in the extension of the runways of some airbases in the eastern part of Sweden, which the Commission thought should be viewed in the context of emergency landings by bombers returning from the east. Some other preparations were also made, all deemed by the Commission on Neutrality Policy to be aimed 'primarily at creating freedom of action – in a threatening, vaguely defined, contingency – permitting the rapid reception of mainly indirect assistance, primarily from the United States, were a decision made to this effect at the political level'. (Herolf & Lindahl, p. 165)

However, it should be noted here that the Commission did not look into all aspects of Swedish activities relating to foreign powers during the Cold War, such as signals intelligence collection operations directed against the Soviet Unions (which caused two Swedish planes to be shot down by the Soviet air force in 1952). Moreover, the period after 1969 was not investigated by any commission and Herolf and Lindahl, too, note that newly opened NATO archives indicate "extensive contacts and plans for mutual support, formulated for the eventuality of Sweden being involved [in a military confrontation]" (Herolf & Lindahl, p. 166).

Malmberg offers another angle to the issue. According to him, in the Cold War, neutrality continued to thrive but in a new form. Malmberg believes that Sweden's status during the Cold War can not be caught with the simple dichotomies of 'neutral' – 'not neutral' or 'aligned' – 'non-aligned'. According to him, we need to focus on interaction in order to understand how Swedish neutrality was transformed. Malmberg continues:

Sweden's international political profile in the Cold War was made up of a combination of national neutrality, Nordic co-operation, and a commitment to UN collective security (...). These three concentric circles remained consistent all through the Cold War, albeit gradually complemented by a striving for association with the EC and Pan-European confidence building in the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE). (Malmberg, p. 151).

We could add to this picture the silent partnership between the US and Sweden (Malmberg, p. 157).

Despite its neutrality policy, Sweden both economically and politically was certainly a western country and within this context, the only perceived threat during the Cold War years was the Soviets. In line with this perception, one case which attracts

attention is that Sweden, in the 1960s, complied with the embargo on the export of strategic goods to the Soviet Union. Sweden explained its participation in the embargo as a purely economic matter. (Malmberg, pp. 151–152)

In April 1963, the Swedish “active policy of neutrality” was introduced. “The active element consisted mainly of verbal interventions, expressions of opinions on conflicts in different parts of the world, and attempts to influence their resolution” (Malmberg, p. 161). Sweden’s active policy of neutrality emphasized global system reforms beside Sweden’s traditional independence and “it aimed at promoting Swedish security by principally ideological means and entailed a gradual transition in the official foreign policy doctrine from strategies of adjustment to strategies of change” (Malmberg, pp. 161–162).

Behind the change in Swedish policy lied the change in the Soviet attitude towards neutrality in Europe. In the new era, the Soviets chose to spend efforts to turn the policy of neutrals in their favour. Moreover, the 1975 Helsinki Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) recognised in its final document the right of every state to neutrality (Malmberg, p. 162).

Another important decision taken by the Swedish government in the Cold War era was about nuclear arms. In 1968, Swedish government decided not to acquire nuclear arms. An underlying argument which was not revealed in public was that by then Sweden could get help from US when needed (Malmberg, p. 158).

In 1972, Sweden decided not to apply for membership in the EEC this being primarily justified by Sweden’s concern about the maintenance of a credible neutrality (Steene, p. 178).

Sweden’s foreign policy during these years served other than purely domestic interests. Gustavsson argues that Sweden’s commitment not to ally itself with either side had constituted a ‘strategic good’ to the superpowers:

During the Cold War years, there was occasionally a demand for non-aligned states that could act as a mediator, take independent initiatives, and chair multilateral discussions. Sweden was one out of relatively few states that could perform this function. (Gustavsson, p. 77)

Moreover, given the general state of affairs of international politics at the time,

Sweden could exploit the fact that both sides had an interest in not provoking a change in Swedish posture. This had given Sweden a certain status and prestige on the international scene. In short, during the days of Cold War tension, being neutral was ‘something to be’. (Gustavsson, p. 85)

### **1.6. Swedish Neutrality After Cold War: 1989 - 1999**

When the Cold War ended, Swedish neutrality lost its ground or in Gustavsson's words, the end of Cold War eliminated a previous restriction on Swedish foreign policy (Gustavsson, p. 86). Threat perceptions changed dramatically:

[P]ost-Cold War security scenarios focus as much on civilian threats as military. Wars and armed conflicts now occur within countries rather than between them. With increasingly permeable borders in Europe and transnational issues such as environmental pollution, organized crime and terrorism high on the international political agenda, it makes less sense to think in national territorial and military terms. (Malmberg, p. 171)

This new picture of threats turned neutrality into an irrelevant principle. "Journalists, commentators, individual politicians and academics began to argue that Sweden ought to abandon neutrality and take its due place in the Western and European Security" (Malmberg, p. 170). In doing so, Sweden could close the gap between what was officially said and what was implicitly done.

Moreover, the end of Cold War also shook Sweden's special role in the world which was granted by its neutral status:

[T]here was no longer any need for a mediator or bridge-builder between states on different sides of the bloc. Sweden, in addition, found itself with few possibilities to have an impact among the other countries, since it was not a member of those organizations that were now actively shaping the new Europe. Rather than the United Nations and the CSCE it was now the EC and NATO which were the forceful actors in the changing Europe. (Herolf & Lindahl, p. 172)

In 1991, the Carlsson government applied for EC membership "while retaining our policy of neutrality" and emphasized the CSCE dimension. This move indicated a change in the Swedish position which previously had found EC membership and neutrality incompatible. In the background of this move, was a new world which did not involve an East-West conflict any more. Of course, another reason which paved the way for the EC membership application, was Sweden's relative decline as an international power in terms of expenditures on military defense, GDP per capita, and the distribution of international trade (for more detailed description of the relative decrease in Sweden's international power, see Gustavsson, pp. 77-82). The minor great power of the 1960s was transforming into a more ordinary small West European state and Swedish governments saw EC membership as a solution for their persisting problems.

The new non-socialist government coming to power in September 1991 declared that the time had come for a reassessment of the value of neutrality. Prime Minister Carl Bildt noted that

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[I]t is obvious that the term “policy of neutrality” can no longer adequately be applied as an overall description of the foreign and security policies we wish to pursue within the European framework. We will pursue a policy with a clear European identity. (Herolf & Lindahl, p. 177)

Three other major changes took place in this era. First, neutrality policy was changed for a more limited concept of military non-alignment: in 1992 the Swedish position was narrowed down to a policy of military non-alignment in peacetime in order to preserve the *possibility* of remaining neutral in the event of war. In the words of Prime Minister Carl Bildt:

The hard core of our security policy is still non-participation in military alliances, with an obligation to maintain an adequate independent defence capability to enable us to remain neutral in the event of a war in our immediate vicinity. Sweden is not defended by anyone else and our defence is for Sweden only. (Herolf & Lindahl, p. 178)

The new formulation formally provided Sweden with the opportunity of determining its policy freely in wartime (Herolf & Lindahl, p. 187). Later, this position was given official expression in the declarations of leading figures of the Swedish political and diplomatic establishment:

The government has declared that “Sweden couldn’t be indifferent in case of an EU member being attacked”, Carl Bildt has stated that Sweden could not be ‘passive’ if the Baltic countries were attacked. Sverker Åström, former Ambassador and high-ranking Foreign Ministry official has included a similar analysis in a government commission report. According to Åström the basis for the cooperation in the EU was the feeling and the need for cohesion, which rested on common values. This in the end meant that if an EU member was faced with a crisis, depending on an external outside threat or some other reason, such as an environmental catastrophe or a difficult domestic crisis, the others had to engage in some form to help solve the crisis. (Herolf & Lindahl, pp. 187–188)

Second, a higher profile in organized international cooperation was initiated with Swedish participation in various security initiatives under US and NATO leadership.

Third, an open attitude was declared towards security dimensions within the EU, as long as they did not interfere with questions of territorial defence (Malmberg, p. 172).

Hence, in the post-Cold War period Sweden participated in various international engagements exemplified by, for instance,

participation in the UN peace-keeping force UNPROFOR in Bosnia in 1993; NATO’s Partnership for Peace in 1994; observer status in the West European Union (WEU) in 1995; participation in the NATO-led Implementation Force (IFOR) in 1995, replaced by the Stabilisation Force (SFOR) for the surveillance of the Peace Agreement in Bosnia in 1997; the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC), and the West European Armaments Group (WEAG) in 1997, which has the aim of creating a common defence research and a common European market for defence materials. (Malmberg, p. 173)

Sweden became an EU member on 1 January 1995. But the membership of EU was not achieved at the expense of abandoning the policy of neutrality, but rather by modifying it (Malmborg, p. 184). The Amsterdam Treaty, which came into force in 1999, is also in line with Sweden's intention to maintain neutrality. According to the Amsterdam Treaty, any military defence to be developed would be limited to peace-keeping and humanitarian operations (Malmborg, p. 184). One of the novelties of the Amsterdam Treaty was the possibility of 'constructive abstention':

[I]n the case a decision which has to be taken unanimously, a member state can abstain from the vote in order to avoid participating in the execution of the decision. However, it accepts the decision to bind the Union (...). Yet a neutral member state could abstain 'constructively' on actions with military or defense policy aspects and would not be required to contribute financially to the operation, as such measures are not financed by the regular EC budget (...). In sum, legally speaking the Amsterdam Treaty is fully compatible with neutrality obligations. (Goetschel, p. 125)

Another important event in this era is the NATO bombings of Yugoslavia. "Sweden's response to this event was a 'third way' between non-alignment and allegiance to the Atlantic alliance" (Malmborg, p. 182). While the former Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson strongly condemned the form of military sanctions practised by NATO against a sovereign state without UN mandate, the Persson government expressed understanding for the bombings (Malmborg, p. 182). However, it rejected a request from NATO to contribute to the troops to aid refugees from Kosovo as long as such a NATO command lacked a UN or OSCE authorization (Malmborg, p. 182). After the Kosovo crisis, the Swedish government softened its unconditional insistence on UN Security Council mandate for peace operations. Hallenberg states that attitude of the Government toward NATO's military operations in Kosova indicates Europeanization of certain aspects Swedish foreign policy (Hallenberg, p. 26).

## **2. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SWEDISH NEUTRALITY**

Neutrality as a security policy concept originated at the same time as the concept of state sovereignty:

Sovereignty meant authority over all matters, and foremost the right of states to wage war whenever they thought this would fit their interest. As a correlative, neutrality represented the right of states to abstain from war whenever this seemed to better fit their interests (...). Militarily weaker states in particular welcomed neutrality as an instrument by which to maintain their sovereignty in an international environment in which splitting or 'swallowing' of such states was nothing but a regular feature of the balancing process between major powers (...). These states therefore saw neutrality as a legally founded instrument limiting the use of force within international society. (Goetschel, p. 119)

Sweden, limited as regards its size and political influence, is one of those countries which has chosen neutrality as a way of staying out of wars. During the twentieth century, neutrality policy remained at the core of Swedish foreign politics and

Sweden dealt with the developments in the world with the status of “neutral state”. As a result, Sweden could succeed to stay out of wars:

The neutrality/non-alignment policy could be said to have served its strategic purpose (but also its domestic function of keeping the people behind its rulers) during two World Wars and the Cold War. What it could not do quite as well was protect Sweden against the peace that broke out in 1989–91, and against the new challenge: European integration. (Huldt, p. 46)

Moreover, the policy of neutrality had a strong standing in Swedish politics:

Over the years, all kinds of arguments – including national security, international peace, domestic welfare, and ethics – had been claimed to speak in favor of this policy. The policy of neutrality had become institutionalized and to question or advocate a change in this policy was highly risky for anyone who wanted to be taken seriously in the political debate. (Gustavsson, p. 87)

According to Malmberg, the post-Cold War debate proves that neutrality is not just a security policy. There is also an identity dimension of neutrality (Malmberg, p. 171). To some extent this dimension is related to a perceived connection between neutrality and the Swedish welfare state:

Sweden’s rapid transformation from a poor peripheral state to a prosperous model economy and society was strongly associated with neutrality. Neutrality was not only perceived as a means of keeping Sweden out of war, but also as an instrument for safeguarding the Swedish welfare system in the future. (Malmberg, p. 146; the identity aspect of Swedish neutrality politics is also emphasized by Goetschel, p. 121).

On the other hand, analysts agree on the importance of the special ‘mediator’, ‘peace promoter’ role of small neutral states. For instance, Bruce Hopper has pointed to the role played by small neutral states in international collaboration, when it comes to promoting values of decency and a moral code of behaviour (Steene, p. 173).

In a 1957 book, Samuel Abrahamson studies small-state neutrality and its possible effects upon international trends, concluding that “Sweden has attempted to promote its own influence upon the international system through the maintenance of a high profile that includes serving as a mediator in world affairs”. For Abrahamson, “this role may be the small state’s most important *raison d’être*” (Steene, p. 176).

Joseph Board, in his 1970 study, “views Sweden as performing the role of balancer between the power blocs. Sweden’s non-aligned status plays an important role in the promotion of systemic stability even though Sweden is ideologically linked to the West”. (Steene, p. 178).

It could be argued then that these ‘mediator’ and ‘peace promoter’ roles together with the emotional attachment of the Swedish public to neutrality policy functioned as identity-providers for the Swedish nation.

Steven Koblik, in a 1972 study, states that Sweden's foreign policy of neutrality has been shaped by both external and internal variables, the external factors referring to the international scene, the internal ones to domestic factors (Steene, p. 182). Applying Koblik's distinction to some of the aspects discussed above, we could argue that, for instance, the identity-forming aspect of Swedish neutrality politics belongs to the internal variables, while the role of being a balancer between the power blocs belongs to the external variables.

While Swedish neutrality policy, at least in the Cold War period, from an external point of view can be seen as lacking in transparency (is this country really neutral, or is it a covert ally of the Western bloc?), it is domestically characterized by conformism: it is not open to discussion or questioning. Jakob Gustavsson, for instance, notes a strong implicit norm against internal controversy on neutrality policy:

Since the government had something of a monopoly on the 'correct' interpretation of the policy, the level of politicization was low; dissenting views were claimed to undermine the credibility of the policy and endanger national security (...). (Gustavsson, p. 74)

Likewise, Wilhelm Agrell states that any questioning of the neutrality policy by definition was something dubious and irresponsible according to the previous official stance (Agrell, p. 195) and supports his conclusion with various cases. Likewise, Bo Huld comments that

During the Palme years it was still possible to describe an open NATO-membership discussion as off limits. Today, such efforts would not be taken seriously. (Huld, p. 50)

The lack of transparency and the tension between official and unofficial attitudes during the Cold War also made the Swedish neutrality policy appear somewhat unclear. Malmberg comments that

Sweden's adherence to Western values could not easily be reconciled with a foreign policy that somewhat impeded a clear distinction between democracy and dictatorship. (Malmberg, p. 170)

It could be asserted that it was this lack of transparency of Swedish neutrality as well as the domestic conformism regarding its meaning and contents that provided ground for the double-sided Swedish neutrality posture during the Cold War years. Official neutrality joined unofficial alignment to the West. This characteristic of Swedish neutrality could also be seen as inconsistent with Sweden's often declared moral stance in international politics (which would seem to require a less ambiguous attitude as regards right and wrong in international affairs). What we see here is a former minor great power, with a continuously weakening international position as regards economy and defence capacity, acting in a world where there are very few

means of international protection for small states, doing everything in its power to stay out of war.

### **3. REMODELLING OF THE SWEDISH SECURITY POLICY IN STATEMENTS OF GOVERNMENT POLICY ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS: 2000 - 2005**

This section of the study will focus on the Statements of Government Policy on Foreign Affairs (SGPFA) belonging to years starting from 2000, including 2005 and will follow the traces of the Swedish neutrality in these official documents. This implies that this study could be further complemented by another study which concentrates on what actually happened during the period under examination. Of course, a study which will be conducted on the action level would let us make a comparison of security policies on the verbal and action levels and this would provide us with a fuller picture of the pursued Swedish security policy in this period. However, in this study, below, first the Swedish security policy formulations starting from 2000 will be presented and a summary of the way that these security policies were contextualized each year will be provided. Later, the overall change in the security policy in the period under examination will be interpreted and conceptualized being loyal to the context.

To start with, it should be noted that the traditional idealistic position that Sweden had adopted for a long time in foreign affairs continued to dominate the SGPFAs in the period 2000-2005, too. Within this context, the 2000-2005 Swedish SGPFAs remained to be the voice of the conscience in global affairs. As it will be remembered, being the voice of the conscience was regarded as one of the major characteristics of small neutral states in the Cold War era. After the Cold War ended, authors commented that this feature of small neutral states became obsolete. However, it is obvious that in the present international system, this feature is still an important and necessary moral position. The Swedish security policies, which are summarized yearly below, should be understood within the framework of such a background.

In the year 2000, SGPFA of Sweden repeated the classical Swedish security policy formulation:

Sweden's non-participation in military alliances, with the aim of making it possible for our country to be neutral in the event of war in our vicinity, remains unchanged. It serves to strengthened security in our part of Europe, thereby enhancing our own security. (SGPFA, 2000, p. 3)

However, this time, this formulation has been contextualized with Sweden's strong commitment to European security which was expressed in the following sentence: "The security of Europe is indivisible" (SGPFA 2000, p. 2). This is a strong expression compared to the expressions which are found on the same theme in statements of the previous years. Behind this strong commitment to European security lies the idea that enlargement of the EU is a peace process.

The 2001 SGPPFA, again, emphasized the nordic, European and global dimensions of Sweden's security policy as in the 2000 Statement and the EU was defined as a major player in foreign and security policy arena (SGPPFA 2001, p. 1). One significant difference in the 2001 SGPPFA is that the Government gives signal of a prospective change in the classical Swedish security policy:

Since 1992, Sweden's security policy has been summed up as follows: "Sweden's non-participation in military alliances, with the aim of making it possible for our country to remain neutral in the event of war in our vicinity, remains unchanged."

In our opinion, it is now time to review this formulation. We have therefore invited all the political parties in the Riksdag to discussions on this subject. It is our aim to generate broad agreement, and a broad debate, in order to arrive at a better description of the orientation of our security policy.

It is not our intention to abandon the policy of non-participation in military alliances.

The policy of non-participation in military alliances is an asset for Sweden and has the strong support of the Swedish people. It allows us freedom of action. It helps reduce the risk of conflicts and tension in our part of Europe. It makes it possible for us to be proactive in the work of nuclear disarmament.

All these factors form the basis for our choice of security policy. We are looking forward to the discussions, which we hope can [sic] start this month. (SGPPFA 2001, pp. 6-7).

In the 2001 SGPPFA, Sweden's stress on developing conflict prevention and crisis management capacity of the EU was maintained (SGPPFA 2001, p. 5). However, it was clearly stated that the EU is not regarded as a defence alliance (SGPPFA 2001, p. 6). When this last point is considered, we can easily conclude that the traditional marriage of security and defence at the national level will not be considered at the EU level. Instead, a new conception of security is taking place which only aims constructive interference in different kinds of conflicts. Moreover, in 2001, this new concept of security on the EU level was connected with transatlantic cooperation:

The transatlantic link and a continuing vigorous role for the USA in Europe and our neighbourhood are of major importance for the security of Sweden as well as of Europe. As EU presiding country Sweden aims to strengthen relations with the USA and Canada. (SGPPFA 2001, p. 8).

The 2001 SGPPFA shows how the Swedish security policy is situated in a delicate balance mechanism. It is obvious that membership in the EU, which is conceptualized as "international state" or "postmodern state" by some authors, forces the imagination of the Swedish politicians and lead them to work on different security policy possibilities, meticulously. This craftsman approach to security policy on Sweden's part seems like a feature of a transition period which indicates a fragile balance situation.

Terrorist attacks of September 11 marked the year 2001. This shaking event and its implications for Sweden and the EU were given place in the 2002 SGPPFA:

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The appalling acts of terrorism on 11 September made it clear just how vulnerable the open society is and revealed the threats to which we are all exposed. It goes without saying that Sweden and the EU must take an active and vigorous part in the fight against international terrorism. (SGPFA 2002, p. 7)

An examination of the SGPFA's after 2001 shows that September 11 terrorist attacks left a permanent trace in the foreign policy of Sweden, too, as it did in the foreign policies of other Western states. However, both September 11 terrorist attacks and the sign of revision in the 2001 SGPFA did not bring any change to the classical Swedish security policy in the 2002 SGPFA:

Sweden pursues a policy of non-participation in military alliances. This security policy, making it possible for our country to remain neutral in the event of conflicts in our vicinity, has served us well (SGPFA 2002, p. 10).

Sweden's emphasis on security in its vicinity remains unchanged in 2002 and this automatically reminds of the supportive Swedish attitude toward the EU enlargement. Support for the UN is one of the most persistent themes on the Swedish SGPFA's and in 2002, this theme was again given place. However, at the regional level, Sweden wanted to rely on the US commitment to Europe.

It is only beginning with 2003 SGPFA that the togetherness of military non-alignment and neutrality policies has dissolved. In the 2003, the Swedish security policy was formulated as follows:

Sweden does not participate in military alliances. This is a policy that has served us well in different phases of history for almost two hundred years. It allows us freedom of action. It has broad popular support. The agreement the Government has reached with the Centre Party, the Christian Democrats and the Moderate Party means that it has broad political support. (SGPFA 2003, p. 16)

This new formulation of the security policy in the 2003 SGPFA was accompanied with a repeated commitment on a united Europe for enhanced security (SGPFA 2003, p. 14) and the EU was indicated as one of the security actors beside NATO and Russia (SGPFA 2003, p. 15). In 2003 SGPFA, Euro-Atlantic cooperation was emphasized, too. Security problems all over the world were addressed and a broadened security concept was presented:

The security of states is traditionally said to be guaranteed by military means, including now the fight against terrorism. But this is too narrow a view. In today's world, security must be built globally and jointly, and entail freedom and security for all. (SGPFA, 2003, p. 2)

This broadened concept of security will become a repeated theme in the following SGPFA's.

In 2004, the Swedish security policy was formulated in a way that is similar to the 2003 security policy:

Sweden does not participate in military alliances. This is a policy that has served – and still serves – us well. At the same time we want to be actively involved in strengthening European security and defence policy. There is no contradiction here. (SGPFA 2004, p. 11)

The above statement once again provided the official wordings of the fact that Sweden flexibilized its security policy in a way to exclude neutrality policy and to include playing a part in the EU security and defence policy. In 2004, the EU was encouraged to increase its contribution to global security (SGPFA 2004, p. 10). In relation to the war in Iraq, Sweden supported multilateralism and the UN. However, In addition to this, interdependence with the US has been emphasized more strongly than the previous years:

Although the governments of Sweden and the United States at present take different views of certain issues, this must not overshadow the fact that the active involvement of the United States is essential to meet all the challenges facing the international community. No country can deal with these challenges on its own. The United States needs the world and the world needs the United States. The relationship with the United States - the “Transatlantic Link” - is crucial for Europe’s security and development. Even if we sometimes have differences of opinion, we share essential basic values of democracy and human rights. (SGPFA 2004, p. 5)

As stated above, since 2003, the neutrality policy as a security policy was abandoned in the Swedish SGPFA. In 2003 and 2004 SGPFA, the main security policy was described as “non-participation in military alliances” and the policy of neutrality was not given place. How can transformation in the Swedish security policy be explained? What happened to the neutrality policy which used to be strictly stated in the previous SGPFA? The answer that this author gives to this question is three layered: The abandonment of the neutrality policy in the Swedish SGPFA could be related both to the territorial scope of the neutrality policy in use in the previous statements, to the improved security conditions in Europe and also to the changing security threats in the world. The Swedish neutrality policy has been formulated to secure Sweden’s neutrality in the event of conflicts in Sweden’s vicinity. This territorial scope of the Swedish neutrality has always been emphasized in the SGPFA. The territorial concerns, on the other hand, provided ground for Sweden’s supportive attitude toward the enlargement of the EU. Sweden declared that it regarded the EU enlargement as a peace process. When the EU enlargement process became mature enough to maintain peace and to eliminate war and conflict possibilities in the vicinity of Sweden, the neutrality policy became obsolete. On the other hand, emergence of non-conventional security problems on the agenda makes old threats seem less important and directs attention to new types of solutions. The abandonment of the neutrality policy and leaving room only for military non-alignment could be read in this line. Here, it could be useful to remember that Sweden gave the sign of revision in the traditional Swedish security policy formulation which was expressed as “Sweden’s non-participation in military alliances, with the aim of making it possible for our country to remain neutral in the event of war in our vicinity, remains unchanged” in 2001 SGPFA.

The earthquake, which struck Asia in the end of 2004, left Sweden with a very high number of casualties. The Asia earthquake and lessons taken from this disastrous event dominates the 2005 Swedish SGPFA. Within this context, in the 2005 SGPFA, military non-alignment as a security policy was left out, too, as was the neutrality policy starting from 2003. Unexpected exclusion of military non-alignment in the 2005 Swedish SGPFA could be related to the contextual priorities of the time. A further interpretation, which could be made on this issue now, would be immature. In the 2005 SGPFA, this time, strong emphasis was put on the issue of 'improving Sweden's capacity in emergency situations' and benefiting from the EU membership with this intention. In the 2005 SGPFA 'natural disasters, environmental degradation, poverty and pandemics, terrorism and organized crime, failing states and regional conflicts, war and weapons of mass destruction' (SGPFA 2005) were declared as common threats. This change of emphasis is presented as 'broadening of the security concept' in the 2005 SGPFA. On the other hand, this change could also be conceived and expressed as a shift of focus from the vicinity to the global in the Swedish security policy. Within this new perspective of security, roles of the EU, the US and the UN in global security affairs were emphasized to fight with these new global threats which are inevitably obvious, now.

All this indicates that a remodelling of the Swedish security policy took place in the 2000-2005 period. The shape that this remodelling took is both related to the traditional objectives of the Swedish security policies, the changing external conditions, threats and risks. However, it could be stated that this remodelling did not stem from a change on the level of objectives in foreign affairs. In this regard, Sweden did not make big moves in this period. This remodelling of the Swedish security on the level of means could be read as Sweden's integration to European security order which is further being shaped by the other member states, global power relations and also adaptation to the changing external threats and risks. Within this context, the remodelling of the Swedish security policy should be regarded as a process.

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