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Storytelling (in)Security

An explorative essay on strategic narratives in Swedish security discourse, with background in the decision and process of joining NATO.

Abstract

For the last couple of decades the study of strategic narratives has increased in the field of international relationships, allowing for a more sociological approach. Aiming more towards viewing the storytelling and framework that is narrated by nation states and global actors. These narratives are key to understanding how we are affected by narration and the framing of events (Van Noort & Colley, 2021). As Wibben (2011, p. 39) states, humans are storytellers by nature, and narratives are the way in which we shape and understand our world. In this thesis I aim to explore strategic narratives in Swedish security discourse – against the background of the new security situation in Europe, following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February of 2022. Sweden's national identity being a neutral country is deeply integrated in the national narrative and now with the application to join NATO this notion is challenged. Last year The Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency had a campaign to create "a will to defend" among Swedish civilians. In addition, the Swedish Armed forces have published and advertised a number of commercials for recruitment. In this thesis the strategic narratives in these campaigns are analysed through a narrative approach with a critical security perspective. I will argue that there are clear indications of increased militarisation in Sweden.

Keywords: militarisation, the good civilian, critical security studies, storytelling, and strategic narratives.

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Table of Content

1. Introduction

Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February of 2022 there is a changed security situation in Europe and in Sweden, this has been forthright expressed both through the government and associated organisations. In March last year The Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) was tasked by the government to increase resilience and preparedness among the Swedish civilian population:

> "The security situation has made it necessary to rapidly improve Sweden's military and civil defence, in case of the worst happen and we need to face an armed invasion. In March this year MSB were tasked with the commission by the government to strengthen the civil defence. A part of that is to strengthen people's resilience and will to defend. The information investment we do now will contribute to this. This summer we did a similar investment with a focus on home preparedness" (MSB, 2022a).

The following spring it was decided that Sweden should join NATO as a full member state, and the 18th of May in 2022 the then minister of foreign affairs Ann Linde signed the letter of intent for Sweden to officially join. As Sweden has previously been committed to a non-alignment policy this is quite the turn as far as political events go (Jackson, 2017). Even though joining NATO is a political decision, the government alone can't circulate ideas tied to insecurity and threat. Rather state actors are depending on media to reinforce narratives that are in line with decision-making (Stavrianakis and Selby 2013, p. 30). Since last year plenty of strategic narratives has reached us regarding the new security situation, among others the campaign "the will to defend" promoted last autumn. This is important, as it brings messages about insecurity and threat into public places and civilian life.

So, to situate the research, this thesis intends to explore the strategic narratives in Swedish security discourse following the process of a Swedish NATO membership. With the change of scenery in European political security, there are new narratives producing notions of (in)security among the civilian population, for this research the focus will mainly fall on advertisements and recruitment videos from The Swedish Armed Forces and campaigns from The Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency.

This is relevant both for the new security situation in Europe, but it's also applicable to the increasing focus on strategic narratives and storytelling by nation states and global actors, a more sociological approach within the field of international relationship studies (Van Noort & Colley, 2021, p. 4). Broadly speaking this is the study of how policy changes, actions, and events are framed to justify certain decision making. In other words, the focus is on the framing of events rather than the actions themselves. Strategic narratives are actively created to mobilise opinion and justify events and actions. In turn, this is in part a way for nation states and or global actors to produce and keep legitimacy (Van Noort & Colley, 2021).

There are multiple factors for a more sociological approach within IR, one of them being the increased use and reach of social media. The new media landscape has evidently transformed global movements in terms of increasing and diversifying possibility for opinion formation and mobilisation, in turn, they influence political processes (Scholte, 2005, p. 279). This is important, as states are depending on new and traditional media to circulate notions of (in)security (Stavrianakis and Selby 2013, p. 30). Similarly, to the increasing sociological approach within IR, critical security studies have been influenced by post-structuralist thought in calling attention to language and the construction of (in)security (Shepherd, 2009, p. 217).

At the same time, several scholars within the IR field argue for an increased focus on how media is mirroring and in turn circulating notions of insecurity (Robinson, 2018, p. 63). What's more, security narratives are interlinked with strategic narratives, as they are often drawing upon notions of (in)security or national identity. And in this case, security images are central as they are presented within advertisements from The Swedish Armed forces and the campaigns from MSB, consequently bringing messages of insecurity into public spaces, e.g., in subway stations / at bus stops.

In the beginning of this thesis process, the research was meant to explore security narratives as they were. However, in looking into the previous research and parts of the analysis material, it became quite clear that there should be an increased focus on the security narratives instead. As these narratives are both parts in framing events and political artifacts mirroring the ambience of security in Sweden, I will also argue that these can be used to address current levels of militarisation process. And so, the aim of this thesis is to contribute to exploration of

strategic narratives and the process of increased militarisation, zooming in on Sweden and Swedish context.

The approach to explore the strategic narratives in Swedish security discourse will be conducted with interpretive qualitative method. According to Hansen (2016, p. 96) discourse analysis is both a method and an approach within IR, as it explores discourse and patterns within communicating events. What's more it will allow for a narrative approach to explore the framing of events. As this research aims to explore the security discourse with the application to join NATO as background, its limited to cover a short spectrum of time, and so all data is collected from events and posts from after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, 24th of February 2022.

1.1. Research Problem

With the new security situation in Europe, following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Swedish political representants from both government and opposition have agreed to join NATO. This is the background to what the following thesis will be exploring. As the changed scenery allows for a different interpretation of these narratives, they are key in understanding current political processes and militarisation (Scholte, 2005). This is further significant due to the globally increasing levels of militarisation, further discussed in the background chapter (Agius et al., 2020).

As this field is broad it is limited to cover a short spectrum of time, all data is collected from events and posts from after the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February of 2022. To clarify, in this essay the exploration of strategic narratives in Swedish security discourse is not about how they are accepted or not accepted by the viewer and audience – rather it is meant to explore the framework being put out as a strategic narrative and why. As strategic narratives are both a mobilising force and a tool to framing events, this approach aims to explore underlying beliefs and identities. These narratives are also all political artifacts mirroring current ambience of (in)security and in turn, political processes (Van Noort & Colley, 2021, p. 4).

1.2.   Research Question

To explore this topic strategically the leading research question is: what are the strategic narratives in Swedish security discourse? And what political myths do they mirror?

1.3.   Thesis Outline

This thesis is divided into six main chapters, firstly the introduction presents the aim, purpose, and research problem. To properly explore this issue a few concepts and ideas needs to be established to provide context. The main ideas are strategic narratives, political myths, militarisation, and critical security studies. The background covers militarisation and the relevance of strategic narratives in current IR. Followed by a brief overview of militarisation and historical context in Sweden. In the methods chapter, critical discourse analysis (CDA) is presented along with the selected data, which are political artifacts representing the bigger picture of Swedish security discourse. The theoretical framework chapter covers different approaches to security and how these will be integrated and used in the later chapters to understand some of the implications present in the artifacts. The results are presented in two main parts, the analysis, and the discussion. In the analysis the political artifacts are presented and explored with a CDA approach, through a critical security lens. The discussion chapter is guided by the leading themes arriving from the analysis. Lastly the concluding remarks cover the concise result, final thoughts and suggestions for future studies.

2. Background

This chapter is divided into four parts, covering background and previous research on militarisation, strategic narratives, and the Swedish context in which this research is situated.

Briefly, to situate the narrative approach within this thesis, it's meant to shed light on the current ambiance of (in)security in Sweden. Narratives and storytelling are the central practice humans use to make sense of the world, create, and interpret meanings, and in turn, legitimatize actions (Wibben 2011). As for studying narration, Walker (1986, p. 495) emphasise that language has political power both used to communicate and persuade the audience both in creating identity and in enforcing political myths. This is further emphasised by Sebastian Kaempf (2016) who argues that political processes are entangled with modern and traditional media and their narratives and representations. As they show us headlines and images that shapes our understanding of the world around us whether that's intentional or not (Kaempf, 2016). As for visuals, these are significant as they combine storytelling and a persuasive force, as images can be (and often are) used to invoke emotional reactions (Bleiker, 2015). Images can circulate and express meaning in a way written word can't since they are depending in the viewers interpretation and context (Robinson, 2018, p. 63). Images are central to this research as they are presented along with advertisements from The Swedish Armed forces and Campaigns from MSB, consequently bringing messages of insecurity into public spaces.

Image 1. Advertisement by The Swedish Armed Forces, located at a Stockholm subway station, received from the advertisement agency Volt's website[1]. Translation left side: "We let Sweden be at peace". Translation right side: "So that life can continue as usual".

2.1.   Militarisation

Militarisation is the process of normalising military values into everyday civilian life (Jackson, 2017). Despite what is sounds like militarisation is not only something happening to people in the military, but rather most militarised people are civilians (Shepherd, 2018, p. 209). This process happens through various processes including military ideas and values. The last decade or so, militarisation has increased globally, in Europe this is evident through harsher restrictions in crossing national borders. Several states are enforcing stricter border controls, claiming to protect national integrity, identity, culture, and tradition (Agius et al., 2020). Nation states are far from the only once conveying these narratives: other actors incorporate militarisation in their communication by linking military security to something "good, natural and necessary" (Jackson, 2017). A classic example of militarisation is the 'war on terror' following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, both in terms of an increased rhetoric of retribution and actual military action (Shepherd, 2018, p. 209). In other words, military security is presented as the natural solution to a range of issues, most often regarding (in)security. According to Laura Shepherd (2018)

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[1]Advertisement agency: https://volt.se/case/vi-later-sverige-vara-i-fred-2/

militarisation is present in everyday media, on television, in films and on social media. More notably, it's mirroring militaristic ideas and ideals in a positive light (Shepherd, 2018, p. 209). This is evident in accepting ideas of militaristic values, such as legitimising the use of armed force (Shepherd, 2018, p. 209). Additionally, Shepherd (2018) argues that militarisation is more visible in other forms of everyday life than in direct relation to military action, e.g., in legitimising / believing in a certain action or authority. For the collective this also means that the notion of military security and national security is one and the same (Stavrianakis & Selby, 2012, p. 30). This is not to say that militarisation is a determined matter alike in every context but rather a process mirroring the context and the political myths in place of the nation / community in which militarisation takes place. (Stavrianakis & Selby, 2012).

2.2. Swedish Perception and Context

Swedish perception of war and security is strongly linked to the national identity of state neutrality (Jackson, 2017). Going back to historic events like the cold war when Sweden upheld a "non-aligned" policy claiming a neutral identity. This has been a perception of national identity since (Agius, 2012). Still Swedish national identity is strongly interwoven with being a peaceful nation and aiding others with peacekeeping missions through the UN (Jackson, 2017, p. 260). However, in the last couple of years a lot has happened regarding the state of the Swedish military. In 2018 military conscription was reinstated, although a lighter version than before. In brief, conscription is only offered to some after filling out a declaration of interest and then being selected from a sub-organ (Plikt- och Prövningsverket, 2021) to the Ministry of Defence. Simultaneously, Sweden's armed forces have put out a number of advertisements, on television, social media and in public places (e. g., at bus stops / in the metro) encouraging young people to join (Stoehrel, 2013). These commercials and advertisements often convey messages like "Do you have what it takes?" or "Are you a born leader?" (Stoehrel, 2013). This is important because it brings messages about insecurity and threat into public space.

Image 2. Advertisement by The Swedish Armed Forces, located at a Stockholm subway station, received from the advertisement agency Volt's website[2]. Translation left side: "We let Sweden be at peace". Translation right side: "So that life can continue as usual".

These films and campaign posters are a clear example of political artifacts and strategic narratives. As they convey messages projecting a desirable identity (Van Noort & Colley, 2021). These kinds of identity forming videos are far from new and alone of its kind, Sweden (The ministry of foreign affairs) produced a video in 2016 celebrating 70 years as members of the UN, the film showed images of Sweden represented by calm landscapes and lakes, mirroring the message of a peaceful nation (Jackson, 2017, p. 260). This is illustrating both a reflection of the notion of a national identity, as well as an image of what values are highlighted as desirable.

As stated above, national security discourse has increased as a topic as the security situation has changed in Europe following the Russian invasion of Ukraine. In March of 2022 the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) were tasked by the then government to increase the will to defend among the Swedish population (MSB, 2022a). The 'Will to defend' campaign came out last autumn of 2022 and included television commercials, SoMe posts and public advertisements (e.g., at bus stops / in the metro).

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[2] Advertisement agency: https://volt.se/case/vi-later-sverige-vara-i-fred-2/

Later, the 16th of May 2022 the Swedish government officially decided to join NATO (Regeringskansliet, 2022). Magdalena Andersson, at the time prime minister, stated "We consider that the best option for Sweden and for the Swedish people's safety is to become a member of NATO" (Olsson, 2022). Almost a year later in a press release the 8th of Mars 2023 the Minister of foreign affairs Tobias Billström stated "A membership with NATO is the best way to tend to Sweden's security and to solidary contribute to strengthening all of the Euro-Atlantic areas security" (Regeringskansliet, 2023). Between these statements there was an election and a shift between blocks of parties and a new government. However, the decision to join NATO was already in motion and supported (and of course rejected) by parties from both sides of the political blocks. Because the discission was of cross-block nature, party politics is not regarded as key theme in the following thesis. As Jackson (2017) states, governments make decisions and enforce laws, and they can decide to raise the budget to the military, military action, and training. However, nation states can't on their own shape the minds of the population regarding the outlook on military action. Thus, governments and stakeholders are depending on other structures in society to aid in circulating notions of insecurity and military values. In other words, militarisation depends on media, traditional and new, to broadcast these ideas.

2.3.   Strategic Narratives

When studying strategic narratives from an IR point of view, focus fall on how an event or action is framed to be approved, justified, or accepted by a certain group (Colley & Noort, 2022). In practise, a strategic narrative paint a picture of a shared reality, from past and or present – to change or affect the minds of others. A strategic narrative is constructed with political objectives in mind to push for a certain outcome. In turn this shapes the behaviours and desires in politics and decision making (Colley & Noort, 2022, p. 21). As for narratives significance, humans are narrative creature, the stories we create and hear are what's shaping our lived reality, as Currie (1998, p. 2) puts it, humans are the tellers and interpreters of narrative.

Strategic narratives and storytelling by nation states and global actors have gained increased recognition within IR the last couple of years, most likely due to the advance and extended reach of social media (Colley & Noort, 2022, p. 1). Along with a more sociological approach

to the field (Robinson, 2018). For the field of IR, the new technological advances have changed and diversified global flows, including global political processes – beginning with the local, adding actors and new power relationships (Colley & Noort, 2022, p. 21). Similarly, critical security studies have increasingly adapted post-structuralist approach. Consequently, giving more space for how language, interpretation and representation are part in the construction of how we (individuals and communities) understand danger and threat (Robinson, 2018).

Traditionally IR is more focused on nation states sovereignty and power, peace, and conflict (Colley & Noort, 2022). Likewise, in traditional security studies the focus areas are state actions, power relationships and military force (Scuzzarello & Kinnvall, 2013). These fields integrate on several dimensions as they are closely linked to one another. In some of the previous literature on strategic narratives these lenses focus on the storytelling a state or agent makes to justify specific actions or policies, for instance in joining unions the narrative speaks of the many pros of being a part of said union (Colley & Noort, 2022)[3]. As security is a leading narrative of many state actions and policies these are particularly significant to review. A deeper introduction to the approach of security it presented in chapter 3, theoretical framework.

Looking at narratives can aid us in understanding how strategic storytelling shapes and affect elements in political actions, including wars, elections, policymaking, and diplomacy (Colley & Noort, 2022). Also effecting identity among the people and in turn political processes. Along with new actions and decision-making, narratives are used to uphold a national identify. In other words, instead of asking how an action or event took place, the focus is how an action or event was framed and justified (Schmitt, 2018).

According to Oliver Schmitt (2018), for strategic narratives to be effective they use a narrative that reenforce ideas and identities in line with people's notion of who they (already) are (or their nation is). That way they depend on political myths and national identity to be effective in convincing the audience. Political myths differ from strategic narratives in that they are already in place within a specific political community, they provide a framework of meaning and interpretation for the events people experience (Schmitt, 2018). They are also not actively created by an actor for an outcome, but rather is an organic sequence that originate from multiple sources and changes over time in accordance with the events in the political

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[3] See for example: Strategic Narratives, Ontological security and Global Policy: Responses to China's Belt and Road Initiative (2022).

communities and their needs for a compliant narrative (Schmitt, 2018). Strategic narratives, however, are made to *actively* push for an outcome. By referencing a political myth, people are reminded of a collective identity in accordance with their emotions, metaphors and or historical analogies (Schmitt, 2018).

To summarise, in a Swedish context it is evident that the notion of the military mirrors the absence of armed conflict in modern memory (Jackson 2017). Military action is more often represented by messages of peacekeeping and protection. In addressing military actions, it is mostly done by highlighting protective and stabilising force, there to defend values such as democracy. In accordance with Jackson (2017) the military and military values are often emphasised together with messages of the good citizen trop. What's more, these narratives are illustrated as natural and necessary factors in protecting everyday life of civilians. Political myths are mirrored in the notion of neutrality. Again, whether that is actually accurate in terms of action, polity and political events is not necessarily of importance. Rather the notion of an identity and biographical background is what strategic narratives call on.

3. Theoretical Framework

This chapter presents the theoretical framework guiding the thesis, including critical security studies, ontological security, national security, and feminist security studies. Furthermore, a few key concepts leading the way in the analysis and discussion chapters are presented. In essence, the theoretical framework is grounded in the assumption that the implications in the political artifacts (further presented in the analysis chapter) are profoundly linked with notions of security. In accordance with Wibben (2011, p. 39) narratives of security are of great significance as they form social relations and political processes.

Briefly introducing security studies, it can be divided it into three levels: micro level, middle level, and macro level security. Micro level security deals with the immediate surroundings of the individual, family, and livelihood. At this level the individuals have more power and agency over their situation as they are a part of a smaller constellation. The middle level refers to associations and organisations that are representing groups of people rather than individual peoples, this leaves the people with less say in decision making and in turn, legitimacy, and representatives. At a macro level there are nation states and international organisations, the workings of which are unknown to most people (Hurtado & Ercolani, 2013). Even though these can be theoretically separated they are all deeply interlinked in practice, as the issues regarding state security in turn affect the ontological security of the many.

3.1. Critical Security Studies

In traditional security studies the focus mainly concerned nation security, state action and military power (Owen, 2010, p. 39). Critical security studies (CSS) are a response to this state-centric approach, with an increased recognition for the individual's notion of security. When CSS was established the main threat to human security was not war between nation states, rather other vulnerabilities were highlighted, such as economic, environmental, and public health threats (Owen, 2010, p. 39). Essentially, this approach defines security as the freedom from threats for once life, livelihood, and community (Peoples & Vaughan-Williams, 2021). Consequently, more things are now recognised as (in)security issues (Owen, 2010). That is not

to say however, that CSS are solely focus on individual safety. Rather, CSS takes on a more sociological approach and emphasize that as humans we don't exist or live our lives in a void, but rather we are a part of a community and a political group. Thus, it's essential to recognise society and our community as the site for security (Peoples & Vaughan-Williams, 2021, p. 40). CSS is an umbrella term including a few different approaches in the study of security, including:

3.2.   Ontological Security

Ontological security studies are grounded in CSS and briefly, it's often understood to cover the security of being and continuing. That is related to managing threats to the notion of our identity, routine, trust, predictable interaction, and biographical continuity. With a focus on biographical continuity meaning, it is a necessity for the individual's notion of security to have "a consistent narrative self" (Kinnvall, 2004, p. 746). So, to illustrate, a threat to one's ontological security could be the treat of environmental degradation that will affect one's livelihood or one's direct surroundings. For individuals, ontological security is also about handling existential anxieties. This is done by maintaining a state of normality in everyday life, having a decided set of routines and activities. Essentially, this means that one can count on some things to remain the same everyday every year that we can take for granted and rely on e.g., public transport, a stable food supply, free elections every fourth year (Kinnvall, 2004, p. 747).

This also applies for the political community, to maintain a consistent identity. According to Kinnvall (2006) states reconstitutes themselves by performing and reinforcing a consistent narrative self, often by narratives regarding security. In this sense, studying the narrative is key because it can reveal what the notion of normality is between narrator and the audience, e.g., a shared understanding of an event that took place and why (Wibben, 2011). As for strategic narratives Carolijn Van Noort and Thomas Colley (2021, p. 4) argues that these are more likely to be convincing if it follows a pattern that is similar to the one's of the targeted community, and that it won't undermine the ontological security of the same group. So, for instance militarisation processes by nation states often use the sense of belonging in a certain unit by highlighting specific cultural or historical analogies that the people can recognise and identify with, in turn evoking reaction, e.g., increase recruitment (Kinnvall, 2004, p. 752).

3.3.   National Security

National security is closely related to ontological security but with more focus on larger, external threats to the people within a nation. National security is closely linked to sovereignty and legitimisation of the state and its cultural and geographical territory (Jackson, 2019, p. 258) Naturally, militarisation goes hand in hand with national security, as militaristic values often mirror national interests and notions of national unity. Here, borders have a key part in maintaining ontological security for a political group. Borders are socially produced and upheld though social practice and beliefs (Scuzzarello & Kinnvall, 2013, p. 92). Geographical borders are of symbolical importance as they are used in conveying a narrative of who is inside and who is outside of the border, e.g., who is sharing the same history, culture, and territory, and in turn, who is not, one people one nation sort of concept (Scuzzarello & Kinnvall, 2013, p. 92). In this context, studying strategic narratives in the security discourse, national security is present as the core of long-lasting security and in turn, ontological security. A reflection of this on a global scale is the increased militarisation around the world. As nation states are restriking their borders in response to (actual or perceived) threats to their national security (Agius et al., 2020). In terms of understanding legitimisation of political action, national security is often called upon in strategic narratives to convey the notion that this (the action) is for the greater good of the nation (Van Noort & Colley, 2021).

3.4.   Feminist Security Studies

Feminist approaches within security studies emerged in the same timeframe as CSS and are more focused on the security of the everyday. Among other things that is embodied by an increased focus on reasons behind insecurity, often regarding factors like identity, gender, economic and environmental vulnerability, rather than war (Wibben, 2011, p. 37).

According to Laura Sjöberg (2017, p. 157) FSS is a more hands on approach, taking a feminist understanding of what security is, why it is the way it is and how it is constituted. Consequently, much emphasis is on security narratives. Sjöberg argues that female identity and labour has always been a part in creating a security narrative, used to maintaining a state's cultural and national identity (Sjöberg, 2017, p. 149). Similarly, Wibben (2019) argues for an approach in IR and security studies that allows for feminist research to be considered both as method and

context. Incorporating another dimension to security studies, interwoven with narratology and storytelling. According to Annick Wibben considering security issues through a narrative approach is of political significance on her view because they create social relations and have effects on everyday lives (Wibben, 2011, p. 39). In this context, FSS will be used to analyse security narratology and discourse through a feminist lens.

In line with post-structuralist thoughts narratology is key in the upkeep of identity and social practice (Peoples & Vaughan-Williams, 2021, p. 49). Identity is an expansive term but one way to understand it is that identity is performative and moving, in turn becoming social practice (Butler, 1990). Meaning humans use narrative and storytelling to maintain the sense of being a unit (Hansen 2016, p. 102). Common narratives, or narratives that are often reinforced soon become recognised as truths or common sense, in turn, these can become an accepted reality and a framework for how we view an object or event, in the long run this is how actions are legitimised (Krebs et al., 2017). So, to summarise, this thesis having a feminist perspective in analysing the security discourse will mean having a feminist lens in viewing material selected from security discourse, along with implications and consequences. Regarding these narratives as profoundly political will aid in understanding the driving force behind them and potential consequences of these narratives. As Wibben (2011) argues, any security narrative is also a narrative of political identity.

3.5. Key Concepts

To conclude the theoretical framework, a few key assumptions: the term security is ambiguous, holding meanings depending on school of thought and context. For this essay the working definition of security is as defined by Ken Booth (2007, p. 278): "The question of security is, in practice, underpinned by questions of who 'we' are and what 'we' want to be secured from". This definition allows for a narrative approach to the political artifacts that will be analysed in later chapters, it also highlights the importance of both group identity and individual identity in security studies. Regarding political identity and strategic narratives, the key definition is grounded in Wibben's (2011, p. 109) definition: identity and security are thoroughly interwoven and, "any security narrative is also a narrative of political identity". This assumption will guide the analysis and discussion in this thesis.

4. Method

In this chapter the methodological approaches are introduced: Critical discourse analysis as defined by Norman Fairclough (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999) and discourse analysis in international relationship studies as explained by Lene Hansen (2016). Followed by a presentation of the selected material and a brief note on ethical considerations.

4.1. A narrative approach

Discourse analysis is both a method and an approach to the study of legitimisation, policy, and action in international relationships studies (Hansen, 2016, p. 102). It's akin with post-structuralism, which emphasize the relationship between power and language. Post-structuralism orientates from the 1980s and has since developed further along with notable political events. Post-structuralism views language as a tool and a practice filled by values and implications, rather than a neutral mechanism (Hansen, 2016, p. 96). What's more, this approach allows us to view strategic narratives as a way for nation states and other political organs to produce and uphold certain views of themselves (Hansen, 2016, p. 95). The reason for applying this method is because of the focus of language as a creator of power and identity. What's more, the focus is not on the true or false statements in the communicating event, but rather what ideas, identities, notions, norms, and values are represented through the text (Hansen, 2016, p. 96). As the research question concerns the strategic narratives in security discourse having a narrative approach allows for an in-depth analysis of public discourse material, both in text and visuals (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 83)

Akin with this approach, critical discourse analysis, from now on referred to as CDA, as defined by Norman Fairclough (1999) focuses on language as a creator of identity and a tool for power. CDA is an interdisciplinary approach which assumes that language is a form (or a tool) of social practice, e.g., value-based words are capable of transforming opinion and affect reasoning in the way certain words frames an event or action (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999). In addition, when preforming a CDA there is no need for an entire system of artefacts to be included and or integrated in the analysis, rather key concepts and representations are selected and viewed as a part of a whole. To analyse discourse the communicative element or event can be divided into three categories or dimensions: firstly, text, visuals, or speech, analysed at wording level. To

analyse somethings at wording level consists of observing the attitudes, conveyed by the choice of wording e. g., value-based language (example of value-based language is describing something as coloured, or stained, they have different implications). By looking into the attitudes, we can get a sense of what is considered normal or desirable.

The second dimension is discursive practice, this is analysed at compound text level and includes the constitution and or the practice of text. Tools to analyse and interpret text are ethos, metaphors, wording, grammar, and interactional control (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 83). Ethos focusses on language as a creator of identity linked to the speaker / writer / source, and the audience. Interactional control covers the relationship and context of the speaker and or the agenda. The assumption is that language is not natural but consists of values and attitudes that translates to how we interpret the world around us.

The third and last dimension to analyse discourse is called social practice, which regards social structures, social relationships, and as the name might suggest, social practices (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 83). As noted earlier, a key assumption is that identity is performative, and language is a tool for creating identity (Butler, 1990). This approach also allows for an audio-visual analysis of the political communication artifacts, presented below (Jackson, 2017, p. 263). The data consists of videos and speeches going around in social media and since they are a part of the everyday experience, have the potential to promote and or normalize certain notions and values (Jackson, 2017, p. 258). In other words, this method opens for the study of the storytelling we receive in the current security debate.

4.2. Viewing visuals

There are a number of reasons to include a visual analysis in regard to security discourse, for one, people tend to interpret images as truthful representations, which is useful when considering militarisation and social media (Robinson 2018, p. 65). On a larger scale, visuals also have a particular persuasive power in themselves. Ben O'Loughlin (2011) makes a case for the power visuals have in political process and IR, urging more social scientist to regard images as key in understanding relationships between audience and underlying beliefs and ideas (O'Loughlin, 2011). Images of people, specifically people you can identify with are often used

in campaigns to evoke empathy (Bleiker et al, 2013). Within IR some photographs and films have stirred global channels and SoMe, creating their own mobilisation force. Like Tiktok-trends following events from all over the world, a recent example are the dancing videos people have filmed and shared as a symbol of support for the arrested teenage girls from Iran. Videos trending are showing people dancing to the same music in a similar way to the girls in response to their fate (Omni, 2023). In other words, visuals have a strong value in their ability to narrating stories and our interpretation of events (Robinson 2018, p. 65). In terms of context, the images and videos later presented in the analysis are strongly supported by the visual as the wording in these commercials are backed up by the visual storyline. This is also a common trait in the campaigns from the Swedish Armed Forces and MSB, which will be made clear below in the analysis chapter.

A challenge in discourse analysis, especially regarding visual media, is that the images might not speak by themselves but rather demands interpretation (Bleiker, 2015). Although interpretations can be subjective, communication is based on a shared reality or a common understanding between narrator and audience. In turn, this makes the context and the situation of the media vital to account for (Jackson, 2017, p. 264).

4.3. Collecting and Selecting Material

The data selected for the analysis are political artifacts meant to represent bigger pieces of the security narrative in Sweden. In accordance with Hansen (2016) this allows for an interpretive methodological approach towards discourse, addressing what notions are reenforced within the narrative. As stated before, nation states are dependent on traditional media to circulate and distribute narratives. For instance, states can increase recruitment and spend additional money on the military, but the government can't on their own shape the populations understanding of military values (Stavrianakis & Selby, 2013 p. 30). For these reasons, the political artifacts selected are representing traditional media and agencies acting on behalf of the state.

Firstly, data include documents relevant to the security discourse and the application to joining NATO e. g., the official declaration of intent to join NATO signed by Ann Linde, at the time, minister of foreign affairs. As well as pieces from traditional news media reporting on the

process. The media analysis is significant not only because of the framing of events in the slogans and headings. But also, because they mirror what the ambience of the current situation is. Moreover, campaign films from MSB (Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency) and Sweden's Armed Forces are presented, as they are indeed political artifacts with the purpose of conveying a certain narrative (Jackson, 2017). These films have aired on television and circulated in social media; in turn they are a present political artifact in the everyday lives of the audience. Lastly, material is collected from the 'Defence Will Campaign' in 2022, published by MSB on behalf of the government. To summarize, all the data are political artifacts that we can search for underlying ideas, beliefs, and identities in accordance with a CDA.

4.4. Ethical considerations

As stated, this thesis is based on qualitative interpretative discourse analysis, as such the selection of political artifacts are meant to reflect on the current ambience of security in media. However, since the selection is narrow to focus on the strategic narratives and their reflection of political myths the amount of data is focused. This is in part a limitation as the amount of comparative data is bound to few selected pieces of political artifacts. This is especially in regards of the analysis of traditional news media. The last year and a half thousands of articles have been published on the topic of the road into a NATO membership. As it's impossible to analyse all of these, the selected artifacts should be considered as they are, a handful of examples of a larger picture. Other than limitations, all material used in this thesis is public material from news media and or official documents / productions from governmental agencies. Therefore, there are no essential need for a discussion on protecting sources. The people referred to by name are all political representatives and should be considered as such (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004, p. 271). Lastly, it should be noted that all translations are carried out by me, the writer, as most published material is only available in Swedish, I've translated it as close to the original meaning as possible. Still, some language variation may accrue as linguistic variation mirrors a set of understandings already in place.

4.5. Summary of Methods Chapter

To summarize the methods chapter, there are a few key assumptions guiding the research approach, first and foremost the idea of discourse mirroring driving forces from the narrator is key to reflect on implications and potential consequences of a certain narrative. Language is in accordance with Fairclough (2002) a method both for creating and maintaining identity and a tool for power. As these political artifacts are created within current context it can be regarded as a reflection on notions already in place. In turn this allows for reflections not only on the political artifacts themselves, but also on the context surrounding them. As stated before, discourse analysis is both a method and an approach in IR (Hansen, 2016), this is significant because narratives that are reinforced until they are common sense within a community becomes part of that community's framework of reality. In turn, these should be considered as the guiding approach throughout the research.

4. Analysis

In this chapter the purpose is to present the data together with an analysis of the selected artifacts. This chapter is divided into four main parts, presenting the collected data starting with official media reflections framed by headlines. Followed by commercials created by The Civil Continuance Agency (MSB) and the Swedish Armed Forces, one being a campaign film and the other an advertisement for recruitment. Lastly, the final data is collected from "the will to defend campaign" that aired in the autumn of 2022, published by MSB on the behalf of the government (MSB, 2022b). As described in the methods chapter, the selection is based on the relevance for the political security discourse, as these forms of communication, digital, visual media and political artifacts are key in understanding discourse as it mirrors normative ideas and information flows (Neumann, 2009). What's more, although these narratives are profoundly political, I would argue that they aren't tied to political parties in the way one might expect. Even though The Swedish Armed Forces and MSB are acting on behalf of the government, they are still independent institutional bodies with their own agendas and ways of working.

5.1. Political Implications

Political implications are presented from a traditional news media point of view and their framing of events. As stated, even though joining NATO is a political decision, the government alone can't circulate ideas tied to insecurity and threat. Rather state actors are depending on media to reinforce narratives that are in line with decision-making (Stavrianakis and Selby 2013, 30). In traditional news media the process of joining NATO has been described as an interwoven issue together with the war in Ukraine. Which is significant for the integrated analysis of the NATO application process and the security situation, as they are heavily integrated both in media and in the perception of urgency to join.

To begin with, the process of joining NATO has been in the making for a while as Sweden has had several integrated collaborations with NATO in the past. In the 1990s the Swedish Armed Forces increased collaboration and developed a partnership with NATO in education and military exercises. Officially, the process to join as a full member state started the 18th of May

in 2022 with a letter of intent signed and posted on 17th of May 2022, by the then minister of foreign affairs Ann Linde (Regeringskansliet, 2023). On the governments website the application to join NATO is reasoned to be a consequence of the changed security situation in Europe following the Russian invasion of Ukraine (Regeringskansliet, 2023). It's worth mentioning, that since the first decision to join NATO was established and voted through, the opposition won the most mandates in the election 2022 and took over government in the autumn of 2022. However, both opposition and the current government were involved in the process of joining NATO. That is not to say however, that every party was for joining, rather it's been a debate both within and between parties (Olsson, 2022). Since this process was of cross-party nature, the focus is not on political parties and their variation. Rather relevant extracts from news media meant to illustrate the language and some key points.

The wording in these headlines are often charged with political implications, e.g., in calling attention to military force or entering a new era type of troupe. Often signalling urgency or seriousness of the events, using words and phrases as 'existential' or 'entering a new era' highlighting the turning of events in monumental ambience. Similarly, the language used emphasise on the necessity for an increased focus on national security, Magdalena Anderson, leader of the social democrat party, comments on the decision to vote for a membership:

> "The non-alignment policy has kept Sweden away from war for 200 years but with the background of the new development we can now see our assessment is that Sweden is best defended within NATO" (Olsson, 2022).

The language of urgency is rather common in these framings, tied to notions of insecurity, however, phrasing a decision as "Sweden enters a new era" (Järkstig, 2022) is a rather interesting approach as strategic narratives tends to be the most effective if they are following a pre-set pattern. Speaking of turnovers are often done by implying the natural road to this decision / policy shift (Van Noort & Colley, 2021). As Wibben (2011, p. 39) states, narratives linked with notions of security form social relations and political processes. From this point of view the narration is a clear indication of distancing Sweden from the threat, while at the same time emphasising unity with Finland.

On the road to a Swedish NATO membership recent headlines have mainly focused on the process in itself, e.g., on the Swedish/Finnish relationship joining NATO within the same timeframe. In the earlier stage of the application, the narration focused mainly on implications and consequences of joining. A few examples of headlines:

DN, 2022-05-11 "Road into NATO expected by lightning speed for Sweden and Finland" (Gripenberg & Melchior, 2022).

Ekot, 2022-05-12 "Russia's independent media is silenced" (Melén, 2022).

Omni, 2022-05-29 "Andersson to the veterans: "Sweden enters a new era"" (Järkstig, 2022).

Omni, 2022-06-11 "Existential for Finland – Sweden is one the second parquet" (Dahlin, 2022).

Aftonbladet, 2022-07-04 "How the government wants to equip Sweden to NATO level: submarines, air-defence and soldiers" (Aftonbladet, 2022-07-04).

Regarding the language of urgency these headlines are shedding light on the turn-over event that a NATO membership is through a political identity perspective. Firstly, the framing of the application and the use of loaded words, e.g., calling the membership an existential matter for Finland. Considering community as the site of security this is also enforcing the distancing between the nation state, the ally, and the threat. By drawing attention to the closeness and the similarities to Finland, while at the same time distancing the state from the (actual / perceived) threat.

The headlines above are representing different types of narratives circulating notions of insecurity in different ways. For one, the unifying narrative of Sweden and Finland as companions in the NATO application process. This can both be useful for insurance of being backed up by other nations, it's also enforcing the Swedish Nordic identity, calling for old ties between Sweden and Finland. In later chapters it will become clearer how media reflect these narratives differently from the institutional agencies acting on behalf of bigger organisations – The Swedish Armed Forces and MSB, are significantly different in their communicative approach. The language of urgency is both highlighting the current state of the (notion) of

insecurity. This can be regarded as an example of media circulating notions of insecurity, especially regarding national security (Stavrianakis & Selby, 2013 p. 30). As well as a performative act of militarisation, traditional media distributing notions of military security as national security, and in turn ontological security.

5.2. We have it in us.

The film 'We have it in us' (English version) posted by MSB (Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency) on 7th of November 2022, is included to address the current ambiance of national security in Sweden. In addition, it is published on behalf of the government, aired on national television, and has circulated in social media. In order to pinpoint the structure, and the narrative being shared in the video, a short description of the content of the video is provided. It should be noted that the comment section has been disabled, otherwise a good source in telling how the film is received by viewers.

The video is quite simple, the colour scheme is quite dark and gloomy with muted sounding. It starts off with a scene on a subway or a bus, where you see a woman dressed in the common green military outfit, she makes eye contact with an older middle-aged man across from her, who nods to her, and then you see her nodding back. In the next clip you see two runners in athletic wear standing on top of a hill with a night view over the city lights, the audio is a mix of sirens and a propeller sound. The women look over at each other and nods to one another. It is portrayed so that the viewer understands that they aren't there together but met on the hill while running. In the last clip you see a boy in a red jacket standing on a football field, he looks into the camera and nods once. Then the text "We have it in us if the crisis or war comes" is shown with the boy still in the background. Lastly, a white background with the sentence "We are all part of the civil defence, learn more at the MSB website". The Swedish version is longer by 45 seconds and includes one more scene as well as marginally longer versions of the previous clips. The main difference is an added scene which takes place outside at night in front of a night-open food place, a nurse in blue scrubs walks out of his car and makes eye contact with a civilian in another car looking over at him and nodding, the nurse nods back. In the last clip you see a bunch of kids playing football at night before an alarm goes off, they stop playing and the football rolls over to the boy in a red jacket who picks it up and looks into the camera, nodding once as the text shows, "We have it in us if the crisis or war comes".

Image 3. Image from the "We have it in us" film. Translation: "We have it in us. If the crisis of war comes".

The entire video is only 60 seconds long, yet it does have a clear narrative.[4] Firstly, the obvious narrative is the message of us being ready and able to defend in case of war and or a crisis. The scenery is all set-in everyday lives scenarios, on the bus, outside running or on the training field, calling for recognition from the viewer and in turn a sense of a shared understanding. It is showcasing some professionals, the soldier, and the paramedic. As well as the civilians running up the hill, reflecting the good citizen trop. Focusing on individuals, showing people away from the crowd or zooming in on someone's face helps the audience connect and emphasise with the character (Bleiker et al 2013).

When it comes to the representing of the professionals, they are pictured by the opposite gender that is traditionally associated with that profession: the soldier is a woman, and the nurse is a man. The video is portrayed to convey a message not only of preparedness but also one of unity and "swedishness". In producing these types of narratives, the state can uphold or produce certain views of themselves, e.g., the good citizen or the good nation (Hansen, 2016, p. 95).

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[4] To Watch the film: MSB. (2022a, november 7). *Vi har det i oss. Om krisen eller kriget kommer.* Www.youtube.com; Myndigheten för säkerhet och beredskap. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yGGb_qT7vM4

A common trait within these kinds of ads and commercials, there are norm-breaking aspects in the way certain people are portrayed. More accurately, a common trait is showing people doing things typically associated with the different gender. This ad is showing a young female soldier and an older civilian man showing her respect with a nod and later a male nurse nodding to a civilian woman. The gendering of the professionals in the "We have it in us" video can be regarded as an approach to separating us and swedishness from the different others, the unnamed threat. It underlines the values belonging to the Swedish national identify being forward and progressive – unlike the different others / the unnamed threat. This is further distinguished by the two female runners who meet each other on top of the hill. The women have different ethnicities, conveying diversity. They nod at each other showing strength (in the exercise) and unity in the nodding, a shared understanding. It can also be considered a nod to the values the armed forces want to convey of equality and equity. Again, by referencing a political myth, people are reminded of a collective identity in accordance with their emotions, metaphors and or historical analogies (Schmitt, 2018).

These types of narratives also reinforce a sense of collective security, as Booth (1991) suggest, the issue of "security is essentially a question of who we are and what we want to be secured from". And so, highlighting the swedishness is also a way of conveying the narrative of what needs protecting, resonating with one's ontological security. The distinction between us and them further enforces the unified identity and the being prepared trop (Jackson, 2017, p. 263).

The usage of children in these kinds of videos / campaigns are common as they evoke a sense of protectiveness (Robinson, 2018, p. 65). The last scene showing a football field with children playing before zooming in on the boy who looks into the camera is illustrating normality in playing and then interruption by the alarm going off.

In accordance with Susan T. Jacksons (2017, p. 258) argument this category of media brings military values into civilian life, using everyday items and situations to create an idea that inserts the same values into the everyday. In part, this is key to understand normalisation mechanisms in society and how the notion of e.g., (in)security becomes the new normal. This is further emphasized with the text "we are all a part of the civil defence". As the film constructs the view of readiness and unity it also builds on the notion of a national identity that is in the

need for protection. In turn the film reminds the viewer of a national security that is worth protecting.

Considering the good citizen trop, it is clear that the film narrates a positive view of the military and being a good, ready citizen. In accordance with Shepherd (2018, p. 210) the creation of military ethos begins with a positive view of participation in the military and militaristic values, as well as a motivation for younger people to join. Regardless, it is safe to say that these videos and images are bringing messages about security and threat into public spaces.

5.3. We are anyone

The Swedish Armed Forces published the video "The home guard, campaign film 36 seconds" on YouTube the 8th of February 2023. The film aired on television and circulated in social media encouraging recruitment to the armed forces. The Swedish armed forces are known to regularly publish these kinds of commercials, often using similar slogans and storylines.[5] This video is quite representative of the theme usually portrayed in their commercials. Showing everyday situations often including children, then switching to a scene with the military showing soldiers.

In this film, different scenes are shown as a female voice narrate. She starts of by saying "We are anyone" and the scene takes place at a kindergarten, showing a male teacher surrounded by about 7 children sitting in a half circle around him. Next clip shows a few workers in a warehouse, and the narrator continues "we think about what we'll have for dinner". Camera sweeps past a changing room for firefighters, "we book a laundry time" you see a woman working with metal in a workshop "and leave kids at school". Another short image of the preschool scene "We are someone's sister" and then the woman working is shown again as she is building something "brother, mother or father". A firefighter is seen sipping his jacket up and then it cuts to the preschool focusing in a close up of a child's face, and then back to the room where the teacher is now playing with the kids. Another scene following the firefighter as he is walking out of the changing room "we go to work". A zoomed in picture of the top of a woman's

[5] To watch the film: Swedish Armed Forces. (2023, February 8). *Hemvärnet - Kampanjfilm 36 sekunder*. Www.youtube.com. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SAC-Axpq0PI

face "then we go home". In the next clip the audio goes down and the camera cuts to a zoomed in picture of a green military outfit "… and defend Sweden", it zooms out and you see soldiers in a thick forest, holding weapons facing the same direction. A soldier wearing a gasmask is shown in front of a blueish and purple sky "We stand up for our democracy". Soldiers working in gasmasks are shown "in peace and in crisis". A white text saying, "We are unordinary people" shows up on screen. A solider with his face painted green as the narrator goes on saying "everywhere, always" as the Armed Forces logo shows up in white in the middle of the screen.
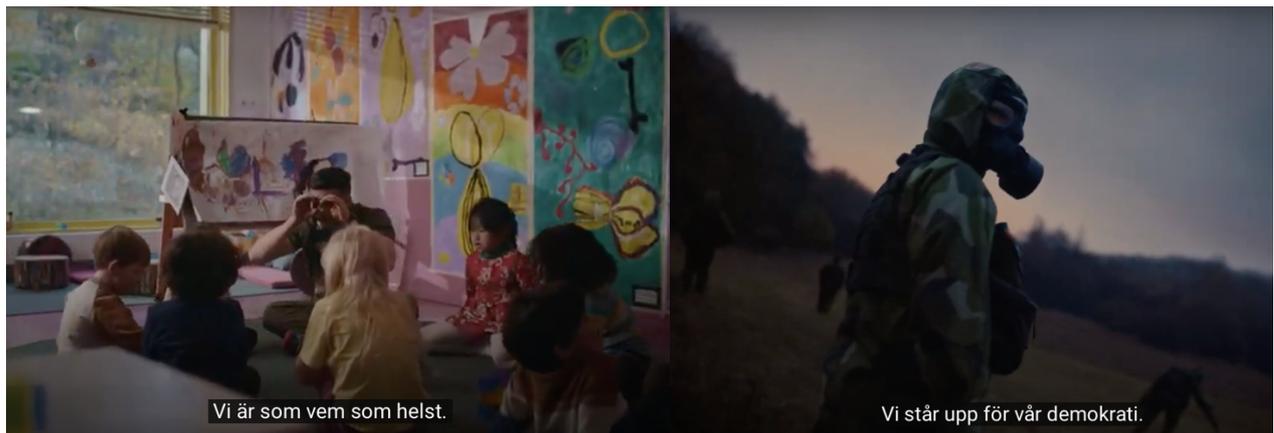

Image 4 and 5: from the Swedish Armed forces campaign. Image 4 translation: We are like anyone. Image 5 translation: We stand up for our democracy (Försvarsmakten, 2023).

In this video the storyline is clear as the narrator tells us who they (the speakers) are. The storyline partly conveys readiness, showing the firefighter dressing up for work and the soldiers in the field. It also conveys the image of a regular life in need and or worthy of protection. In the slogan "we are anyone" the compromised message is quite literary, we are anyone, you are anyone e.g., a father, mother, brother, or sister, and so, it speaks to a shared understanding of who we are. Antithesis (opposites) used here are showing both the everyday lives and military life. It's emphasised by showing a kindergarten teacher and playing kids before showing images of military activity and weapons. One way to interpret this is that it's supposed to widen the spectrum of who can identify within this spectrum. Thus, it can both be regarded as a tool for unifying as well as evoking emotional connection with the playing kids.

As for underlying ideas, beliefs, and identities this ad also promotes and resonates with the notion of Swedishness. Similarly, to the "we have it in us" film, this conveys an image of Swedishness by showing images from the ordinary everyday lives: picking up your kids from

school, planning for dinner and doing the laundry. The same goes for the spoken narrative of us being anyone, as in we are one of you, pushing for the we as a unit narrative. We are anyone, everyone can work and be helpful and it's in everyone's interest to defend the nation. The storyline is also similar in the way it portrays swedishness through having the kindergarten teacher being male, and having the mechanic and some of the soldiers, as women. One way to interpret this is that it is supposed to speak to the audience understanding of normality and threat to the same. By showing images of contrasts and what can be lost in conflict, the video speaks to the sense of ontological security of the audience.

It is a campaign film meant to encourage people (specifically a younger audience in the conscription age) to join the home guard. What's more, the underlying ideas and beliefs are mirroring a strong picture of a desirable and worthy profession. It is meant to evokes a sense of protectiveness showing groups of children in their everyday lives and the normality in leaving the kids at school and thinking of what to make for dinner. And as the film show a narrative of everydayness it displays the community as the site for security (Kinnvall, 2004, p. 746). In this sense, it reenforce a certain picture of Sweden as a nation and Swedish identity. By highlighting the everydayness in the same sense as standing up for democracy resonates with the notion of a national identity (Jackson, 2017, p. 260). Effectively resonating with one's ontological security. Thus, this ad is working both to advertise our rights and at the same time reminding us of our duty to defend them. Other than recruitment, these videos provide a positive light on the armed forces – even if one is not interested to joining the army – they can still receive a positive view of the military and military values.

Regarding the ethos of the Swedish armed forces and MSB, it is evident that the Swedish population has a strong confidence in authority, and especially in these kinds of organisations (Nielsen & Lindvall, 2021). Consequently, these organisations have a strong working ethos already. Taking into consideration the ads having their own claims to creating trust to the viewer, e.g., the people shown in these videos are portrayed doing their job and being a vital part in the Swedish society. This is further emphasised by the use of the audio in the video, starting off with a mix of background noise and some movement sounding in the background then going silent when the scene cuts to the military and the phrase "… and defend Sweden" is spoken. As the messages of the military defending Sweden begins the music playing increase in speed, underlining the changed scenery.

Considering that value-based language is a key part in these advertisements being convincing. As these videos are meant to mobilise collective action in terms of recruitment and militarisation it's further emphasised by the choice of wording. E.g., when the narrator says, "We stand up for democracy, in peace and in crisis" it conveys the narrative of shouldering a responsibility for the greater good. In some ways it can be regarded as a call for the notion of Sweden's place in international peace work with the UN, in that it highlights the necessity for protecting democracy, aligned with Hansen's (2016, p. 95) statement that nation states and other political organs produce and uphold certain views of themselves by reinforcing certain ideas of national identity, composed from political myths (Hansen, 2016, p. 95).

5.4. Defence Will Campaign 2022

Lastly, material is collected from the MSB 'Defence Will Campaign' in 2022. This campaign includes the video "We have it in us" as well as other social media posts, films, and posters. As mentioned in the backgrounds chapter this campaign is executed by MSB on behalf of the government to increase the sense of resilience and willingness to defend within the Swedish population:

> "The message is about wanting to stand up for each other and Sweden is something we have in us. It's a feeling. MSB advertises nationally during the period 7 November – 25 December." (MSB, 2022b).

This campaign includes a number of posts with slogans encouraging 'to do your part' e.g., "Help society to stand strong" or "We need to defend our democracy, human rights and independence. Everything that is good with our society" (MSB, 2022b). The main artifacts, however, are two scenarios fictively described through short stories. They are called "when the war came" and "when the power went out".[6] The stories have been advertised on MSBs social media channels and can be found on the official website.

Briefly, the short stories describe a scenario in which you (the reader) are the protagonist, it describes what you are doing and how the world looks around you: "It is hard to find out what

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[6] To read the full stories visit the website: https://www.msb.se/sv/forsvarsvilja/scenario-nar-strommen-forsvann/ and: https://www.msb.se/sv/forsvarsvilja/nar-kriget-kom/

is happening. Often you wonder if what you read and hear can actually be true. At work there is a battery driven radio on with the Swedish Radio P4".[7]

In the scenarios the picture of crisis is illustrated through the new normal, for instance, in "when the war came" your night routine is described:

> "When you get home the electricity is momentarily working. You take the opportunity to go to the bathroom and get surprisingly happy at the sound of the flush. The kids help refill cans of water, without you having to ask" (MSB, 2022a).

In this one scene a few pieces of the new normal is illustrated, for one the electricity working is no longer something you can rely on, neither is having a consistent access to water. The fact that this is now part of everyday life is conveyed through your happiness of hearing the sound of the flush, and more importantly, having your kids used to completing tasks of refilling water cans. Having been in this situation long enough for them to be used to the new everydayness of war. Including children in these kinds of narratives conveys both sense of protectiveness and responsibility (Robinson, 2018, p. 66). It's also emphasizing the off-ness of the situation, as they no longer have to be asked to fulfil this task. As the use of children is an especially effective persuasive power, this can be regarded as another way of conveying a sense of responsibility (Robinson, 2018. 65). This is further stressed in the storyline as you are described to think how hard it's when your children ask you when the war is over, again conveying an innocent victim's narrative (Robinson, 2018, p. 66).

The story "when the war came" ends on the note "At the same time, you feel that what you do and contribute with, both at work and at home, are more important than ever". Similar to the "we have it in us" video this claim is conveying a narrative of responsibility to shoulder in times of crisis. Since the purpose of the campaign is to increase willingness to defend it's clearly an effort to remind civilians of the importance in contributing and or emphasising that we are all part of the civil defence.

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[7] Radio channel P4 is Sweden's contingency channel tasked with distributing news and information from the authorities.

In "when the power went out" the situation is still new for the protagonist "you grip the pen to write down the numbers of the once closest to you but can't come up with a single one"[8] The ambience is clouded by insecurity of the situation without electricity, the shower isn't working properly, you can't charge your phone or pay with card, when you go to work there is nothing to do, as the Wi-fi is down. In this story the hardship of a crisis is illustrated by the unprepared protagonist. The inconvenience of long-term power-loss peaks at the end when you, the protagonist is thirsty but don't have any water saved. A lady you don't know ends up helping you giving you some of her water. At last, you think how next time you are going to be the one prepared. In this story the protagonist faces hardships of a long-lasting absence of power, their struggle is illustrated through going through everyday live, passing the café on your way to work, going to the office, to the store. At every place you stop there is an issue, and you can't go about your day without challenge. The being prepared trop is highlighted both through the protagonist's unpreparedness and the people who are prepared and helps him out. Effectively stating the importance of being prepared and ready for crisis.

In accordance with Shepherd (2018, p. 210) a large part in the process of militarisation is the telling of war stories. This narrative creates an indirect ethos of the military / military values to managing the stress of potential threat. In other words, it reasons with one's sense of security, both ontological considering the clear contrast of the current situation and the previous reality and biographical memory. From a CSS approach it is clear that the community surrounding the protagonist are the site for security as they themselves aren't involved in battle or direct confrontations but rather have to endure hardship as a civilian living in times of crisis or war, depending on what scenario you are reading. Moreover, this can also be considered an act of legitimisation in that it represents a necessity for defence or protection against this potential scenario, in turn also allowing for a militarisation process.

To summarise, this campaign makes it a point to illustrate hardship and the importance of being prepared. The good civilian trop is present within all stories and films, both through the protagonist or the people around them. It's clear that the good civilian trop is engaged with the prepared trop, as they are both portrayed entangled in a positive light. In accordance with Jackson (2016) it's clear that the sense of security is linked to both national and citizen identity. Both in terms of highlighting the everydayness of life and the normalcy one can identify with.

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[8] A Single phone number*

But also, in the usage of contrasts showing / illustrating children and the hardship of war or crisis. This can be regarded as a tool for evoking a sense of protectiveness and responsibility. These narratives are all speaking to the perception of readiness and unity, whether that is how they will be received is up to the audience. However, a clear direction is evident in all the analysed artifacts, namely, preparedness and readiness, equals security.

5.5. Summary of Analysis

The artifacts analysed in the chapters above are all fundamentally political and has to be regarded as such. One thing that should be mentioned before moving on, is the lack of political representation regarding the application to join NATO. The main theme concerns the practical way into NATO. However, the decision to join and why is limited. Rather representation reaches us via organisations like The Swedish Armed Forces and MSB on behalf of the government. This could be why the focus is split between the security approach and the application approach, represented by the organisations and politicians respectively.

Through analysing the selected political artifacts there are a few key themes standing out. Firstly, the theme of militarisation, mirrored in military values. In both the video commercials and the short stories there is an ambience of insecurity and threat present. The source of the insecurity is not included in the story, rather it's between the lines or an unspoken threat that is more of a perception than a name. This is a significant difference between the material published by agencies acting on behalf of governmental guidelines and traditional media, acting on their own accord.

On the theme of militarisation, in militarised society, certain values are accepted as truth (Shepherd, 2018). Military values are visible not only in traditional media but also in society and normal everydayness. In turn, military ethos is accepted as a natural protection of the state, protecting national borders from an actual or perceived threat (Shepherd, 2018). This works both in terms of legitimisation, as decisions made in order to keep the state secure is legitimate and necessary. It's also a normalisation process regarding the military and armed forces as means of handling conflict and insecurity. In regard to the recruitment video, it's clearly an

effort to increase interest to join the military, however, it's also an imaging of military values. In other words, even if you aren't the targeted audience or in the age group of joining the military, you would still receive a positive view of the military, and thus these narratives reflect a militarisation process (Shepherd, 2018).

The second theme with significance to the analysis is the good civilian trop. The good civilian is demonstrated in a way that lets the audience know what's desirable. This trop is evident both in the video commercials by the Swedish Armed Forces and in the campaign material from MSB. With the implication of a certain language used in these ads and narratives the good civilian is showcased through an understanding (and acceptance) of responsibility. E.g., in the ad by the Home Guard (The Swedish Armed Forces) the narrator speaks of both being an ordinary everyday person, and then switch to messages of defending and protecting, by using words like democracy and freedom. The good civilian trop is quite significant as it conveys a matter of being that is desirable and useful. From a security perspective this narrative speaks to once ontological security, as you are responsible to keep your life and surroundings safe from threat. Both for oneself and for one's national identity, as well as the necessity to maintain or care for one's bibliographic memory (Kinnvall, 2004).

As for the framing of events, it's clear that the political artifact more often than not let the notion of threat be unnamed. There are probably a few different reasons for this, however, in this context analysing the narratives the absent of a named threat is key in understanding the framing of (in)security. The absents of a name can both be a nod to the notion 'we all know what this is about', saying it without saying it. It can also be regarded as a way to keep the audience notion of ontological security at a certain level and not cause any unwanted feelings of emergency. The prepare-for-crisis-trop is less articulated than the good civilian trop, however it's still present throughout all selected artifacts. In terms of the narratives pushing for preparedness of crisis the political artifacts can be regarded as driving forces to the notion of (in)security.

6. Discussion

In the last chapter the results are discussed in accordance with the theoretical framework and the key concepts found in the analysis chapter. The sections are partly divided into themes, however, as often is the case with social phenomenon, concepts are heavily integrated with each other and reach beyond their own category. What's more, it is important to remember that strategic narratives are a mobilising force and should be regarded as such. Consequently, in a narrative approach towards the political artifacts we should consider these to be actively created with implications.

6.1. Mobilising (In)Security

To begin with, the commercials and campaign material for The Swedish Armed Forces and MSB have a few similar patterns in their narratives. You could consider the pairing of security images and the 'are you who we are looking for' trop both an example of militarisation and as strategic narratives used for mobilising. Through the CDA it is clear somethings and some traits are desirable from a societal point of view (Hansen, 2016). For ethos and interactional control, the language used in these advertisements are significant, as the contextual interpretations translates to how we (the audience) view the world around us (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 83). In representing certain qualities as the right fit for security, the notion of the good civilian is represented (Jackson, 2017).

As Schmitt (2018) states, strategic narratives are made to actively push for a certain outcome, it's evident in this case that outcome is increased belief in the ability to defend the nation. However, the political myths mirrored in these clips are also more subtle. For instance, having a gendered lens on the representations in the ads, we can consider the metaphors for the Swedish society that needs protection. The metaphors highlight what's considered a part of national identity, and is used to reference a political myth, in turn reminding the audience of a shared understanding of 'us' (Schmitt, 2018). Feminist research would emphasise on the implications of using women in typical male coded roles (Prügl & Tickner, 2018). Considering the

metaphors of the gendered working roles can be viewed as a strategic narrative in its own right as it pushes for a performative identity of Sweden and Swedishness.

Through a FSS lens, we should consider the implications of these narratives as a reflection of the contemporary world as well as address how governments regulate everyday life (Prügl & Tickner, 2018, p. 84). As some of the implications found through the analysis speaks to the notion of freedom of choice and democracy. In showcasing images of women as soldiers and mechanics the narration points to the notion of Sweden being an equal nation. Potentially implicating the opposite of for the prevised security threat. This is further emphasised by headlines like "Russia's independent media is silenced" again adding on to a distancing between us and the distant (Agius et al., 2020). As Shepherd (2018) states, these modes of representations are a driving force in mobilisation, as the representations mirror people's notions of security and who they are while actively illustrating threat to the same notion.

Institutional power structures and narratives are also deeply interlinked, for one, state sovereignty needs to be performed and upkept to continue being sovereign (Blom Hansen & Stepputat, 2009, p. 7). In this sense, the strategic narratives in the political artifacts can be regarded as a way to strengthen group identity, by unifying the group through a common understanding of identity or collective memory. At the same time, creating an increased identity within the set group, there is also an othering process distancing people from outside of the group. Thus, reinforcing the sense of sameness of one's own group (Neumann 2018). In the recruitment commercial for the home guard the use of antithesis is highlighting differences as a form of similarity, purposefully unifying different people from different lives. This narrative resonates with the notion of a consistent narrative self both for the individuals who lives in the community and the society they are part of. As Hansen (2016) states a stronger narrative is made with both a credible source (like the MSB or The Swedish Armed Forces as Swedes tend to trust in authorities) but also when the narratives are resonation with beliefs already in place, e.g., political myths (Schmitt, 2018).

In terms of media circulating notions of security, something that becomes clear in viewing recent headlines and reports is the focus on the joining part of the process to become a full member state of NATO. Especially in regard to including Finland and the ties to other states

that we are in a good relationship with. However, there is a lack of focus on the political implications and consequences. In comparison to the following artifacts these have a significantly more heads on approach. It is clear that these headlines are less effected by limited use of wording or usage of phrases implicating crisis. One thing that is significant and sticks out from other media produced by The Swedish Armed Forces and MSB, is the naming of threat in the media headlines, e.g., "Russia's independent media is silenced" (Melén, 2022). In the headlines the language is head on calling out different types of threats and counter movements Sweden will take against them, further circulating messages of urgency (Kaempf, 2018, p. 103).

Through a national security perspective, it's present in terms of mirroring the sense of Swedishness in the advertisements as they mirror a perception of a shared understanding of life worth protecting. They are also part in understanding the profoundly political nature of these videos. National security concerns nation borders and territorial security, however, this is deeply interlinked with an understanding of who's on the inside and who's on the outside of the nation (Scuzzarello & Kinnvall, 2013, p. 92). Even though there is no intention to focus on the Swedish and Finish relationship regarding the NATO process, the relationship between the two states have been highlighted throughout the last year and a half. This is a rather clear implication of who are considered a part of a broader national identity, since Finland is referred to as a sister nation, not the same group or unit but still similar enough to 'our' unit. The same goes for the building of the good civilian trop into the narratives. As the people described to be part of the defence are pictured as strong, smart, dependable people. Using the hero-like description can be considered another way of preforming identify by the nation state. As this narrative both pushed as the desirable identity and at the same time it's referenced as something already in place. "We are anyone" and the nods, reference a defence in place and ready. And so, the narrative is to join as well to this already in place structure of good civilians and or the military.

As for the visual representations present in the campaigns and commercials it's beyond doubt that images have a particular persuasive power in narrating. In the recruitment video by the Home Guard, it's clear that they are using emotionally filled images to push for certain narratives. For one they show images in accordance with what the precepted notion of what normality is, it builds on the shared understanding of what every day looks like to the viewer. When political artifacts are repeated on digital media and elsewhere in public spaces, they become a set of practices that normalize the language and messages they convey (Neumann

2009). As the political artifacts presented above, both visual and moving images, have circulated in social media and in public spaces. These are a part of a political process in terms of placing notions of (in)security issues into everyday life. In turn, the visual is a driving factor for people to identify with the message. From a security point of view, it is both evident in the imaging of children as the innocent victim trop and the opposite with the imagery of the military. As these representations are used for people to identify with, they can actively push for certain views and actions to be desirable and justified. As Der Derian (2009, p. 238) states, people in conflict are acting on notions on both sameness of one's own group and the othering of the others. There could be a few reasons for this, one way to consider this is by regarding it as a calling for strengthening group identity. Group identity, especially in larger groups, is in need for a sense of unity and being a part of the same collective group (Neumann, 2018).

I would argue that the visual material presented above are clear examples of militarisation. Partly because of the portrayed narrative of strongness and readiness trop, and partly because they resonate with the narrative of keeping a united front towards the different others (Agius et al., 2020). What's more the ideas conveyed are promoting a feeling of readiness and willingness to defend. In contrast to Sweden's non-alignment identity in conflict this is a rather heads on approach, perhaps mirroring a larger global trend of militarisation. There are also other ideas and representations overcrossing between media, more specifically, there are plenty of reflections of the good citizen.

6.2. Militarisation and The Good Civilian

Through the analysis of media material published in the year since (2022-2023) it is evident that there is a clear narrative pattern concerning the good civilian trop. The good civilian trop is reflected in both agencies' communication, in the representing of traits that are desirable from a societal point of view (Hansen, 2016). Consider the portraying of a good citizen, both the professionals, the military, as well as the civilians, portrayed by runners, parents, teachers, the nurse, and the mechanic, all active in their way of working. In the campaign material from MSB and The Swedish Armed Forces the good civilian is illustrated in different ways however it is all within the spectrum of being prepared and or being useful in times of crisis. The people portrayed as the good civilians are strong, smart, and most importantly have a purpose. Whether

they are dressed in military outfits, running up a hill or working with metal they are portrayed as everyday people having normal jobs and families, as well as being the good, prepared, and useful citizen. This is also reinforced by images and slogans with messages of protection, often military / armed forces protection. Indeed, spreading the notion that (ontological and national) security *is* military security.

Another perspective on this is the framing of threat that can highlight the ambience of increased insecurity, both national and ontological insecurity. As the threats are called war or crisis it leaves it open to interpretation. However, the framing of the crisis all surround the readiness, rather than the threat itself. The non-naming of threat can both be considered a nod towards the shared understanding of the group, a 'we all know' type of idea. It could also be considered a unifying process, as the narratives speaks to an us-ness and shared understandings of 'who we are and what we need'. Following the guiding question of security, who we are and what we want to be secure from (Booth 1991), it is clear that these narratives are speaking to a collective understanding of who we are (or should be) as a nation. I think it is safe to say these videos are a product and a reinforcement of militarisation.

As stated, strategic narratives are a mobilizing force, these narratives should be considered political and part of political process. Whether the narratives are reflection of truth or prevised notions of danger are not necessarily of importance, as the prevised notion of what reality contains is the notion, we as a society act upon (Wibben). Narratives are in part how humans understand the world and as such we should take into consideration these narratives as a driving force towards our notions of security. I would argue that these narratives are an action of legitimization in the process of increased militarisation. As Wibben (2011) argues narratives are a tool to make sense of the world around us – it is also how we articulate intentions and legitimize action. In the short stories of the 'what ifs' scenarios the new picture of reality allows for action to prevent the outcome. The action being more drastic than would otherwise be considered justifiable. This idea is also in alignment of the claims traditional media have made in saying how the process to joining NATO went rather fast (Calmfors, 2022). Considering this has happened rather quickly, it has been a long time coming if you view the past decade or two an increase of militarisation. The political artifacts should be regarded as a whole, as media headlines alone can't capture an ambiance of (in)security. Rather we need to regard these narratives together as these reach us from different places.

In other words, considering militarism as an accepted part of a society, Shepherd (2018) argues that once military values and action is considered common sense, a community's ideology has accepted militarism as an ideology. In part this is showcased as an idea that military solutions are part of the good and natural (Jackson, 2017). This is in part the result of the new security situation in Europe, however this process although fast is not entirely new. The global trend of militarisation is mirrored in Swedish society in terms of the renewal of military conscription, reimbursed in 2017 (Försvarsmakten, 2022).

6.3. Summary of discussion

To conclude the discussions chapter, it is clear when looking into the narration shared in traditional media, SoMe, and in public spaces that we are currently in a process of militarisation. In accordance with Van Noort & Colley's (2021) statement people are more likely to follow or accept a decision if it resonates with previous notions of one's identity. As it won't risk hurting one's continuing identity, in other words, one's ontological security (Van Noort & Colley, 2021, p. 4). These narratives discussed in the chapters above can be regarded partly as an act on legitimation of the decision to join NATO. Evidently these narratives are drawn from notions of various forms of insecurity. Through an ontological security perspective, it is being mirrored in the narratives pushing for things to stay the same, but then in order for things (everyday life) to stay the same one must be prepared to defend it and or be ready to face hardship. The preparedness trop that is (supposed to) increase within the population via the "will to defend" campaign can also be considered an approach to dealing with existential dread or anxiety. By having a narrative to depend on, speaking of resilience and unity the individual person can find comfort in this notion.

6.4. Conclusion

The research presented in this thesis has demonstrated what the strategic narratives are in Swedish security discourse. As stated, this research does not intend to cover the actual security situation or the realness of neutrality and readiness. Rather it explored what notions are put out

there for the audience to see and interpret. As these narratives becomes a part of how we view and interpret the world around us we should regard strategic narratives fundamentally political (Wibben, 2011). It is difficult to pinpoint how effective these narratives are at persuading the targeted audience. Rather this study focusses on the intent to persuade for a certain political outcome and what political myths are used and why. This (the reception) should be addressed in future research. Another topic for future research I believe would be fruitful is how the narratives of security, both shared by agencies and reflected in media, create (or undermine) justification and legitimisation towards governance.

To rewind, the research question guiding this thesis concerned how Swedish security discourse is narrated. I would argue that the narratives are mainly a reflection of political myths already in place, such as the notion of an equal and peaceful nation. These notions are then used in a rather harsh contrast in mirroring military values. As for possible consequences, these narratives are key in understanding the shaping of current political processes. For one, it is clear that militarisation is currently an integrated part of Swedish society. Both through the Swedish Armed Forced and the government, but also through the media that reinforce militaristic rhetoric and values through their channels. In accordance with Stavrianakis and Selby (2013, p. 30) the process of militarism is clearly depending on being accepted and shared by traditional media. As for the driving force behind the strategic narratives these are mainly governmental and of state nature as they are sourced from the political. The process of militarisation is naturally not something that can happen overnight. Rather it is a prolonged process of influence and normalisation. Whether or not that is the definite intention of the strategic narratives created in the security discourse is difficult to say. However, increased militarisation is clearly a consequence of the same narratives pushed for in current security discourse. Finally, to conclude this thesis I want to express my sincerest conviction that there is way more to be explored and said on this topic. I would argue that the current level of militarisation present in everyday life is actively shaping our notion of security.

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