

Russian aggression or Swedish media strategy?

A study of the changed nature of the Swedish information flow regarding Russian military in relation to Sweden

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Abstract

Although the Cold War was thought to be a part of history, Russia has in recent years increased their military capacity and activity which is interpreted by the West as a threat which needs to be addressed. This study aims to present how Sweden has changed its view regarding Russia with time and also to explain why this change has occurred. Although Russia may be constituting a larger threat now than ever since the end of the Cold War, this study uses indicia argumentation along with theories such as framing, Mearsheimer's theories about lying in international politics and prospect theory to argue that Sweden is implementing a media strategy in order to prepare themselves for an unpredictable future, where threats are exaggerated in order to gain advocacy for one's policies. By comparing and analyzing material collected from the years 2005-2015, I will conclude that this change is clearly visible over the years with, for instance, increased reporting in the media regarding military activity close to Swedish borders and changed frame in the declarations of foreign policy. Russia may constitute a threat, but the Swedish state is also using this insecurity to change the domestic opinion for its policies.

Key words: Sweden, Russia, Media strategy, Threat, National Interest
Words: 9982

List of Abbreviations

AA	American Department of Defense
DN	Dagens Nyheter
EU	European Union
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
SVT	Sveriges Television
SDRA	Swedish Defense Research Agency
TSAF	The Swedish Armed Forces
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America
WTO	World Trade Organization

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1 Introduction

With the Cold War at an end, a new time of liberal values and durable peace was in sight. But the last couple of years has changed such optimism. Sweden had its territorial frontier violated by Russian aircraft more than once and they actively train their aircraft units in areas close to Swedish borders. Swedish media has reported extensively about these occurrences with detailed information and statements from Swedish officials. One known example is the one which occurred in October during 2013. Russian aircraft bombers then flew close to Swedish borders without consulting the Swedish military unit first, which were perceived as an offensive move by Russia (SVT 2013-11-06). It is apparent that Russian activity is not going unnoticed but posed as an active threat and is influencing foreign policy making.

1.1 Purpose and Research Question

In this study it is argued that the Swedish state is actively managing the Russian threat, and one part is to gain domestic support for policies which affect military capacity and potential alliances. The purpose of this paper is to present and explain the changed attitude Sweden has had towards Russia over the years. This requires an empirical study which will test if this kind of media strategy, which also other countries use to garner advocacy, exists. The question therefore becomes:

Has the Swedish state changed its view of Russia during the last 10 years?

- Why is that?

The reason why the question doesn't include the 'change in Swedish media climate', but only the Swedish state, is because the premise of this paper is that the information which media receives about the Russian military is based on information released from the state. It is hard to imagine that papers could gain any information of this kind without the help of the state. During the course of this paper, it will

become clear that there are more countries than Russia which violate the Swedish border, and those countries do it without media consequences or at least without being labeled as a national threat. Russia has been conducting exercises around Swedish borders before, but Swedish media sometimes report about it and sometimes they don't. This case study will focus on how Swedish media reports have changed along with how the foreign policy protocol has changed over the years. Essentially the core puzzle here is that sometimes the Swedish state release information to the press and during other periods it don't, and by studying the Swedish media along with declarations of foreign policy during different periods we can determine when Russia is posed as a threat and when it is not, and eventually this study will try to explain why this is. Media is an excellent tool to spread different kinds of information and to develop different frames of opinion amongst the people. Politicians realize this and use this tool in order gain advocacy for their policies.

1.1.1 Existing Research

This kind of study is not the first of its kind. The case of advocacy has long been relevant in the political science field and therefore related research is easy to find. One example of research made after the war had passed is Lunch's and Sperlich's paper about public opinion during the Vietnam War. This paper provided insight in how public opinion changed over the years and why USA lost its support for involvement in the region. It concludes that there is a relationship between the public and foreign policy, and leaders need to bring this into their calculations when making policies (Lunch & Sperlich, 1979, p. 43). The Iraq War, which is a more recent example, have a large number to studies which focus on the process of changing opinion over the years. USA then tried to sell the Iraq War to its public by deceiving them with the information it released (Mearsheimer, 2011, p. 62). As time has proven, they were successful in selling the Iraq War at the time. One might draw the conclusion that leaders have learned with time how to gain and maintain support from the public. Other studies regarding specifically Swedish view of Russia during this period are hard to find. This is most likely the case because it is new and still ongoing.

1.1.2 Disposition

Forthcoming are different parts which divide the study into necessary sections which process the theoretical problem at hand. Chapter 2 is the heart of the entire paper, since it is where design, method and material is presented and discussed. This section is essential because it will determine what kind of conclusion one can draw from the chosen research approach. Chapter 3 will present the theories which will later be applied in order to explain and solve the puzzle which the research question presented. But this cannot be done without the empirical material. The empirical chapter will therefore be chapter 4, but this section will also be the chapter of analysis. Chapter 5 then consists of a discussion regarding the content of chapter 4, and in chapter 6 there are concluding remarks. Lastly, chapter 7 contains bibliography.

2 Method

The ambition is that this paper is done with intersubjectivity so that anyone can recreate this study, and therefore a presentation of the methodological framework is needed. The design of this paper will be a descriptive and comparative case study with ambition to connect the empirical data to a set of theories to explain the behavior of Swedish foreign policy. When this study is carried out, it will be done humbly with the knowledge that any explanation of the dependent variable, change in Sweden's view of Russia, is not as simple as to be understood from a couple of theories, which also mainly focus on the state as a unit and not as much on individual actors (Teorell & Svensson, 2007, p. 31). Other studies could therefore study the same subject from different designs and theoretical lenses to contribute to a more comprehensive view. This study will be limited to Russian military action and its frame development between 2005 and 2015. There are a large number of countries cooperating and practicing their aircraft unit with Sweden, but none which are perceived as a threat, although other countries also fly into Swedish airspace without permission. This is often perceived as accidents and not intended to imply as to having an offensive attitude towards Sweden, and is therefore not labeled as a violation.

The aim is to first describe the Swedish frame of Russia at hand by first presenting material regarding this over the years in order to analyze and compare both the frames and Swedish state behavior. The empirical ground is the pillars which are of fundamental importance to be able to make a decent analysis. The information gathered will be used to explain the dependent variable: Swedish foreign policy action (Teorell & Svensson, 2007, p. 23, 29). Questions which one can keep in mind throughout the entire paper are:

- *How is Russia perceived? Or is it perceived in any particular way?*
- *Does Sweden's attitude towards Russia change over the years?*
- *If there is a clear change in attitude, why is that?*

These questions very much relate to the main research question of this paper, and should be thought of as guidelines which helps the reader to be critical of the reliability and validity of the paper.

The theoretical section consist of a set of theories which will be used to try to analyze the collected empirical material at hand. This will be carried out as a deductive case study which uses theory to explain the phenomenon rather than to test and develop new theories. Since the ambition is to study a wide range of cases but still only answer if and how there has been a change in attitude towards Russia, it is not clear whether this study will be purely intensive or extensive, but rather somewhere in between. This study have the ambition to generalize the result and to present change in media strategy over the years, but also describe and explain cases during this time period for a deeper understanding of how the nature of the reports has changed. The results of this study both have scientific and non-scientific relevance. There is scientific relevance because the study will provide deeper knowledge of Swedish foreign policy, and non-scientific because of the same reason (Teorell & Svensson, 2007, p. 18, 48-49, 69).

2.1.1 Validity, Reliability and Limitations

The analysis and the effort to explain the research question will be made with indicia argumentation. In other words, this study will not contain inside information from within the state which divulge that there is a new media strategy which is conducted in order to garner support for a policy which seeks to increase military strength. Rather, the empirical material will be the confirming factor whether there is a change in opinions regarding Russia, and the theories will analyze in order to draw the conclusion of whether it is plausible that a new media strategy is being implemented in order to change the public opinion intentionally. Theoretical definitions will be provided in the theoretical section which will determine how to interpret and analyze the media reports and declarations. The information gathered will be used to measure how Sweden's view of Russia has changed over the years with the theoretical definitions, which provides validity. My operational indicators goes hand in hand with the theoretical definitions. Framing, for instance, regards how information is presented, and this paper study changes during a 10 year period by looking at change in the information flow over time both content-wise

and statistically (Esaiasson et al, 2007, p. 57). The other theories will then conclude from this why it is presented in this way.

This paper have certain limitations which does not only concern time and space in the making of this study. One of these is the fact that this study concerns an ongoing event in the world today, and not a study of history where a lot information can be collected afterwards. This study also lacks inside information which is not released by the state, which limits the strength of the conclusion which this kind of study can draw. The relationship between media and the state is also one which can't be proven, but the empirical connection and the theories ensure that this is not stated without support. The data that is available will be collected according to principles such as specific search words and controlled content to ensure reliability and avoid systematical error (Esaiasson et al, 2007, p. 63). It is acknowledged that the search words will determine the outcome of which information is used, therefore the words are chosen carefully to subdue the amount of systematical error.

2.1.2 Material

The material will consist of media reporting and the foreign policy protocols from meetings which are conducted every year by the Swedish government. News agencies and news organizations have the policy of reporting information with neutrality and objectivity, but this is not to say that this policy isn't violated once in a while. This is not necessarily because of a conscious bias, but because remaining neutral is hard if even possible (Dulic, 2011, p. 49). But this kind of study also faces other sets of difficulties which need to be addressed. Even the country with the lowest level of censorship and media restriction will try to control the information which is available to the public in one way or another. The incitement for this can be of strategic importance. But this does not mean that there is nothing to analyze, quite the opposite (Öberg & Sollenberg, 2011, p. 55). To be aware of the control over information is a key to understand government activity. This will be done with humility to the fact it is near impossible to draw any clear conclusions regarding what the Swedish government's real intentions are, but with enough information the study can at least tell what has changed and with the help of the theories which are used it might be able to explain the behavior through indications.

It is also important to point out the fact that the focus here is on Swedish media, and that the ambition of this paper is not to gain a comprehensive view of media reporting around the world, or even a detailed study of all media reporting in Sweden regarding Russian military activity. Rather, this study will purposely aim to convey when Swedish media has and hasn't reported about Russia and how it is framed, alongside with declarations of foreign policy released by the Swedish government. The media sources used for deeper analysis in this paper are Sveriges Television (SVT), and Dagens Nyheter (DN). Aftonbladet and Expressen will also be used, but only for statistical purposes. This limitation is motivated by the unfortunate lack of time and space, but also because these are four of the larger media sources in Sweden which have the capability to reach out to the entire population. It is arguably favorable to have those kinds of media sources than local newspapers. The declarations will be gathered from the years 2005, 2010, and 2015, while news articles will be gathered from each year between 2005 and 2015.

3 Theory

There are basic premises which need to be addressed in order to understand how the theories of this study are chosen. In a democracy, the state need support from the people in order to be able to implement their policies and the actors within the state plan how this should be carried out (Mintz & DeRouen Jr., 2010, p. 150, 166). For instance, if country A wanted to go to war with country B, it would be troublesome if the state faced opposition within domestic borders. It can affect different parts of the entities of a society, all from the economic sector to the legitimized authority. If the leaders lose their support, other potential candidates could even use this to try to obtain that support in order to gain leader position. This means that leaders need to strategically convey information in a way that makes the policy seem favorable (Mearsheimer, 2011, p. 21-22). Otherwise a country might end up with a situation like USA did during the Vietnam War. The war met great opposition by the home public and the troops were withdrawn after escalating negative attitudes towards the involvement (Lunch & Sperlich, 1979, p. 43).

Politicians are aware of the democratic system and its rules, so they strategically release information to the media and in the end the public in order to gain advocacy for certain policies (Hague & Harrop, 2010, p. 150). Besides that, the state needs to survive in an anarchic system where the tool for ensuring ones continued sovereignty is acting strategically through military capability and alliances. If the state of Sweden perceives Russia as a threat, the logical move is that Sweden does everything in its might to ensure that they can handle this threat. This can be through military capability, but also by joining or participating in alliances, e.g. NATO. Mearsheimer's neorealist assumptions shed light on the main point in this argument; in the anarchic system there is no higher authority than the state, and it is necessary to mainly rely on self-help in a world where you have responsibility for your own survival (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 31-33). The state needs support in order to do this, and here is where media strategy comes into play.

A couple of theories will be tested in order to explain Swedish foreign policy behavior. First framing is presented. Framing is used to analyze how facts are presented by media and leaders. The reason leaders need to use different angles of information is because public support is needed in order to maintain power (Mintz & DeRouen Jr. 2009, p. 150). Then we have Mearsheimer's theories about lying in international politics. Leaders sometimes lie for strategic purposes, and this will be useful for my analysis (Mearsheimer, 2011, p. 11). The important point to Mearsheimer's theories are not to actually reveal a lie made by Swedish officials, but rather to connect how and why leaders lie with framing in order to be able to comprehend the totality. Lastly, prospect theory is introduced, which is a psychological theory of decision making which argues that people have different views on taking risks depending on the gains and losses at hand (Mintz & DeRouen Jr. 2009, p. 75). This theory is relevant to explain how the public can become more prone to accept that more money is spent on defense.

3.1.1 Framing

Framing can be understood as a way to present issues in order to gain favorable reactions and opinions from an audience. For instance, in order to gain support for a certain policy one might frame the situation as one which need policy change in that direction. If our politicians were to promote a change in our opinion regarding climate change, they might display the situation in a way that makes it seem that it has taken a frightful turn to the worse over the years, thus demanding immediate policy changes in order to maintain a sustainable earth for future generations. Whether or not the threat is exaggerated, we can't know for certain. In some cases we have the benefit of having foolproof scientific evidence, and climate change tends to have scientifically supported opinions. But in the case of military threats, the situation is not quite the same. The perceived threat is nothing which scientists in a lab can assert, and which anyone can calculate in order to gain a correct assessment. This is favorable to politicians, since it means that they can both exaggerate and undermine the threat to the public, depending on which strategy is favorable to the situation (Mintz & DeRouen Jr, 2010, p. 149-150). Framing is often used by not only politicians, but media, lawyers and even everyday citizens.

Robert Entman uses in his book 'Projections of Power' a definition of framing which will be used in this paper:

"Selecting and highlighting some facets of events or issues, and making connections among them so as to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation, and/or solution." (Entman, 2004, p. 5)

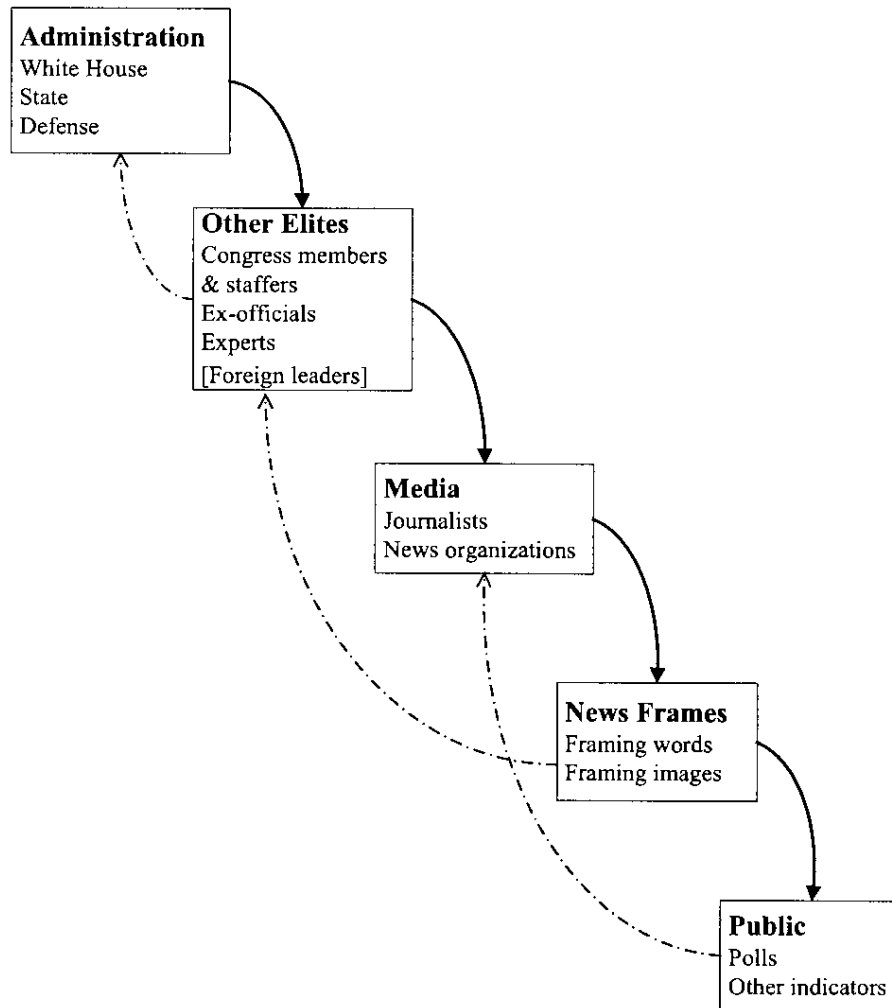


Fig. 1 *Cascading Network Activation*

By viewing this model, one can imagine how the process of framing is constructed. Although framing can go both ways according to the model, this study will primarily focus on elite and administration influence on the public and media, rather than the other way around (Entman, 2004, p. 10). This study will focus on a Swedish version of the model, but it is rather the principles of the model which are relevant, and they are in every way applicable to Sweden as well. The premise of this paper is that all information which is spread regarding Russian military activity towards Sweden originates from the state.

3.1.2 Mearsheimer's theories

According to Mearsheimer's theories of lying in international politics, leaders usually lie because of strategic reasons rather than being corrupt or craven. And when they do lie, it is usually to their own public (Mearsheimer, 2011, p. 12). There are three kinds of deceptive behavior or tactics which leaders use in order to not present "a straightforward or comprehensive description of events" (Mearsheimer, 2011, p. 15). *Lying* is the act of making up facts which one knows are not true or simply denying facts that to one's knowledge are true. But it is also when an individual uses facts, true or not true, in order to knowingly imply that the situation is in a certain way which is not in accord with reality. The relevant principle here is not whether the information given is truthful or not, but whether the leader who speaks knowingly is spreading false information. *Spinning* is when certain facts are emphasized or deemphasized in order to make the mental image of the receiver perceive the leader in a positive way. It is simply about telling the story so that it fits one's position, linking together facts and information with exaggeration or distortion so that it is told in an advantageous way. *Concealment* is the last deceptive tactic which speaks a lot for itself. It is when information which can damage one's position is being kept away from the public (Mearsheimer, 2011, p. 15-18).

This kind of deceptive behavior can be used in different ways to achieve strategic interests. Two types of these will be the focus in this paper. Firstly, we have *fearmongering* which is when a leader tells his/her own people lies regarding a foreign policy threat by exaggerating it in order to make the public appreciate the threat so that necessary actions can be taken, which in the end serves the national interest. As might become apparent to the reader, this behavior is neither selfish nor malign, but strategically relevant for the national interest. (Mearsheimer, 2011, p. 45-46, 55-56). Secondly we have *liberal lies* which are told in order to disguise "illiberal actions with idealistic rhetoric" (Mearsheimer, 2011, p. 23). The norms of acceptable and unacceptable forms of state behavior during different situations are generally clear and can be reflected in the international law and liberal ideology. But even if a state tries to act according to these norms, a state might be inclined to act in a way which denies them. At those times, leaders try to mask what they are doing by

inventing lies which motivates their behavior and/or conceals their true actions (Mearsheimer, 2011, p. 77-78).

3.1.3 Prospect Theory

Prospect theory is relevant to explain decision making in relation to risks to loss and gain. When the information regarding a situation is framed, it can be done in a way which influences the decision outcome, this is called the editing phase. Then the evaluation phase takes place, in which a decision is made. During the first phase, one is introduced to the decision and the options are presented, and according to this theory “avoiding loss is more important than securing gain” (Mintz & DeRouen Jr. 2009, p. 75-76). In times of decision, people might be reluctant to take risks with respect to gains for their decision, but are at the same more likely to take risks with respect to potential losses. Depending of the perceived level of gains and loss, the decision outcome differ (Mintz & DeRouen Jr. 2009, p. 76).

4 Empirical data and Analysis

The aim in this section is to shed light onto the question if there have been any changes over the years in Sweden's view of Russia and why this is. By reviewing Swedish foreign policy declarations and media coverage over the years it will become clear when and how Russia is relevant.

4.1.1 Foreign Policy Declarations

First, the foreign policy declarations will be presented. This type of document is released every year and is presented in the Swedish Parliament by the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The content presents, or rather explains, how the Swedish state perceives the world and how it intends to act on the international arena (Regeringen 2015). For this paper, declarations which are used were released between 2005 and 2015. A paragraph in a declaration might look like this:

Sweden wants to strengthen its cooperation with Russia. Sweden will continue to strive for a policy that is as clear in its demands for respect for international law as in its support for the right of every country to determine its own future. Sweden's security policy remains firmly in place. Threats to peace and to our security are best averted collectively and in cooperation with other countries.

These declarations can be said to be understood in two ways. The first way is to interpret the content in its literal sense. The readers who interpret the paragraph in this way may conclude the following: Sweden and Russia are working on their relationship. Sweden promotes international law and condemns wrong-doers. Sweden will in time of need seek alliance with other countries.

For other readers, there is a 'read-between-the-lines'-mentality which interpret what is actually being said. There is a more subtle, yet not unrecognizable, meaning to some sentences which implies how Sweden in reality perceives the world. This kind of language is

fundamental to understand how the policy makers think. This is an example of how one might understand the text above with this kind of lens: Sweden will continue to try to maintain a neutral tone with Russia and cooperate with it as long as it suits Swedish interest. If Russia acts in a way that is a threat to Sweden and/or works against Swedish interest, Sweden can point to the violations of international law and liberal values to condemn them in media and on an international level, both to their own population and to other countries and leaders. This can be used to justify taking sides against Russia if it comes to that, but since this is so far not the case, Sweden will continue not to openly frame Russia as a real threat. Instead diplomatic language is used. Diplomatic language is defined as “acting in a way that does not cause offense” by Cambridge Dictionaries Online (Cambridge 2015). This is very true in this case. Sweden does not want to provoke Russia or lose any possibility to maintain peaceful relations with them, but if current circumstances change to the worse, Sweden will not hesitate to partake in an alliance against Russia.

This line of argumentation is to be done with caution. Interpretations may vary and since diplomatic language is gingerly in character, it is impossible to draw clear-cut conclusion regarding to what is meant in some cases. But by observing what is mentioned and how it is constructed in text, one can draw conclusions about what the intention of it is with framing theory. In this study, declarations from the year 2005, 2010 and 2015 will be presented and analyzed, so declarations from every year between 2005 and 2015 will not be used. This is because there is a need to detect clear changes over time and therefore it is not necessarily relevant to analyze every year. Also, there is a need to thoroughly read these declarations, and restraining the material becomes necessary because there is limited time and space in the making of this study. The declarations will be presented in chronological order, and will be analyzed below each year.

4.1.2 2005

“These new threats require a broadened concept of security. They require a security policy that focuses on the protection and rights of the individual, and on international law. They require an active foreign policy. During the Cold War it was said that foreign policy is our first

line of defence. This line now runs through Afghanistan, Africa, the Balkans and other places where Sweden is participating in missions to promote peace and in active development cooperation.” (p. 2)

“Cooperation with Russia is a cornerstone in security work in our common vicinity. We have well-developed regional cooperation that is helping to bring Russia closer to Sweden, the Nordic countries and the EU. Sweden wants to deepen cooperation with Russia. We want Russia to be more involved in global issues. It was important that Russia ratified the Kyoto Protocol. We are working to facilitate free trade between the EU and Russia. We share the commitment to the problems facing Russia, including the threat of terrorism. We witnessed the terrorist action in Beslan with great dismay. A precondition for deepened cooperation is that the Russian government ensures that democratic development in the country moves in the right direction and breaches of human rights cease. The situation in Chechnya must be solved by a political process.” (p. 8)

“This is why we are working in the EU to promote peace and manage crises. The EU is undertaking crisis management in Africa, the Middle East, Southern Caucasus and the Balkans. Sweden is taking part in all EU operations. But we must be able to respond more rapidly, not least when the UN needs support. This is why we are proud that Sweden, together with Finland, Norway and Estonia, will shortly be able to establish a military rapid reaction force in the EU. During 2005, the Government will increase the allocation for participation in peacekeeping operations, including longer-term missions led by the UN, the EU or NATO.” (p. 9-10)

“Sweden does not participate in military alliances. At the same time, NATO is an important partner to Sweden when it comes to efforts in crisis areas. We are continuing to contribute forces for NATO/PfP operations in the Balkans and in Afghanistan. In May Sweden is hosting a ministerial meeting within the framework of the partnership with NATO, which will provide an opportunity to discuss current security policy challenges in this extensive forum.” (p. 11)

(Regeringen 2005-02-09, p. 2, 8-11)

Analysis

This declaration from 2005 is seemingly clear from any framing biases which would imply that Russia is a potential enemy of Sweden. If one would imagine potential outcomes which are implied by these declarations as hypothetical doors which leads to different outcomes, the doors which are presented here opens up for closer ties and better relationship, although an unchanged and even stern outcome is also possible. The West makes it clear that they want Russia to sign agreements which would change their policies and in the end adhere to more liberal characteristics. Sweden on paper wants to maintain neutral status, but in its behavior Sweden is closing ties with partnerships and military actions.

Nevertheless, the view Sweden is spreading to the public is one where Russia isn't a threat, and at this point it would be logical if there were less or none media reporting regarding hostile Russian military activity in relation to Sweden. If there was any of such, Swedish officials are probably likely to either lie, spin and conceal these facts in a way which maintain a non-hostile view of Russia amongst the public, because it at the time didn't serve the national interest. According to prospect theory, this also makes sense. If there isn't a potential escalating situation at hand where Sweden is forced into a corner and has to choose between being defeated or stand up for their own sovereignty, anyone would want to maintain the stability at hand in order to avoid major loss. Sweden could have begun the process of strengthening its military capability and started a campaign in order to foster support for military alliances and mask Russia as an enemy as early as 2005, but it at this point didn't serve national interest. The reader should keep in mind that the Russian invasion of Georgia 2008 and the occurrences in Ukraine 2014 were yet to happen at this point.

4.1.3 2010

“Membership of the European Union means that Sweden is part of a political alliance and takes its share of responsibility, in the spirit of solidarity, for Europe's security. Sweden will not remain passive if another EU Member State or Nordic country suffers a disaster or an attack. We expect these countries to act in the same way if Sweden is similarly affected. For Sweden, which has chosen to take a place at the

heart of European cooperation, this is a natural and desirable development, just as it is natural and desirable to work to ensure that the EU's voice is heard more clearly throughout the world. This is the best way to safeguard our values and national interests in an increasingly complex world.” (p. 2)

“Cooperation with South Caucasus must also be strengthened. Georgia's territorial integrity and democratic development are also important to the wider region. Sweden welcomes the Russian President's statements on the importance of a functioning rule of law and an extensive modernisation of Russian society. We hope that it will soon be possible to welcome Russia too as a member of the WTO.” (p. 5)

(Regeringen 2010-02-17, p. 2, 5)

Analysis

Now the frame differs a bit. Russia isn't directly pointed out as an enemy of Sweden (and probably won't be until it becomes necessary for the state to do so), but it is more clear here that Georgia 2008 had effects on European security as a whole. One can imagine that the countries of Europe in general fear that Russia will increase its military capability and become a hegemon in the region. The more military activity and capability that Russia show off, the more the West will consider them a threat and potentially harmful in the future. This would also be why it becomes relevant for Sweden to present doors which lead to deepened ties with West. These quotes from the declaration pretty much speak for themselves:

“Sweden will not remain passive if another EU Member State or Nordic country suffers a disaster or an attack. We expect these countries to act in the same way if Sweden is similarly affected.” (Regeringen, 2010, p. 2)

“This is the best way to safeguard our values and national interests in an increasingly complex world.” (Regeringen, 2010, p. 2)

Still, Sweden states and actively works on closer ties with Russia in its rhetoric, and is probably open for this as well as long as Russia isn't crossing lines of both borders and international law. It is still too early for Sweden to conclude if Russia is a future enemy and if it should

jump into an alliance with West, but it certainly keeps a sharp eye on Russia. The Swedish consideration that it is necessary to “safeguard our values” is something that can be linked to Mearsheimer’s theory of liberal lies. It is also reasonable to assume that countries use liberal rhetoric preemptively as well to motivate their future position and behavior.

4.1.4 2015

“We share a common destiny, and we do so at a time of greater insecurity. When this chamber debated foreign policy a year ago, the Russian aggression against Ukraine was beginning – the greatest challenge to European peace and security since the end of the Cold War.” (p. 1)

“State violations in the east and state breakdowns in the south also have repercussions for Sweden. They lead to tension in our neighborhood, flows of refugees and a growing proportion of our population who bear the painful memories of war and conflict.” (p. 1)

“We welcome the fact that the European Union has presented a united response to the developments in Russia and Ukraine. Sweden will continue to strive for a policy that is as clear in its demands for respect for international law as in its support for the right of every country to determine its own future. We support the efforts being made right now to find a political path towards easing tensions. And perhaps most importantly: we must help Ukraine to be successful, just as we will contribute to the continued development of the EU’s Eastern Partnership as a lever for those countries that have chosen the European path, whereby bloodshed on the battlefield is replaced with patience at the negotiating table.” (p. 1)

“Sweden’s security policy remains firmly in place. Threats to peace and to our security are best averted collectively and in cooperation with other countries. Sweden does not participate in any military alliance. It is impossible to imagine military conflicts in our region that would affect only one country. Sweden will not remain passive if another EU Member State or Nordic country suffers a disaster or an attack. We expect these countries to act in the same way if Sweden is affected. Our country must therefore be in a position to both give and

receive support, civilian as well as military. While the situation in our neighborhood makes it necessary to strengthen Sweden's defense capabilities, we are continuing to develop our military cooperation: with Finland, with our other Nordic neighbors, with the Baltic countries and with NATO. In the latter case we, together with Finland and others, are now taking new steps as part of an upgraded partnership. Sweden will continue its active engagement and participation in international operations under the aegis of the UN, the EU, NATO and the OSCE.” (p. 2)

“Together with other members of the UN, the EU, the OSCE and the Council of Europe, we defend the human rights that apply to every individual. We do so wherever these rights are attacked, and regardless of whether the people affected are in a magazine's editorial office or a supermarket in Paris, in a market in Nigeria, or on an idyllic island in Norway. International law demands respect for the Charter of the United Nations and for the principles of territorial integrity and prohibition of violence enshrined in it. Genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and other serious international crimes must be combated and punished. The work of the International Humanitarian Law Delegation must be reinforced, and should also focus on disarmament. Safeguarding human rights is a cornerstone of Swedish foreign policy. A strategy for human rights, democracy and the rule of law is now being drafted.” (p. 3)

(Regeringen 2015-02-11, p. 1-3)

Analysis

Not only is the tone throughout the declaration rather different now, but there is also a lot more being said about the situation and relationship between Russia and West. Now the insecurity is “greater” than before and this is considered to be the “greatest challenge to European peace and security since the end of the Cold War”. The initial fear for European security has escalated. Increased tension and instability are problems which Sweden faces in the future, and extra emphasis is put on international law and Swedish peace. The liberal tone is largely visible which is used to motivate Swedish action if it would go in a military direction with clear alliances with West. The occurrences in Ukraine are framed as signs of instability not only in that region itself, but to Sweden and its neighborhood and the entire EU needs to act together to face this security threat.

“Safeguarding human rights is a cornerstone of Swedish foreign policy. A strategy for human rights, democracy and the rule of law is now being drafted.” (Regeringen, 2015, p. 3)

This line of argumentation is a clear construct of liberal values motivating behavior which is framed in a light which justifies one’s position. Now fearmongering also comes into play. The frame is clearly connecting Russian activity with Swedish insecurity which requires that Sweden increase their security. This can be done with both increased military capability and/or military alliances, and the latter is openly on the table in the declaration. It now serves Swedish national interest to potentially make moves which redefine its neutral position to actually taking sides. This first and foremost needs to have domestic support, and the rhetoric used in this declaration is deftly made in a diplomatic manner which could indeed motivate future alliance and side taking. If the Swedish population would think that Russia constitutes a real and active threat, then it would also be willing to allow more money spent on defense because they anticipate that it is necessary to manage future events according to prospect theory. The political elite are no fools, they do realize that they actively need to change the public opinion regarding their policies, and therefore these theories explain how leaders think and act when writing these declarations. But political elites still don’t intentionally create these opinions for selfish reasons, but because it serves the national interest.

4.1.5 Articles

Two large Swedish news sources will be used in order to recognize to which extent there has been media reporting about Russia posing a military threat to Sweden over the years and what is being said. I will use SVT’s and DN’s Internet search engine in order to both be able to divulge the number of articles regarding the topic and during which time these are posted, and select a few in order to further analyze the content. I will use the words “Ryssland militär hot Sverige” in the search, which means “Russia military threat Sweden”. The texts will be analyzed in the same way as the declarations of foreign policy.

4.1.6 2005

Media reporting's from SVT and DN regarding Russian military activity in relation to Sweden during this year is nonexistent.

4.1.7 2006

“Ryssland rustar upp vid Östersjön”

For the first time since fall of the Soviet Union Russia is increasing its military capability. Swedish military and politicians have not perceived Russia as a threat during the last 10 years, but now Russia is getting stronger each year and will continue to do so according to the Swedish Defense Research Agency (SDRA). Sweden needs to prepare and be able to meet Russian military influence on Swedish security. It is also mentioned that Russia is seeking increased influence in the future, this is already being done by using their control over supplies of energy resources, which can be compared to extortion in order to gain increased power over old Soviet states (DN 2006-01-21).

Analysis

SDRA is a government agency who does research regarding questions of security and defense which is reported to the Ministry of Defense. This kind of information does put Russia in a suspicious position from a Swedish standpoint. It is clear that Sweden in accordance with this line of argumentation has incentive to prepare for the Russian threat. Russia is indeed perceived as a potential threat, not as a potential partner or a country of good will, but rather as a suppressor who is ambitious of power. This is the only article which can be found from 2006 regarding Russia posing a threat to Sweden.

4.1.8 2007

“Min efterträdare är uppenbarligen okunnig”

This article considers whether Russia is a potential threat in the future or not, and if Swedish officials should prepare for such a threat. It becomes clear that Russia is something to be included in the

calculations when forming Swedish foreign policy. But the article as whole does not focus on Russia, but criticize the new Minister of Defense. It is stated that the current situation in the world is relatively stable and peaceful (DN 2007-12-16).

Analysis

There is no clear intention that Russia should be focus of Swedish foreign policy, but Russia is still framed as a potential threat in the future. Russia isn't posed as a partner, but is neither posed as an active military threat.

4.1.9 2008

“Sverige avbryter militära kontakter med Ryssland”

Emphasis here is put on a weak Russia which is going to increase their military capability and the Russian invasion of Georgia. In this article, the tone of the statements of the Swedish politicians, Fredrik Reinfeldt and Carl Bildt, are seemingly restrained regarding the situation. They don't draw any conclusions that this would be of importance to Sweden or that this is a threat which is necessary to address (DN 2008-08-18).

Analysis

Here the situation is framed by the politicians in a light which is calm of character. Although the Russian activity could've erupted into a military campaign in Sweden, it didn't raise as much concern. Russia is still an active nation with a future which can pose a threat to Sweden, but at the time this is not the case. The officials aren't inclined to frame Russia as the enemy, but certainly condemn their behavior in Georgia. But this is nothing which is in the interest of Sweden to react to in any other way than politically at the time.

4.1.10 2009

“Dags för Sverige att rusta upp mot Ryssland”

Former Minister of Defense, Björn von Sydow, comments on the democratic decline in Russia, the invasion of Georgia, and the violation of international law as signs for Sweden to increase its military strength. Russian behavior is unpredictable and must be addressed in future strategies of the West. NATO must put military pressure on the Russian border and control this unpredictable nation by it. Sweden is currently too weak to manage the threat, and its defense must be upgraded and put more attention the future threats (DN 2009-01-18).

Analysis

This article has the kind of argumentation which frames Russia as a threat which Sweden need to address. Fearmongering about the future is remarkably visible in this article and the frame is clear as well. There is little in the article which would imply a possible partnership between Sweden and Russia or a positive future. It is assumed that the future will be troublesome, and that Sweden (and the West) needs to be prepared for the upcoming threat.

4.1.11 2010

“Försvarsledningen i fyra regioner”

The at the time current Minister of Defense, Sten Tolgfors, comments on changes in the defense and notes that the Swedish defense budget might be experiencing cuts, but that is still adequate to manage any possible threat which Russia might pose, indicating that Sweden can take care of themselves which the current weak Russia (DN 2010-07-11).

Analysis

Russia is framed as a weak state which does not currently pose a threat to Sweden which it cannot manage. There is no incentive to increase the military strength of Sweden or to rally to a Western alliance.

4.1.12 2011

“Så marscherar Putin mot ett nytt tsarvälde”

Although negotiations regarding disarmament are being brokered between USA and Russia, Russia is increasing its military capability while denying human rights and those who are critical of the current regime are being harassed according to Swedish politician representing the moderate party Mats Johansson. Concern regarding the balance of power in the neighborhood of Russia and Sweden is expressed. Russia is perceived to be trying to gain its superpower status once again, both with economic strength and a new foreign policy so put pressure on old Soviet states and West (DN 2011-02-09).

Analysis

Framing here puts Russia in an illiberal light and is very much perceived as a potential threat in the future, if not for certain considering Russian ambition. Johansson highlights their undemocratic society and illiberal actions, which connects to liberal lies and fearmongering. This is the only article of its kind during 2011.

4.1.13 2012

“Risken med ett öppet förhållande”

Sweden feels more drawn to NATO, but can only join if Sweden do so with broad consent. The Russian general Makarov declared that a Finnish membership in NATO would be perceived as a threat, but the rest of Scandinavia does agree that a changed foreign policy is needed in order to be able to manage the Russian threat. But so far Sweden is more neutral in their actions than their neighbors Denmark and Norway (DN 2012-07-22).

Analysis

Russia is a potential threat and Swedish future regarding military action and alliances are put into question. Sweden is ambivalent in its behavior and the future direction of their policies is discussed.

4.1.14 2013

“Ryska bombplan övade anfall mot Sverige”

Russian bomb and pursuit-planes were reported active close to the Swedish airspace border at the Gotland. According to The Swedish Armed Forces (TSAF), the Russian planes were exercising and do not constitute a real threat, since there is nothing new with this kind of exercise. According to Anders Silwer from TSAF, this should not be interpreted as a threat. Swedish military planes were not prepared to meet the Russian planes, but NATO planes were ready to meet the Russians (SVT 2013-04-22)

Analysis

TSAF do indeed tell the public in their statement that this should not be perceived as a threat, but if that is the case it would be unnecessary to report such happening to the media, since this kind of exercise is nothing new according to them. This kind of frame is diplomatic in tone, since it does not label Russia as an active threat, but to report this kind of activity when it hasn't been relevant to do so before is noteworthy.

“Rysslands maktambitioner har inga nationella gränser”

This article argues that Russian interest is not restricted to its neighboring countries, but believes that Russia wants to extend their power to Europe. This would not be done militarily, but with economic and political power which the EU must be cautious of and together handle the influential waves the coming years with clear demands which Russia must adapt to. Russian business and political relationships foster corruption, bad values and must be prevented. At the end of the article it is argued that Europe must be prepared militarily to withstand Russian threats and claims of power. This article is written by Gunnar Hökmark, sitting in the European parliament representing the moderate party of Sweden (DN, 2013-03-19).

Analysis

Russia is framed as a bad influence and an unfavorable partner which is to be approached with caution. This line of argumentation doesn't put Russia in the military offensive light, but it does frame them as

both corrupt and potentially dangerous. They are a threat in some sense, but still not an adversary. The impression of the article is that Europe stands for liberal and therefore correct values, and Russia is the opposite. Liberal lies and fearmongering therefore used throughout the article, but not to the extent as to pose Russia as an active threat to anyone, and certainly not to Sweden.

4.1.15 2014

“Sverige har utsatts för grov kränkning”

During 2014, an article was posted by DN with a headline which translates into “Sweden has been exposed to coarse violation”. Commander in chief Sverker Göransson announced in this article that a foreign submarine had violated Swedish borders, and that this behavior was unacceptable. The Swedish Armed Forces tells the press that the nationality of the submarine is yet to be confirmed. Later in the article it is mentioned that Russia is the one who is guilty of the violation. But during a press conference at this time, Russia isn’t mentioned, not even as a suspect. Prime Minister Stefan Löfven explains that this is because they only tell the press information they know for certain is true. Still, this occurrence is taken with great seriousness and is marked as a threat (DN 2014-11-14).

Analysis

One might argue that since the submarine isn’t officially declared as Russian, the information about the threat which the officials release to the public isn’t as influential on the opinions of potential threats as it could have been. But even if the officials won’t label the submarine as Russian, the rest of the information which is released does raise concern regarding the future either way, which motivates an increased military budget. Also, one should not forget that Sweden doesn’t consider any other country in the region as an active threat, and the conclusion which anyone will be likely to make is that the submarine is Russian because of the already high number of Russian military activity reporting. They don’t need to label the submarine or any other military activity as Russian simply because the way they frame and fearmonger the situation, everyday citizen is likely to draw the conclusion that the submarine is Russian on their own which in turn

connects to prospect theory and willingness to increase military capacity.

“UD: Rysk kränkning av svenskt territorium”

The ministry of foreign affairs released information regarding two Russian aircraft which violated Swedish airspace. The current Swedish minister of foreign affairs, Carl Bildt, called it the most serious Russian violation of airspace during his time as minister. TSAF labeled the occurrence as not likely being a mistake, but intentional. At the end of the article, two earlier violations of Swedish airspace made by other countries than Russia (USA and Poland) are mentioned, but are either labeled as not constituting a threat and/or mistakes (SVT 2014-09-20).

Analysis

The distinction made between airspace violations made by Russia and those made by other countries are evident. Russian violations are framed as a threat to Sweden, and the others are not. The information about the Russian violations are hyped and are according to framing theory and fearmongering creating opinions of how Russia now potentially constitutes an active military threat which needs to be managed according to the national interest.

4.1.16 2015

“Ryskt flyg “hotade” amerikanskt plan över Östersjön”

A Russian military plane threatened an American scout plane at the Östersjön area according to the American Department of Defense (ADD). According to the TSAF, there were no Swedish aircraft nearby, and more Russian military air units have been spotted flying over international water in Östersjön lately. This increased number of air units often flies close to Swedish borders without signaling to Swedish officials. The five Nordic countries collectively agreed to increase their defense capability and cooperation in order to manage the rising Russian threat (SVT 2015-04-11).

Analysis

Russia is framed as military active and an aggressor which needs to be managed. It is framed as a problem on an international level which breaks the peaceful relation. This is a clear case of fearmongering which supports the idea of increased military capability and alliances for Sweden.

“Expert varnar för ryskt hot mot Gotland”

The Minister of Defense, Peter Hultqvist and the Commander in Chief Sverker Göransson comments on the Russian military activity and the defense budget. Hultqvist expressed that Sweden needs to address these matter of security in order to be prepared for the future. A British defense expert named Keir Giles warns that Russia could be invading Gotland within 2 years and that the situation is really tense between the countries (DN 2015-04-28).

Analysis

The message of the officials is pretty straightforward. The frame and the fearmongering is similar to earlier articles but is now going as far as anticipating a Russian invasion. This kind of rhetoric is sure to develop further concern regarding Russian activity which connects to prospect theory and increased money spent on defense.

4.1.17 Media statistics

Amount of articles regarding Russia as a military threat to Sweden over time (DN and SVT)

2005: 0
2006: 1
2007: 3
2008: 8
2009: 3
2010: 3
2011: 2
2012: 4
2013: 19
2014: 73
2015 (May): 13

Without sorting out which articles are relevant or not from the search (with the same search words), other newspapers such as Aftonbladet and Expressen also have a clear increase in news reporting during the last years.

Aftonbladet

2005: 15
2006: 15
2007: 10
2008: 20
2009: 11
2010: 12
2011: 20
2012: 15
2013: 73
2014: 91
2015 (May): 32

Expressen

2006: 1

2007: 7

2008: 2

2009: 5

2010: 5

2011: 3

2012: 2

2013: 11

2014: 20

2015 (May): 5

5 Discussion

In this study in particular it is clear that in the last couple of years when Russia is the topic of discussion, it is seldom that their military capability and threatening nature isn't mentioned. Earlier it has mostly been discussions regarding their development of a democratic society, liberal values and ties to the West. The statistics alone tell us that Russian activity has become more relevant in the media than before. But the research question requires a discussion regarding the change which Sweden has endured also regarding the content. Even in the first years which were analyzed in the media framed Russia as a potential threat, although not to the extent and not as big a threat as in the last couple of years. In the declarations there is clear change over time regarding how Russia is framed, from positive the first year to a potential enemy which Sweden needs to be careful of.

The number of times it has been reported and the content of the information tell us that the Swedish state has chosen to release information and become more active regarding putting Russia in a bad light. The framing model (Fig. 1) becomes relevant to see how this is done intentionally to change opinions. According to this theoretical framework, the extent and content is released in order to "help" people come to the conclusion that Russia is a threat which needs to be addressed and increased military capability will be needed to face future challenges. As Mearsheimer's theories tell us, this fearmongering and liberal rhetoric is used because it serves the national interest. Lying, spinning, and concealing information to the advantage of this interest is according to these theories because it will garner the support for increased military capability and make it possible to affiliate to Western alliance's such as NATO if needed. This kind of logic gains further support from prospect theory. In times of crisis and fear for great loss, people will be more prone to support these kinds of policies both politically and economically. When the Swedish people fully appreciate the Russian threat, they will also support the policy changes.

In accord with this paper's indicia way of argumentation, I would argue that there is indeed a clear change in Swedish state attitude and

behavior in relation to Russia. The last couple of years have shown clear increase in reports of Russian military activity which often are labeled as dangerous and often make the Russians seem unpredictable. This is not to say that this isn't the case, but I would argue that this has been the case all the time considering the nature of international relations. The difference between 2005 and 2015 is that Russia now is indeed increasingly active and shows its true colors, while back in 2005 there was reason to believe that Russia could choose a road which lead to closer ties to West and liberal values.

The reason why Russia became more militarily active is another question, but nevertheless have the Russians shown that they have interests which does not go hand in hand with West, otherwise the relationship would have been of different character and the media reports would have a different frame. It has become relevant for Sweden to implement a media strategy which allows domestic support for increased military capacity and potential alliances to develop to be able to manage the Russian threat. This is reflected in the overtime increased hostile language in the frame which is used in the articles. Russia goes from being a general threat to being an active threat with specific occurrences reported consisting of military activity both close to the Swedish border and beyond the border labeled as intentional violations. The number of these media reports increased greatly as the statistics tell us, and according to prospect theory this will provide the state of Sweden the support needed to manage future threats. Out of little acorns grow huge oaks.

This paper have a few disadvantages. For instance, it can't draw any conclusion without the theories and premises at hand, which other papers might be able to do with more information in the future. Future studies which provide different perspective and perhaps deeper insight could both be of extensive and intensive character. For instance, it would be interesting and largely contributing if one could conduct interviews with Swedish officials regarding this subject in order to understand the individualistic perspective which influences the structures of the political process, and maybe receive more information regarding how the leaders work with a media strategy. This would require another operational indicator which studies the same puzzle. Other studies could also focus on qualitative data in order to see Swedish foreign policy from a broader timeline perspective with a larger generalizing ambition which further confirms a long term media strategy. Studies done in the future when more

information is available, maybe even inside information, can complement, confirm and/or reject explanations. This has earlier been the case in the Cuba crisis for instance, which has provided comprehensive insight in the process of decision making.

6 Conclusion

It is evident that there is an increased amount of released information and changed frame regarding the Russian relation to both Sweden and the West. The change has gone from potential partner and a hopeful future to a potential enemy and a dangerous and unpredictable future. The situation is now framed as demanding increased military capacity in the defense of Sweden. The Swedish state has according to the theoretical framework implemented a media strategy intentionally because it fosters support for increased military capacity and potential alliances with West which serves the national interest.

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