Lund University

Department of Political Science

STVM25

Supervisor: Martin Hall

LUND UNIVERSITY

Nordic Total Defence after 2022

Convergence within Divergent Institutional Paths

Maya Kokko

Master's Thesis in Political Science

May 2026

Abstract

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 transformed the European security environment, leading Finland and Sweden to join NATO and placing Finland, Sweden and Norway within a shared alliance framework. Despite this, the three countries retain distinct national total defence models. This thesis asks whether the post-2022 security environment is producing convergence in the total defence architectures of Finland, Sweden and Norway, or whether historically embedded institutional paths continue to sustain divergence. The study combines historical institutionalism with elements of securitization theory to explain institutional change, continuity and the securitization dynamics shaping them. Methodologically, it follows a qualitative comparative case study design, using process tracing and comparative analysis of policy documents before and after 2022. The findings suggest partial convergence. All three countries are intensifying their securitization, moving in the same direction in strengthening civil-military cooperation, and doing so through layering and conversion within their existing institutional frameworks. Differences nevertheless persist and trace back to diverging historical trajectories in total defence. The thesis argues that the post-2022 environment has produced convergence in how the countries approach total defence and the significance of its comprehensiveness, but it has not affected convergence in a way that would dismantle the differing historical trajectories.

Keywords: Total Defence, Nordic Security, NATO, Historical Institutionalism, Securitization

Words: 1993

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

The Nordic region is often treated in the security studies literature as a relatively homogeneous area, small states with the same threat perceptions, shared democratic values and broadly comparable defence cultures. However, Larsson and Rhinard (2020) argue that the view of the Nordics shared approach to security and civilian preparedness is simplistic and should be challenged.

Finland and Sweden have each institutionalised a total defence model that integrates civilian resilience, military defence, and societal preparedness into a whole-of-society framework. The Finnish comprehensive security model, is presented as a governance framework that coordinates a wide range of actors, fosters institutional trust, and modernises the historic concept of total defence into a preventive security policy (Valtonen & Branders, 2020, p.92). Its development reflects post-Cold-War threat diversification and strong political backing for a pragmatic, rule-of-law based approach to security (Valtonen & Branders, 2020).

In Sweden, the total-defence model performs an equivalent function. Similar to its Finnish counterpart, it represents a whole-of-society approach to national security, bringing together military preparation, civil defence, government institutions, and the private sector under a coordinated framework (Wither, 2020, p.62). This kind of integrated thinking is not a new invention. Total defence has deep historical roots, shaping the security postures of states such as Sweden and Finland during and after the Second World War (Valtonen & Branders, 2020, p.98; Larsson, 2020, p.47). With the boundary between war and peace increasingly difficult to define, and challenges ranging well beyond purely military, the logic of whole-of-society security has only become more pressing in the recent decade (Wither, 2020, p.62).

While Sweden and Finland have developed institutionalised, whole-of-society frameworks for total defence, rooted in a tradition of non-alignment and the strategic necessity of self-reliance, Norway's approach differs in both structure and historical foundation. In Sweden and Finland,

total defence is defined as surrounding all activities needed to prepare the country for war, while in Norway, the concept refers more narrowly to mutual support between civil and military actors across a broad threat spectrum (Bennesved et al., 2024, p.3). This conceptual difference reflects a deeper divergence in strategic culture: where Swedish and Finnish security policy was historically shaped by non-alignment and the principal to "make do by yourself" (Larsson, 2020, p.47; Valtonen & Branders, 2020, p.98), Norwegian security policy has been anchored in NATO membership since its creation in 1949. As a result, the deterrent effect Norway has is considered to rest on the Alliance rather than on individual national investments in preparedness (Bennesved et al., 2024, p.3). Consequently, Norway has not developed a comprehensive, codified security model equivalent to the Finnish or the Swedish models. Instead, broader societal security thinking in Norway has evolved alongside, rather than within, the total defence concept, with the relationship between the two remaining less institutionally settled (Morsut, 2020, pp.86-87).

Since 2024 both Finland and Sweden have been a part of NATO. One might expect their total defence frameworks to weaken because the original functional driver (non-alignment) has been removed. Yet early evidence suggests the opposite: both countries are actively strengthening and deepening their total defence institutions in the post-2022 security environment, citing Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine as justification. At the same time, Norway has published a new white paper on total defence and is revisiting its civil preparedness posture. The question of whether the Nordic region is converging toward a common total defence model or whether deeply entrenched institutional path dependencies will keep the three countries on divergent paths remains open.

The question has significance for two primary reasons. Empirically, the Nordic region now forms NATO’s entire northern flank (Friis & Tamnes, 2024; Fedina & Black, 2024), and the extent to which its total defence models are compatible or divergent has direct implications for alliance deterrence and regional crisis response (Wrange et al., 2024; Hilde, 2025). Theoretically, the post-2022 environment offers an opportunity to assess whether shared external pressure can override institutional divergence which is a question that speaks to longstanding debates in historical institutionalism about the conditions under which institutional change occurs (Mahoney & Thelen, 2009; Capoccia, 2015; Hacker et al. 2015).

This thesis investigates this question through a comparative study of Finland, Sweden, and Norway. Drawing on secondary literature, it traces the divergent institutional trajectories of the three counties and, through analysis of primary policy documents, it focuses on the pre- and post- 2022 total defence architectures.

1.1. Research Question

The thesis is structured around the following research question:

Is the post-2022 security environment producing convergence in the total defence architectures of Finland, Sweden, and Norway, or do historically embedded institutional differences continue to keep them on divergent paths?

This question asks whether the current security environment, including Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine and the following NATO accession of Finland and Sweden, is producing convergence across the three cases or whether historical trajectories prove resilient. Answering this question matters not only for the future of Nordic and northern European security but also to a broader debate about whether shared external pressure can override the institutional path dependencies that decades of divergent choices have produced. If convergence is occurring, the thesis further seeks to address through what mechanisms and to what extent. Answering this contemporary question, however, requires a historical account of how Finland, Sweden and Norway came to develop different total defence paths in the first place. The thesis, therefore, also offers an explanation of the divergence, with alliance status and institutional paths as explanatory factors.

2. Background

This background chapter provides a contextual foundation for the analysis that follows. It begins by outlining the concept of total defence and the terminological variation surrounding it. The chapter then turns to the Finnish, Swedish, and Norwegian frameworks drawing on the edited book "*Nordic Societal Security: Convergence and Divergence"* (Larsson & Rhinard, 2020). The chapter then provides an overview of Finland and Sweden's relationship with NATO. This background is essential for addressing the question of the post-2022 environment potentially driving the countries toward convergence in their total defence frameworks.

2.1. The Concept of Total Defence

Total defence is a comprehensive, whole-of-society approach to national security that seeks to deter potential aggressors by making the costs of attack high while reducing its likelihood of success (Wither, 2020, p.62). Under total defence, the state takes responsibility for organising and coordinating both military and civilian efforts to protect the population and critical infrastructure, ensuring the state's resilience. This involves managing the interplay between armed forces and civilian authorities across a wide range of sectors, including logistics, energy, healthcare, communications, and transportation, among others (Ångström & Ljungkvist, 2024, p.500). What sets total defence apart from more conventional defence strategies is its emphasis on shared responsibility. Rather than relying solely on centralised, top-down military planning, total defence is built on the principle that security is a collective task that requires the direct and legally binding participation of civil society (Ångström & Ljungkvist, 2024). This makes the approach inherently more decentralized and bottom-driven, positioning citizens as active contributors to national security (Ångström & Ljungkvist, 2024, p.500).

Ångström and Ljungkvist (2024, p.501) note that total defence has historically been particularly appealing for smaller nations, as deterring aggression from larger and militarily superior nations requires the ability to mobilise a society as a whole. For such deterrence to be credible, the

structures and systems needed in times of war must already be established during peacetime. In this sense, total defence operates in two levels, both as preparing for conflict and as a strategy for preventing it from occurring in the first place (Ångström & Ljungkvist, 2024, p.501). The term “total defence” emerged largely from the experiences of the Second World War, which was understood as a “total war” because the line between armed forces and civilian population was largely erased, as the entire national territory became a setting for war (Berzina 2020, p.1).

During the Cold War, European security was largely shaped by two major alliances, which were NATO and the Warsaw Pact, and most countries belonged to one or the other (Berzina, 2020, p.2). However, some European states chose to remain neutral, and it was precisely these non-aligned countries that became the most prominent examples of total defence in practice (Berzina, 2020). Without the safety net of a collective defence alliance, they needed to depend on their own national resources and capabilities to ensure their defence (Bezina, 2020.).

While total defence has historically been most closely associated with non-aligned states during the Cold War, the core idea has much wider applicability (Berzina, 2020, p.7). This is also important in the context of NATO, since the strength of the Alliance ultimately depends on how well each member state handles its own defence responsibilities. In its modern-day application, total defence rests on two principles: resistance and resilience. Resistance concerns the will and readiness of a country to defend itself against military threats, while resilience focuses on the ability of civilian society to keep functioning during a crisis, whether the crisis is a military attack or some other form of disruption (Berzina, 2020, p.7). Wither (2020, p.62) notes that this direct involvement of civil society, resting on both physical and psychological foundations, sets total defence apart from more conventional approaches to military deterrence and defence. For example, countering hybrid threats is not done with military capabilities alone but needs a determined and prepared society behind them (Berzina 2020, p.7).

The terminology used to describe these strategies differs across the Nordic countries. Finland uses "comprehensive security," Sweden refers to "total defence," and Norway leans toward "total defence" or "total preparedness.". Total defence and comprehensive security share the same fundamental idea of a whole-of-society approach to national security (Berzina, 2020). They both

rest on integrating military and civilian efforts together to safeguard the state (Berzina, 2020), so the core goal remains the same regardless of the label used.

The concept of comprehensive security, reframes the idea of total defence to a modern security environment. Today, the most pressing challenge is not conventional warfare alone but also hybrid threats, which employ a broad spectrum of tools to achieve political and military objectives. As Berzina (2020, p.6) suggests, comprehensive defence may therefore be a more fitting term to capture the kind of response these evolving threats demand. In Finland, the shift from total defence to the comprehensive security model was a gradual process that unfolded in the early 2000s (Valtonen & Branders, 2020, p.101). One of the driving factors behind this transition was the concern that the language of total defence could be perceived as militarisation of society (Valtonen & Branders, p.101). Unlike Finland, Sweden and Norway have chosen to retain the Cold War terminology, keeping the term "total defence" while modernizing the substance as more fitting to the current security environment.

2.2. Nordic Models of Total Defence

2.2.1. Finland

Valtonen and Branders (2020, pp.96-97) trace the origins of Finland's comprehensive security model to the early decades of independence, arguing that the Civil War, Winter War, and the Continuation War shaped a national ethos of self-reliance and whole-of-society mobilisation that became institutionalised as total defence. They show how Cold War isolation from Western countries due to Soviet pressure, which was represented by "Finlandization", reinforced this trajectory, as the absence of a reliable alliance partners made pragmatic, domestically driven security collaboration a necessity rather than a preference (Valtonen & Branders, 2020, p.98).

Valtonen and Branders (2020, p.101) further demonstrate that the Finnish model has been sustained by strong and continuous political backing and governments advocating the comprehensive approach in their government programmes. This political support is reinforced by

socializing mechanisms such as the National Defence Courses, which have built cross-sectoral elite consensus since 1961, and general conscription, which embeds defence awareness across society (Valtonen & Branders, p.102).

Finally, Valtonen and Branders (2020, p.103) note that the Finnish comprehensive security model can be seen as quite unique compared to the other Nordic models. The Finnish model is driven by specific historical context, but it shares important foundations with other Nordic countries, especially Sweden and Norway. All three models from the three countries share a similar mindset on 'societal security', with similar concepts, such as 'resilience', and emphasize coordination across a wide range of threats (Valtonen & Branders, 2020, p.104). The authors additionally note that Finland's wide approach to security likely facilitates its collaboration both with the EU and NATO (Valtonen & Branders, 2020, p.104).

2.2.2. Sweden

Larsson (2020, p.47) traces the origins of Swedish total defence to the Second World War, when a 1943 commission concluded that the boundaries between military and civilian had been erased and that total warfare required a total defence uniting both domains. Over the following years of the Cold War, this model was organized into four branches: military defence, economic defence, psychological defence and civil defence. It was highlighted that these four branches of defence only worked if they were used collectively (Larsson, 2020.). Underpinning the entire system was Sweden's policy of non-alignment. Like Finland, the Swedish government chose the principle of "make do by yourself", which was backed by mass conscription, extensive civil defence duties, and a nearly autonomous domestic arms industry (Larsson, 2020, pp.47-48).

Crucially, Larsson (2020) shows that the end of the Cold War triggered a fundamental rethinking of Sweden's total defence. From the late 1980s onward, bureaucrats within the newly created Swedish Emergency Management Agency (ÖCB) began challenging the logic of civil defence, arguing that non-military threats such as terrorism, natural disasters, and infrastructure sabotage required equal attention alongside traditional military planning (Larsson, 2020, pp.50-52). This culminated in the 1995-96 defence resolutions, which shifted budget priorities away from war preparedness towards "peacetime strains" and introduced a widened security definition as official

government policy (Larsson, 2020, p.54). Sweden's simultaneous entry into the EU in 1995 and participation in NATO's Partnership for Peace programme further provided international legitimacy for moving beyond territorial defence (Larsson, 2020, p.54.). Larsson concludes that Sweden's post-Cold War turn from total defence thinking to social security thinking was not a radical departure but rather a reconfiguration of logics already embedded in the total defence tradition (2020, pp.61-62).

2.2.3. Norway

Turning to Norway, Morsut (2020) traces the emergence and development of the concept *samfunnssikkerhet* (societal security) and its evolving relationship with the Norwegian total defence tradition. Like Sweden, Norway established a total defence approach after the Second World War, built around two pillars: military defence and civilian preparedness. The aim was to be able to mobilise the whole society in case of crisis or war, but with civilian preparedness designed in a subsidiary role to assist the military (Morsut 2020, p.69). As noted in the introduction, Norway's security has been anchored in NATO membership (Bennesved et al. 2024, p.3), meaning the institutional logic differed from the self-reliance principle that drove total defence development in Finland and Sweden.

Morsut (2020, p.71) shows that from 1999 onward, as the Ministry of Defence shifted its focus toward NATO-led operations in Kosovo and Afghanistan, the civilian preparedness pillar of total defence was increasingly neglected. As civilian preparedness lost its centrality within the defence framework, *samfunnssikkerhet* gradually emerged to fill the conceptual and institutional space left behind (Morsut, 2020, p.72). A series of domestic crises, including the Scandinavian Star ferry fire, a natural disaster, and the Åsta train collision, revealed substantial flaws in Norway's crisis management capacity prompting a political reconsideration of how societal security should be organised (Morsut, 2020, p.72). The resulting Vulnerability Commission delivered a broad assessment of threats facing Norwegian society, but notably revealed internal tensions between those advocating a narrow, military-centred approach to security and those pushing for a broader, more inclusive framework (Morsut, 2020).

Morsut (2020) further demonstrates that successive Norwegian governments struggled to define the boundary between total defence and *samfunnssikkerhet*. She highlights that the Ministry of Justice, in White Paper 17, adopted a broad definition of *samfunnssikkerhet* that encompassed the full spectrum of threats, from minor natural events to crises threatening the nation's very existence (Morsut, 2020, p.74). The Ministry of Justice further developed this thinking in White Paper 39 from the year 2004, which redefined total defence as mutual support between the armed forces and civil society, shifting the emphasis from civilian support to the military toward military support to society (Morsut, 2020, p.75). The Ministry of Defence in the same year, however, offered a narrower definition in its concurrent long-term plan (St. Prp. 42, from year 2004), limiting *samfunnssikkerhet* to situations where the state's existence was not directly at stake and thereby reserving existential security for the domain of total defence and military responsibility (Morsut, 2020, p.76). As Morsut (2020, pp.75-76, 82) observes, drawing a clear line between state security guaranteed by total defence and *samfunnssikkerhet* proved difficult, with the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Defence offering divergent definitions of the concept's scope.

To conclude, Morsut (2020, p.86) notes that in Norway, total defence ultimately survived not as the overarching framework but “as a complement to strengthen samfunnssikkerhet” by supporting civilian authorities in managing crises. Notably, she observes that it was the civilian preparedness pillar that underwent the most radical transformation, as the armed forces progressively disengaged from this domain (Morsut, 2020). Morsut (2020, p.87) notes, however, that the "return of geopolitics" following Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 may shift this balance, and raises the question of whether total defence will regain a more dominant position. The same question is taken up for analysis in the context of the post-2022 security environment.

2.3. Finland, Sweden, and NATO

NATO currently comprises 32 member states, having grown from the 12 founding members who signed the North Atlantic Treaty on 4 April 1949 to include 20 additional states through ten

rounds of enlargement (NATO, 2024). Norway was among the original members in 1949, making it one of the Alliance's longest-standing members. Finland and Sweden, by contrast, maintained non-alignment for decades before joining in 2023 and 2024 (NATO, 2024). Before Finland and Sweden applied to NATO in May 2022, both countries remained formally non-aligned while deepening practical cooperation with the Alliance over nearly three decades (Migliorati, 2024, pp.3249-3250). This cooperation developed despite consistently low public support for NATO membership in both countries (Migliorati, 2024, p.3250).

The joint Finnish and Swedish application to NATO in May 2022 came as a largely unexpected development (Lundqvist, 2022). Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine fundamentally changed the security estimation in both countries, effectively invalidating what had become known as the Hultqvist doctrine, which held that various bilateral and multilateral solidarity mechanisms could serve as a sufficient substitute for formal NATO security guarantees (Lundqvist, 2022, p.94). The costs of remaining outside the Alliance had become too big to be compensated by the traditional assumption that Western wartime coalitions would materialise even without formal treaty commitments (Migliorati, 2024, p.3258). The shift was particularly visible in public opinion. In Finland, support for NATO membership rose almost overnight: for the first time, more than half of Finnish citizens expressed support for joining the Alliance, rising to 62% by mid-March and exceeding 75% by May 2022 (Kinnunen & Koivisto, 2022). In Sweden, the shift was similarly dramatic but politically more contentious, as the ruling Social Democrats initially remained firmly opposed to membership. Nevertheless, public support rose from 42% in January to 51% already in February 2022, while opposition declined sharply within just two months (Migliorati, 2024, pp.3258-3259).

Although NATO membership fundamentally shifted the formal security policy orientation of Finland and Sweden, it does not constitute a complete transformation of their national defence or foreign policy approaches. According to the Finnish Institute of International Affairs, Finland will continue to build its national defence on mandatory conscription, a large reserve force and the principle of territorial defence (Iso-Markku et al. 2023). Finland will also continue to base its foreign policy on a low-key approach based on its membership in the European Union (Iso-Markku et al. 2023.). Similarly, Sweden's national defence policy will still be founded in its

total defence model, encompassing military, civil, economic, and psychological dimensions of national preparedness (Fedina & Black, 2024). The extent to which this will reshape their distinct total defence traditions remains an open question.

3. Literature Review

This chapter reviews the existing literature relevant to the analysis of Finnish, Swedish and Norwegian total defence architectures. The review draws on four main bodies of literature. First, comparative studies on defence transformation in the Nordic states. Second, recent country-specific analyses and situating national total defence efforts within NATO. Third, the theoretical literature on securitization, which provides a broader scholarly context for the theoretical framework.

3.1. Defence transformation of the Nordic States

Petersson (2011, p.702) examines the post-Cold War defence transformation in Scandinavia. The shift from large, conscript-based forces oriented toward territorial defence to smaller, professional forces designed for expeditionary operations abroad. His analysis reveals how Norway, as a NATO member, and Sweden, as a non-aligned state, approached the transformation. Norway, though a founding NATO member, proved reluctant to fully embrace transformation, reforming its forces but with limited enthusiasm for contributing to NATO's expeditionary operations (Petersson, 2011, p.717). Sweden, despite being formally non-aligned at the time, undertook reforms that mirrored NATO's transformation agenda, resulting in the country's armed forces being deployable but no longer capable of conducting independent operations. Petersson (2011) notes this as a striking position for a non-aligned state. He argues that theoretically, non-aligned Sweden should have maintained a national defence capability similar to Finland, which remained focused on territorial defence and did not undergo the same

transformation process (Petersson, 2011, p.705). Yet Sweden placed much of its security provision in the hands of others, which Petersson suggests reflects small state dynamics, in which maintaining credibility within the Western community demands a degree of compliance, even at the expense of national self-sufficiency (Petersson, 2011, p.717). The study also highlights that both Norway and Sweden exhibited low levels of public and institutional support for defence transformation, which the author connects to the broader patterns of resistance to organizational change (Petersson, 2011, p.716). These findings are relevant as they suggest that the trajectory of defence reform cannot be understood alone through the lens of alliance membership but also domestic legitimacy, institutional path dependencies, and distinct strategic cultures.

Wrange et al. (2024) study the extent to which a shared security culture exists among the Nordic and Baltic states, analysing how these countries conceptualize total defence and resilience and how they cooperate in this domain. The study finds that while the region as a whole has moved toward increased convergence in security culture, differences remain in how total defence and resilience are perceived as relevant concepts and what their underlying meaning is (Wrange et al. 2024, pp.511, 530). A particular finding of the study is that Finland, Sweden, and Norway emerge as a subgroup with the strongest foundations for a shared security culture. This is due to the countries' similar bureaucratic traditions, geographical proximity, and rooted historical engagement with total defence (Wrange et al., 2024, p.530). The authors argue that the observations point toward a ‘Nordic Three’ rather than a ‘Nordic-Baltic eight’ as these three states have demonstrated the most commitment to cooperation and a shared attention to state and societal resilience (Wrange et al. 2024, p.531). The study also highlights that Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has strengthened a shared identity across the region, with Finland and Sweden’s NATO membership as the most visible expression of this (Wrange et al. 2024, p.530). The study points to the direction that the post-2022 could be driving convergence between the three countries, which is what the analysis seeks to address.

3.2 Country-specific models and the NATO framework

The edited volume *European Total Defence: Past, Present, and Future* (2025) offers detailed case studies of total defence in Finland, Sweden, and Norway, providing insight into how each country's model has evolved. The volume also includes a chapter by Hilde (2025) that examines NATO's role as a framework for the allies' national defence efforts. Together, the chapters reveal both convergence and persistent national differences.

Sederholm et al. (2025, pp.115-116) trace the Finnish total defence model from its origins, showing how it was shaped by Finland's geopolitical exposure, its 1,343-kilometre border with the Soviet Union. The authors raise the question of whether NATO membership might diminish the importance of the nationally rooted model. They argue the opposite: while the model was originally built on the premise of non-alignment, it also relies heavily on international cooperation, to which NATO adds considerable value (Sederholm et al., 2025 pp.123-124). In practical terms, membership makes cooperation with allies more efficient in areas such as civil defence, information sharing, and situational awareness, while also expanding the pool of resources available in crisis situations (Sederholm et al., 2025, p.124). Sederholm et al. also argue that Finland contributes civilian resilience capacities to an Alliance that lacks its own total defence framework (2025, pp.124-125).

Berndtsson (2025, p.54) examines the re-emergence of Swedish total defence after the government's decision in 2015 to resume total defence planning, which was a direct response to Russia's annexation of Crimea the previous year. Berndtsson maps out the evolution of Swedish total defence and identifies several challenges in civilian-military collaboration. A central finding is that the number of levels and actors involved creates a risk of incoherence, with unclear governance structures potentially undermining cooperation across the network (Berndtsson, 2025, p.64). Berndtsson emphasizes that the re-invention process of total defence remains underdevelopment, with uneven expertise levels, unclear mandates and incomplete private-sector integration (Berndtsson, 2025, p.65).

Forfang Rongved (2025) describes Norwegian total defence as developing through three phases. The original Cold War model was based on mass mobilisation and state-led war preparedness. In

the post-Cold War period, this shifted towards a market-oriented societal security model in which war preparedness declined in importance (Forfang Rongved, 2025, p.75). However, Forfang Rongved (2025, p.84) argues that Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 exposed vulnerabilities in this model. He suggests that Norway may now be moving toward a total defence 3.0, which combines renewed war preparedness and stronger state responsibility with elements of the modernised model. Key elements of this 3.0 concept include readiness for armed conflict, strengthened psychological preparedness, reduced reliance on global supply chains, and a significant scaling up of both military and civilian defence structures (Forfang Rongved, 2025 pp.85,88). Forfang Rongved notes that this transition stands in tension with the cost-saving logic of the post-Cold War model and will remain shaped by developments in Moscow (2025, pp.88-89).

Hilde (2025, p.239) examines NATO's role as a framework for member states' national total defence efforts. He notes that while there is no formal NATO total defence concept, the Alliance emphasizes combining military and civilian resources for deterrence and defence, which is consistent with the logic that underpins total defence thinking. Since 2014, NATO has introduced resilience tools such as the seven baseline requirements for national resilience, which were agreed at the Warsaw Summit in 2016, outlining common standards across areas such as transport, energy, communications, and continuity of government (Hilde, 2025, pp.242-243). Hilde highlights NATO's Crisis Response System as a potential framework for national systems, noting that Norway has adopted it as the basis of its civil-military crisis management, and Finland has shown interest in doing so since joining NATO (Hilde, 2025, p.248). However, Hilde emphasizes that NATO is a consensus-based organization without supranational powers and therefore it is up to each member whether and how to implement decisions nationally (2025, p.239). The extent of convergence therefore remains shaped by domestic institutions, cultures and political choices.

3.3 Theoretical Literature on Securitization

This thesis draws on the securitization theory by the Copenhagen School, with one specific extension of it, both set out in chapter 4. The post-Copenhagen School literature is, however, considerably broader than the elements operationalised, and this section briefly surveys the surrounding debates to situate the thesis within them.

Subsequent scholarship has both extended and critiqued the Copenhagen School framework on several aspects. Williams (2010, p.212) summarises the broader scholarly consensus that the original framework requires further development. A central critique concerns the role of the audience, which Léonard and Kaunert (2010, p.57) argue is underdeveloped in the original framework. Defining the role of the audience is made even more challenging since securitization rarely involves a single unified audience but rather a multitude of distinct audience groups (Balzacq et al. 2016, p.500).

Balzacq (2019, p.336) repositions the audience as an analytical requirement rather than a normative given. Central to Balzacq's arguments is the rejection of a top-down model in which elites independently construct threats; instead, he understands securitization as an intersubjective process co-constituted by both securitizing actors and the target audiences (2019, p.347). Balzacq (2010a) additionally draws a distinction between different audience functions. First, the enabling audience, which holds a direct stake in the issue and carries the authority to formally mandate securitizing measures. Second, the broader public, whose moral support, while meaningful in constructing formal decisions, does not in itself produce binding policy outcomes (Balzacq, 2010a, p.9). Balzacq further links audience acceptance to questions of legitimacy (Balzacq, 2019, p.332). In his view, justification serves as the political mechanism through which leaders convince the public that proposed security measures align with societal values (Balzacq, 2019, pp.345-346). Salter (2010, p.122) extends the audience question by proposing that securitization unfolds across distinct elite, technocratic, scientific, and popular settings, each with its own logic of convincing. This audience-focused literature has refined the field's understanding of how threat framings are received and contested. The present thesis does not, however, draw on them.

Beyond the reconceptualisation of the audience, Balzacq has introduced other renewals to the original securitization framework to make it more analytically flexible. He, for example, introduces the concept of regimes of practices as an integrative approach capturing the interplay between verbal and non-verbal practices in organised, context-specific ways of thinking and enacting security (Balzacq et al. 2016, p.497; Balzacq, 2019, p.332). Balzacq also reframes securitization itself, not as a logic of depoliticisation but as the politics of the extraordinary, a process that heightens the political salience of an issue rather than removing it from debate (2019, p.332).

The broad literature of securitization points to the breadth and ongoing development of the theory beyond its original formulation. The literature on the theory has refined and extended the framework in several directions, not all of which are operationalised in the present study. The next chapter on the theoretical framework returns to the securitization concepts that are directly relevant to the analysis.

4. Theoretical Framework

Analysing if Finland, Sweden, and Norway are moving towards convergence in their total defence architectures requires a theoretical framework capable of addressing two independent but connected analytical problems. The first is a question of institutional origins and continuity: how do security institutions develop, why do they take specific forms, and under what conditions do they change or persist? The second issue considers political process: through what mechanisms do threats drive institutional action, and how does the framing of threats shape the scope and character of the institutional response? This chapter introduces historical institutionalism, securitization theory and their application to the upcoming analysis. Finally, it synthesises the two theories into an analytical framework.

4.1. Historical Institutionalism

Historical institutionalism emerged as a distinct approach in comparative politics during the 1980s, largely as a reaction to the dominant theories of the previous decades. Until then, the subject had been shaped by two schools of thought: group theories of politics and structural functionalism (Hall & Taylor, 1996, p.937). Historical institutionalists did not dismiss either tradition entirely. From group theory, they kept the basic idea that conflict over resources drives politics. From structural functionalism, they kept the ambition to see the polity as a system of interconnected parts (Hall & Taylor, 1996, p.937). What they rejected was the structural functionalist tendency to explain political outcomes through the social, psychological, or cultural traits of individuals, arguing instead that institutional organisation was the primary force (Hall & Taylor, 1996).

Within HI, institutions are understood broadly, not just as formal rules and organisations, but also as the informal norms, routines, and procedures that grow out of concrete historical processes and political conflicts (Hall & Taylor, 1996, p.938; Pierson, 1996, p.126; Thelen, 1999, p.388). As Pierson argues, HI is historical because it sees political development as an ongoing process shaped by what came before, rather than something that can be explained at a single point in time. It is institutionalist because many of the effects of these processes become embedded in institutions (Pierson, 1996, p.126). What this means in practice is that early choices constrain later ones, and that the unequal distribution of power between actors over time produces distinct national trajectories that can prove difficult to reverse. HI tends to focus on a limited set of cases tied to a specific time and place rather than aiming for universal theoretical claims (Thelen, 1999, p.373). In forming hypotheses HI typically starts from an empirical puzzle observed in the real world and works toward an explanation (Thelen, 1999, p. 374).

For this thesis, HI provides the conceptual tools for the analysis. Three core concepts structure the framework: path dependency, critical junctures, and the mechanisms of gradual institutional change.

4.1.1. Path Dependency

Path dependency is the foundational concept of HI. In its most precise formulation, it refers to understanding why a political system, institution, or policy looks the way it does today, tracing how it got there (Pierson, 2000, p.252). Crucially, path dependence does not always reproduce continuity; reactions against an existing path can also redirect development (Pierson, 2000, p.252.).

The idea of *increasing returns* is central to understanding path dependence. Pierson (2000, p.252) describes increasing returns as meaning that the longer a particular path is followed, the more established it becomes. Switching to an alternative path grows progressively more costly, making continuation the most rational option even if other paths might once have been equally suitable. Each step on a particular path makes following the same path more attractive, creating a cycle of self-reinforcing activity (Pierson, 2000, p.253). Even though the idea has been mostly used in economics, Pierson notes that the logic also applies to politics, political institutions, and policies. Once a formal institution or a public policy has been established, the option to exit from it is often unavailable or too costly (Pierson, 2000, p.259). Pierson (2015, pp.134-135) develops this argument further by distinguishing the *transfer of resource stocks*, meaning a one-time gain from an institutional victory, from the *alteration of resource flows*, whereby an institutional victory continuously tilts in favour of the winning path across following rounds of decision making. For security institutions, increasing returns mean that existing defence and preparedness structures tend to reproduce themselves across future policy decisions.

At a more cognitive level, path dependency also shapes how policymakers and individuals understand security problems and identify appropriate responses at a normative level. As Thelen (1999, p.948) notes, institutions constrain the behaviour and frameworks of interpreting the social world of individuals socialized into the institution. Pierson (2015, p.137) argues that institutional outcomes do not just shape behaviour but gradually shift what actors believe is desirable or even possible. He notes that changes become self-reinforcing over time as alternative viewpoints slowly disappear from discourse (Pierson, 2015, pp.137-138). According to Pierson (2015), institutional paths should be understood as inherently political: those who

benefit from a particular path accumulate both the resources and the incentives to defend it against change, making departure politically costly even when the strategic environment shifts.

4.1.2. Critical Junctures

If path dependency explains the persistence of institutions, critical junctures explain moments of significant change. Capoccia and Kelemen (2007, p.348) define critical juncture as a short period in which actors have an unusually high degree of influence over outcomes. Under normal circumstances, institutions and structures limit the range of possible actions. During a critical juncture, these constraints temporarily weaken, leading to a broader range of alternatives with more significant and lasting consequences (Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007). Capoccia (2015) develops this further by emphasizing the role of political agency during a critical juncture. During the uncertainty of critical junctures, the structural preconditions loosen with political actors gaining more room to manoeuvre. Because of that, what matters is how key actors respond to the opportunities and pressures that the juncture presents (Capoccia, 2015, p.159). Once the juncture passes, however, the openness presented by the juncture closes again, and the choices made during the juncture set off a new path-dependent process narrowing future options (Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007, p.348). This is what makes critical junctures qualitatively different from ordinary political development. They are rare windows where different choices are genuinely available, but once they close, the chosen paths tend to lock in.

Capoccia and Kelemen (2007, p.360) argue that measuring the "criticalness" of a critical juncture requires measuring what they call the *probability jump* and *temporal leverage*. The probability jump captures the likelihood of a particular outcome rising during a juncture and how locked-in it becomes once the juncture is over. Temporal leverage captures how long the juncture's effects last relative to how brief the juncture itself was (Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007, pp.360-361). Capoccia (2015, pp.165-166) introduces the concept of near-miss critical junctures as situations where change is possible and considered, but change fails to materialize due to the failure of mobilizing political forces or favoring stability over reform. This concept matters as it suggests that institutional continuity during periods of potential change should not be read as structurally

determined. It may instead reflect the failure to reform, leaving open the possibility for a later juncture to produce the change that the earlier one did not.

4.1.3. Mechanisms of Gradual Institutional Change

Mahoney and Thelen (2009) point out that earlier scholarship in HI has tended to fall into a model where institutions stay stable for long periods and then suddenly break down and get replaced. The problem with this is that it misses the more gradual, internally driven changes that accumulate quietly over time (Mahoney & Thelen, 2009, p.7). Mahoney and Thelen (2009) identify four mechanisms of incremental institutional change that are relevant for this thesis.

Layering refers to the addition of new institutional elements alongside existing ones, without replacing them. Even though layering does not introduce new institutions or rules, if the new elements are significant enough, they can, over time, change the logic of the institution even though nothing was formally dismantled (Mahoney & Thelen, 2009, pp.16-17). *Conversion* happens when the environment and the formal rules of an institution stay the same, but the way they are interpreted and applied by actors in practice changes (Mahoney & Thelen, 2009, p.17). *Drift* refers to the change that occurs when institutions are not actively maintained in the face of a changing environment. Formal rules remain in place, but their practical effect shifts as the external context around them changes (Mahoney & Thelen, 2009, p.17). Hacker et al. (2015, p.184) define drift further by emphasizing that drift is not political inaction but requires that the shifting context is recognized by relevant actors and that efforts to update existing rules are either not undertaken or actively blocked. *Displacement* refers to the more radical process in which existing rules and institutions are replaced by new ones. This can happen instantly, as in a revolution, but it can also happen gradually, when new institutions are introduced alongside old ones and actors gradually change sides in favor of the new system (Mahoney & Thelen, 2009, p.17).

These mechanisms offer tools for characterizing the nature of institutional change in each case of the analysis without forcing a binary choice between stability and transformation. Hacker et al. (2015) make an important contribution to how drift and conversion change our understanding of institutional change more broadly. Because these processes work through the transformation of

existing institutions rather than their replacement, they can unfold away from the public visibility of legislative politics, making them difficult to expect and monitor. This also means that the actors best positioned to shape these processes are not voters, but organised interests with the resources to engage over long periods of time (Hacker et al., 2015, pp.181-182). This has implications for how convergence among the three countries should be assessed. If convergence is occurring, it may be unfolding gradually through layering and conversion. Alternatively, historical institutions may persist through drift, where the absence of active reform allows institutions to remain in place even as the security environment around them changes.

4.2. Securitization Theory

Securitization theory, developed by the Copenhagen School in the work of Buzan et al. (1998), provides a constructivist account of how security issues are politically constructed. The central claim is that security is not an objective condition but a political act. An issue becomes a security matter when a political actor successfully presents it as an existential threat, a threat so serious that it overflows normal political logic and demands extraordinary measures. What matters is not whether the threat is real, but whether it is presented and accepted as such (Buzan et al. 1998, pp. 23-24). Issues exist on a spectrum ranging from being outside political debate to being part of normal politics, to being securitized ways that justify extraordinary measures (Buzan et al. 1998, p.23). The authors argue that the aim should be towards desecuritization, meaning that issues should be shifted away from emergency mode and back into normal political processes (Buzan et al. 1998, pp.4, 29).

The Copenhagen School framework relies heavily on discourse. Buzan et al. (1998, p.25) state that "the way to study securitization is to study discourse and political constellations". However, a discourse that presents something as an existential threat does not alone create securitization: Buzan et al. (1998) make a clear distinction between the *securitization move* and a successful securitization. Presenting the threat is a securitization move not a full securitization process which requires audience acceptance (Buzan et al., 1998, p.25). This distinction is significant for

the analysis. The analysis focuses on the *securtizing moves* performed in the policy documents. Analysing securitization moves is not about objectively determining whether a threat is real, but more about analysing how political actors construct a shared understanding of what should be seen as a threat and responded to collectively (Buzan et al., 1998). The audience component of securitization is acknowledged as theoretically necessary, but the analysis does not attempt to assess audience reception directly, since the empirical material consists of government documents rather than evidence of public, parliamentary, or expert reception.

Buzan et al. (1998) organise their analysis around five sectors: military, political, economic, environmental, and societal. Each sector carries its own distinct logic of what constitutes a threat and what survival means, meaning that what counts as an existential challenge in the military sector is not the same as in the societal or economic one (Buzan et al., 1998, p.27). Securitization can also be either ad hoc or institutionalised. When a threat is persistent or recurring, the sense of urgency surrounding it tends to become embedded in institutions over time. Most notably in the military sector, where there is a long-standing establishment to address the threat of invasion (Buzan et al., 1998, pp.27-28).

The original Copenhagen School framework was developed primarily to analyse discrete securitizing moves rather than the long-term institutional architectures that securitization can produce. This thesis is concerned with the latter, which requires extending the framework along the lines proposed by Balzacq (2010a, p.1) in what he describes as a more sociological approach emphasising context and practices. This turn treats securitization as an ongoing institutional practice rather than a singular speech act (Balzacq et al., 2016, p.494). It emphasises both the immediate setting in which a securitizing move occurs and the broader socio-cultural and historical context within which it unfolds (Balzacq, 2010b, p.37). Furthermore Bigo (2002, p.65) broadens the empirical scope of securitization analysis from discourse alone to include non-discursive practices. This points to the limits of analysing securitization only through texts and speech (Balzacq, 2010a, pp.1-2; Balzacq et al., 2016, p.517). The extension adopted in the analysis treats securitization as an ongoing process embedded in institutional contexts rather than as a discrete textual event. The practical implication for the upcoming analysis is that the

documents are read not only as discursive performances but as outputs of institutional securitization processes that have unfolded over decades.

4.3. Theoretical Synthesis: Why Both Theories?

The justification for combining HI and securitization theory is not merely additive but relational, the two frameworks are mutually constitutive in important ways.

HI without securitization risks a form of institutional determinism in which path dependencies explain everything and political agency explains nothing. If institutions simply reproduce themselves through increasing returns and positive feedback, it becomes difficult to explain why some institutions change dramatically while others do not even in the same external threat environment. Securitization theory fills this gap by driving attention to the political processes: the construction and communication of threat and the legitimisation of institutional responses. De-securitization can explain institutional dismantlement in ways that HI cannot with the stability of a given securitization explaining institutional resilience in ways that change alone does not.

Securitization theory without HI, risks treating institutional outcomes as more flexible than they are. If security institutions were simply the products of successful securitization moves, one would expect relatively rapid and symmetrical institutional responses to the common threat environments. Institutional differences are easier to understand by recognising that securitization operates within institutional contexts that structure and constrain what kinds of institutional responses are available and feasible. A country cannot simply construct a new institutional infrastructure through discursive practices alone, even if its policymakers made relevant securitizing moves. The absence of the appropiate institutional architecture makes change slower, more contested, and more path-dependent than a pure securitization account would suggest.

The combined framework thus generates an analytical logic: *institutional paths define the directions through which securitization operates, and securitization dynamics explain the political conditions under which institutional paths are maintained or disrupted.*

4.4. Operationalization of the Theories

These theories generate the following observable implications for the empirical analysis:

For *path dependency*, the thesis will trace the founding conditions of each country's total defence architecture and identify the mechanisms that have sustained divergent trajectories. For *critical junctures*, the analysis will examine the postwar founding moment and the post-Cold War period, and assess whether the post-2022 environment meets the criteria for a critical juncture. The analysis will seek to assess *mechanisms of institutional change*, to define in which ways changes have been made, avoiding the binary of stability versus transformation.

For *securitization*, the analysis will examine the scope and character of threat framing in the policy documents of each country. What is constructed as a threat, how broadly the threat is framed, and whether the resulting securitization is institutionally embedded. The analysis focuses on the securitizing moves themselves as they appear in the documents.

Together, these analytical tools will allow the analysis to address both dimensions of the research question: explaining divergent institutional origins through path dependency and critical junctures, and assessing the prospects for convergence through the interaction of securitization dynamics and institutional path dependencies in the current security environment.

5. Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodological choices that structure the study and explains the reasoning behind each decision. The research question guiding this thesis, whether shared NATO

membership drives Nordic convergence toward a more common total defence model, or whether historically embedded institutional differences continue to produce divergent total defence architectures, requires a methodology that can handle both historical depth and contemporary comparison.

5.1 Research Philosophy

This thesis is situated within an interpretivist epistemological tradition and draws on a constructivist ontological position. Ontologically, the study proceeds from the recognition that social and political phenomena do not get their meaning independently but from how actors understand and interpret them. As Furlong and Marsh (2010, p.190) argue, from a constructivist standpoint, reality is not simply discovered but actively constructed, and the social world has no independent role separate from the meanings that individuals, groups, and societies attach to it. This does not mean that institutions or models such as Finland's comprehensive security framework are treated as merely imaginary. They do have real, material consequences, but their significance and development cannot be understood without considering how political actors have interpreted threats, justified institutional choices, and reproduced or challenged existing constructions over time. This ontological position aligns well with this study, as the different total defence architectures are partly a product of how actors have differently constructed the meanings of security and societal resilience..

Epistemologically, the thesis follows the interpretivist position that the social world is discursively and socially constructed, and that interpretations and meanings are central to understanding social phenomena (Furlong & Marsh 2010, p.199). Objective analysis of the kind pursued in the natural sciences is unattainable in the interpretivist traditions, as Furlong and Marsh (2010) note, but as Sandberg (2005) argues, interpretive research can produce justified and thorough knowledge, even if it cannot generate absolute truth. Rather, the knowledge produced here is understood as informed and defensible in relation to the ontological and epistemological assumptions on which it rests (Sandberg, 2005, p.62). From this epistemological

position document analysis and process tracing are appropriate methods, since both require interpreting textual meaning rather than measuring variables.

5.2 Research Strategy: A Qualitative Approach

This thesis adopts a qualitative research strategy. Bryman (2016, p.380) identifies three primary characteristics that distinguish qualitative from quantitative research: a tendency toward inductive reasoning in which theory emerges from rather than precedes empirical engagement; an interpretivist epistemology that prioritises understanding on how actors make sense of their social world; and a constructionist ontology that treats social phenomena as produced through interaction rather than as fixed structures existing independently of those who constitute them. Vromen (2010, p.249) observes that qualitative approaches in the political science discipline are characterised by their emphasis on detailed, text-based investigation that is often historically grounded or draws on the perspectives of those directly involved in political processes. This is commonly referred to as 'thick' description and analysis, compared to the broad numerical generalisations sought by quantitative methods. The question of institutional convergence is fundamentally a question about causal mechanisms: through what processes, under what conditions, and via what actors does (or does not) convergence occur? Such questions are poorly suited to large-N statistical analysis, which would require more comparable cases and would struggle to capture the historical and institutionally specific character of total defence development.

5.3. Research Design: A Comparative Case Study

The thesis employs a comparative case study, examining three countries: Finland, Sweden, and Norway. A case study, as Gerring (2004, p.352) argues, is fundamentally an intensive investigation of a single unit with the ambition of saying something meaningful beyond that unit alone. Comparison serves important purposes in political analysis. Comparing how different

nations respond to similar political challenges opens up opportunities for policy learning and brings fresh perspectives that would not be identifiable from a single case alone (Hopkin, 2010, p.285). Furthermore, any given political phenomenon is likely to attract more than one plausible explanation. Deciding between competing explanations requires the theoretical frameworks to be carefully assessed and, where possible, put to a comparative test (Hopkin, 2010, p.290).

The present study extends this logic across three cases, constituting what is commonly referred to as a small-n design. Yin (1981, p.102) notes that in such designs, once a phenomenon has been examined across all available cases, the researcher is positioned to develop a broader synthesis or general explanation. Small-n qualitative comparison is particularly well-suited to the theoretical framework of historical institutionalism and sits naturally alongside process tracing as an analytical technique. With three cases selected, the aim here is not statistical representativeness but the kind of theoretically grounded comparison that allows claims about mechanisms and conditions to be made with analytical confidence.

The decision to compare three cases rather than conduct a single case study is driven by the nature of the research question itself. The question asks whether convergence between the countries is occurring, a question that is, by definition, comparative. The three case comparison also brings analytical leverage that a single case cannot: patterns identified within one case can be assessed against the evidence from other cases through a cross-case comparison, strengthening or weakening the theoretical claims being made.

5.3.1. Case Selection Technique: Most-Similar Systems Design

Effective case selection should be drawn from the research objective of the study, by choosing cases that provide the control and variation the research problem requires (George & Bennett, 2005, pp.99-100). For the present study, the question about convergence, calls for cases that share many background features. This framework is best identified by choosing cases through most- similar systems design.

The three cases are therefore selected on the basis of a most-similar systems design logic, a comparative strategy in which cases are chosen because they are similar on many relevant

dimensions but differ on a key explanatory variable of interest (Anckar, 2008, p.389). Most-similar systems design is used here as a technique for case selection rather than a method for variable based causal inference. The logic of most- similar systems as a case selection technique is that when cases share many background conditions, those shared conditions cannot easily explain differences in the outcome, which strengthens the basis for examining the conditions on which the cases do diverge.

Finland, Sweden, and Norway are comparable on background conditions that might otherwise explain differences in their total defence architectures:

- Geography and threat environment: All three countries are located in Northern Europe, bordering or near Russia, and have historically viewed Russia or the Soviet Union as their main security threat.
- Political system: Each country is a stable liberal democracy with parliamentary government and high institutional trust.
- Economic development: All three are developed nations with comparable defense spending levels.
- Cultural and normative context: The three countries share broadly similar cultures, including welfare traditions and norms of collective responsibility.

The condition on which the cases differ is their Cold War security trajectory, and alliance status and the institutional paths it produced. With the three countries now sharing alliance membership and their background conditions otherwise stable, the case selection isolates the post-2022 environment as the dimension on which convergence can be assessed. The case selection is also supported by the recent work by Wrange et al. (2024), presented in the literature review, where the authors identified Finland, Sweden, and Norway as a ‘Nordic three’ that forms a subgroup within the Nordic-Baltic region, strengthening the rationale for treating these three as a most-similar group.

Denmark and Iceland fall outside the scope of this analysis. As Saxi (2025, p.297) notes, Denmark in 2004 chose to abandon the task of maintaining balanced armed forces and dismantled the structures necessary for territorial defence. Denmark's orientation has been

directed above all toward global developments and expeditionary operations alongside Anglo-American partners, leaving limited space for Nordic defence efforts (Jokela & Iso-Markku, 2013,pp. 5, 9 ; Saxi, 2025, p.298). Iceland is likewise excluded, as it maintains no armed forces and therefore has no total defence architecture to compare.

5.4. Analytical Method: Process Tracing

Within each case, the primary analytical technique is process tracing. Within case analysis of this kind is not focused on the analysis of variables across cases but rather on the causal paths within the single cases (George & Bennett, 2005, p.191). This within-case process tracing can then be used for a cross-case comparison (George & Bennett, 2005), which the analysis is doing due to the study's comparative case study design. Process tracing involves the systematic examination of evidence selected and analysed in light of the research question, contributing both to describing political phenomena and to evaluating causal claims (Collier, 2011). Rather than focusing solely on causes and outcomes, process tracing shifts analytical attention to the mechanisms that connect them, meaning the causal processes through which an initial condition produces a particular result (Beach, 2017; Beach & Pedersen, 2019). George and Bennett (2005, pp.224-225) describe the method as an effort to identify the causal chain and the mechanisms that link an independent variable to the outcome observed in the dependent variable. This technique allows the researcher to trace how specific conditions interact over time to produce an outcome.

Methodological writing on process tracing covers different spectrums, and it is worth briefly situating this thesis within it. Beach and Pedersen (2019) have developed process tracing in a highly positivist direction in which hypotheses are tested against observable implications through structured tests. George and Bennett (2005), on the other end treat process tracing as a more interpretively suitable technique. They reject the view that complex historical events can be explained solely by incorporating them under general covering laws, arguing instead that such events must be explained by “tracing the sequence of events that brought them about” (George &

Bennett, 2005, pp.240-241). This approach sits more comfortably with the interpretivist position adopted in this thesis than the more positivist framework developed by Beach and Pedersen (2019).

The claim that Finland's comprehensive security framework is path-dependent is not merely a claim about correlation (Finland had a non-aligned status; Finland has comprehensive security) but a claim about mechanism. Specific choices made at particular historical moments created self-reinforcing institutional logics that have made it progressively more costly to diverge from the established path. George and Bennett (2005, p.230) identify path-dependent processes as a category of causal process for which process tracing is well suited, since such processes unfold as sequences in which earlier events prevent some developmental paths and steer the outcome toward others. They also distinguish between different varieties of process tracing based on how theoretically founded the explanation is, ranging from detailed narrative to analytical explanation (George & Bennett, 2005, pp.226-227). This thesis uses the latter, analytical explanation. The development of total defence in the countries is converted from a sequence of events into a causal explanation guided by HI and securitization. Such explanations, as George and Bennett (2005, p.227) note, are typically selective, focusing on the theoretically most important steps rather than documenting every link in the causal chain. The type of process tracing used in the analysis offers an alternative to controlled comparison by focusing on within-case analysis and then using the findings from each case to compare through a shared theoretical framework (George & Bennett, 2005, p.192).

5.5. Empirical Material

The empirical analysis draws on six primary documents, two per country, that are selected to capture each country's institutional framework before and after the shift in the European security environment after Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 and the shared NATO membership that followed. The analysis does not include parliamentary debates, media coverage, or public opinion data, since the analytical focus is on how each government has institutionally framed and organised its total defence architecture.

For Finland, the pre-2022 period document that the thesis examines is Finland's *Security Strategy for Society* (2017), which is a government resolution that gives a comprehensive account of the Finnish Comprehensive Security Model. For the post-2022 period, the thesis uses the newly updated version, *Security Strategy for Society: Government resolution* (2025). The 2025 strategy updates the principles of comprehensive security and connects to NATO membership (Security Committee, 2025).

For Sweden, the pre-2022 period document that the thesis examines is a governmental total defence proposition *Totalförsvaret 2021-2025 (Prop. 2020/21:30)*, which proposes goals for the Swedish total defence. For the post-2022 period, the thesis uses the newly updated version, *Totalförsvaret 2025-2030 (Prop. 2024/25:34)*. The proposition for 2020-2030 updates goals for total defence and connects to NATO membership (Government of Sweden, 2024).

For Norway, the pre-2022 period document that this thesis examines is the publication *Support and Cooperation: A Description of Total Defence in Norway* from the Norwegian Ministry of Defence and Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security (2018). This publication represents the most comprehensive official account of how Norway's total defence was organised before 2022. Notably, this document is a descriptive overview produced by two ministries rather than a single strategic government resolution, reflecting the institutionally fragmented character of Norway's approach. For the post-2022 period, the thesis examines the new White Paper on *Total Preparedness*, *Meld. St.9 (2024-2025)*, which the Norwegian government represents as a historic turning point for Norway's total preparedness (Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2025).

Together, these six documents allow a structured, comparative analysis of whether the three countries' total defence architectures are converging in the post-2022 environment or whether pre-existing institutional differences remain. The deeper historical trajectories that have produced differing starting points are established through secondary literature. This keeps the empirical analysis focused and manageable while ensuring that the comparison rests on a historically grounded foundation.

5.6. Limitations

Several methodological limitations of this study require acknowledgement. First, while the most similar systems case selection holds many background conditions constant, it cannot rule out the influence of factors not compared (Anckar, 2008, p.390). Process tracing within each case provides a partial check on this risk by allowing the analysis to test on the aspects left out (George & Bennett, 2005, pp.265-266). Second, the three-case design constrains generalisation. As Gerring (2004, p.348) notes, single-unit and small-n research designs frequently fall short in representativeness, the degree to which findings from a limited number of cases can be assumed to hold for a larger set of unstudied ones. However, this tradeoff between comparability and representativeness is an inherent feature of case study research (Gerring, 2004, p.348.) rather than a problem unique to this study.

Third, reliance on official policy documents means the analysis captures how governments present their total defence rather than how it functions in practice. This limitation is inherent to document-based research, as Prior (2003, p.168) notes, documents are produced and consumed within specific settings, meaning are shaped by the institutional context in which they were created. Fourth, the post-2022 period is still unfolding at the time of writing, meaning conclusions about convergence remain provisional. Fifth, theoretically guided process tracing carries a risk of confirmation bias, since drawing conclusions from theory in advance may lead toward evidence that confirms those expectations. The confirmation bias can be addressed by actively seeking evidence that could disconfirm expectations.

6. Analysis

This analysis assesses whether the post-2022 security environment is producing convergence in the total defence architectures of Finland, Sweden, and Norway, or if historically embedded institutional differences continue to keep the countries on divergent paths. This question is contemporary but requires a prior account of how the country's development of total defence has differentiated before the primary analysis period. Assessing convergence becomes meaningful against the historical background of divergence. Therefore, this chapter opens with a brief theoretical framing of the divergent baselines, interpreting the countries' trajectories in the conceptual apparatus of HI and securitization.

The primary analytical work begins in section 6.2, examining the three countries' pre- and post-2022 policy documents in turn. Within each case, the analysis of the six documents proceeds through process tracing in the sense developed by George and Bennett (2005). Section 6.3. Then synthesises these within-case traces in a cross-case comparison and ends with a synthesized answer to the research question.

6.1 Theoretical Framing of the Divergent Historical Trajectories

Before turning to the primary analysis in sections 6.2 and 6.3, this section goes through the observations made from secondary literature in chapters 2 and 3 and translates the historical trajectories of the countries into the theoretical framework developed in chapter 4. This section makes two analytical claims. First, the divergence between the cases is best understood as a product of different path-dependent processes beginning with the postwar critical juncture of 1945-1949, and reworked in different ways by the second critical juncture, post- Cold War. Second, these divergent paths have been sustained by divergent securitization dynamics, with the result that the countries entered the 2022 security environment from different institutional standing points.

Establishing different paths in the postwar juncture

The postwar period constitutes a critical juncture in the sense of Capoccia and Kelemen (2007). The structural conditions of this period had loosened the constraints that can limit institutional choice, and the decisions made during this short window produced trajectories that have proven path-dependent. Norway's accession to NATO in 1949 set the country on a path anchored by the alliance. Finland's geopolitical exposure to the Soviet Union and the restriction of "Finlandization" pushed it toward an institutional path organized by the principle of self-reliance (Valtonen & Branders, 2020, p.98). Sweden's decision to maintain non-aligned, backed by mass conscription and domestic arms industry, locked in a similar principle of "make do by yourself" (Larsson, 2020, pp.47-48). Reading through Pierson's (2000;2015) account on path dependency, what makes this juncture analytically significant is not just that it generated different paths but that those choices generated increasing returns that narrowed the range of viable alternatives. For Norway, NATO membership did not only produce a one-time institutional advantage but an ongoing alteration of resource flows (Pierson, 2015), giving Norway collective defence arrangements, shared planning structures and allied guarantees, continuously tilting the institutional path in favour of the Alliance. The functional need and political salience for a deeply institutionalised whole-of-society preparedness was simultaneously reduced. For Finland and Sweden, the absence of any external guarantee made comprehensive, integrated, and domestically self-reliant defence not just a preference but a necessity. The Finnish comprehensive security model and the Swedish total defence model can in this sense be understood as path-dependent products of strategic necessity, integrated, and domestically self-reliant because they had to be.

Applying Capoccia and Kelemen's (2007) measurements on the junctures' criticalness, the postwar period scores high on both probability jump and *temporal leverage.* The window was narrow, the choices were locked in quickly, and the divergent trajectories still structure the cases today. The juncture also illustrates Pierson's (2000) observations that path dependency does not only push things in the same direction. Rather, a path's significance can lie in the reaction it provokes, steering development in a different direction. Norway's NATO accession did not pull

Finland and Sweden along the same path but rather contributed to the push in the opposite direction, reinforcing the logic of self-reliance.

At a more cognitive level, these institutional paths have shaped how policymakers and broader publics understand national security and recognise appropriate responses. As Thelen (1999) and Pierson (2015) argue, institutional outcomes do not merely shape behaviour but gradually shift what actors believe is desirable or possible. Norway's long path in NATO has produced a strategic culture in which the Alliance is the main security provider and therefore the first natural instinct. Finland, by contrast, has spent decades managing an existential threat largely by itself, producing a deeply rooted culture where comprehensive domestic preparedness and close civilian-military cooperation are the primary frame for thinking about security. These cognitive legacies guide which alternatives are taken seriously when new situations arise and help explain why the three cases might have responded differently to similar external shocks.

Differential responses during the post- Cold War juncture

The end of the Cold War constitutes a second critical juncture and its analytical interest lies in the fact that it affected the three cases differently. In Sweden, the fading of the proximate Soviet/Russia threat opened a window where the logic of total defence was able to be substantively dismantled and transfer its resources to other than military threats. From the late 1980s onward civil defence priorities were challenged, and the 1995-1996 defence resolutions shifted budget resources away from war preparedness towards "peacetime strains" (Larsson, 2020, pp.50-54). Sweden's simultaneous EU accession and participation in NATO's Partnership for Peace programme provided international legitimacy for moving beyond territorial defence (Larsson, 2020, p.54). In Mahoney and Thelen's (2009) terms of mechanisms of incremental institutional change, Sweden's post-Cold War trajectory could be seen as displacement: existing total defence institutions lost political legitimacy and were effectively dismantled. Yet, as Larsson (2020, pp.61-62) observes, the turn from total defence principles to social security thinking was not a radical departure but more a reconfiguration of logics that were already embedded in the tradition of total defence. Therefore, the mechanism that most closely resembled the post- Cold War changes in Sweden is conversion alongside some layering rather

than total replacement. It helps explain why Sweden has been able to rebuild its total defence structures in the post 2022 environment rather than starting from zero.

Finland's trajectory in the same juncture stands in contrast with Sweden. Although the end of the Cold War might have opened a similar window of opportunity, equivalent dismantlement did not occur. Rather, the structures underpinning what would become the comprehensive security model were maintained. In Capoccia's (2015) terms, Finnish institutional continuity during a juncture can be read as a near-miss critical juncture: change would have been structurally possible, but it failed to materialize. However, the previously viewed literature suggests that there was no political will to dismantle Finnish total defence structures. Russia remained on the border, existential securitization remained stable, and traditions of conscription and national defence sources remained strong (Valtonen & Branders, 2020, p.102). Therefore, this was not a near-miss juncture, because a shift away from total defence was never seriously pursued. So Finland remained in a highly path-dependent process, in addition to some layering (adding new threat domains as the security environment broadened) and conversion (reframing the underlying model for a new era).

Norway's post-Cold War trajectory differs again. As Morsut (2020, p.71) shows, from 1999 onward the Ministry of Defence's focus shifted towards NATO-led expeditionary operations and the civil preparedness pillar of total defence was increasingly neglected. The conceptual and institutional space left by this neglect was filled with *samfunnssikkerhet*, but the boundary between societal security and total defence was never institutionally settled, with the different ministries advocating competing definitions across successive White Papers (Morsut, 2020, p.86). In the terms of Mahoney and Thelen (2009), Norway's post- Cold War period resists firm characterisation through any single mechanism. The civilian preparedness pillar underwent something close to displacement as the armed forces disengaged from it as shown in Morsut (2020). The total defence concept itself survived through a form of conversion, persisting as a complement to *samfunnssikkerhet* rather than an overarching framework. The unresolved boundary between the two concepts can be seen as an institutional outcome of Norway's alliance-based security architecture, which led to the civilian side to develop alongside rather than within an integrated whole-of-society framework.

Securitization alongside the sustained paths

The institutional paths presented above have been sustained by equally distinct securitization trajectories, and these trajectories help explain why the institutional outcomes have diverged even when the external threat environment has been broadly similar.

In Finland, the framing of Russia as an existential threat has functioned as a relatively stable and continuous securitization. Geographic proximity, the historical memories of the Winter War and Continuation War, and institutions such as general conscription and national defence courses (Valtonen & Branders, 2020, p.102) have produced a tradition of securitization that is comprehensive in scope. Within this tradition Russia is constructed not merely as a military threat, but as a challenge to Finnish sovereignty and functioning. In the sectoral terms of Buzan et al. (1998), the Finnish securitization has spanned the military, political, economic, and societal sectors simultaneously. The consequence is that the comprehensive security model has operated within a stable securitization that has been continuously legitimised and reproduced, and has rarely been contested. This stable securitization explains the Finnish institutional resilience during the post- Cold War period and keeps the total defence architecture path-dependent.

In Sweden, the post- Cold War period produced a de-securitization of military threats. The consequences of military threats, not seen as an existential threat anymore, produced rapid institutional consequences. Buzan et al. (1998) argue that the aim should be de-securitization, where things are not in emergency mode but back into normal political processes. In a way, the Swedish de-securitization at that time gave more place to layering, drift, and conversion, where institutional change and focus on other domains were made possible. The subsequent re-securitization of Russia after 2014 and intensifying significantly after 2022, has been the central driver for Sweden's total defence rebuilding (Berndtsson, 2025).

In Norway, the securitization of military threats has historically been mediated through military alliance membership as it has anchored security in its measures through it (Bennesved et al., 2024). Threats can be acknowledged, but the institutional response is framed primarily in

collective defence terms rather than stark domestic securitization, creating whole-of-society mobilisation. This has reduced political pressure for comprehensive domestic securitization since the military sector securitization has been able to operationalize through NATO membership. The lack of clear securitization also explains what Morsut (2020) shows in the difficulty of finding a clear place and conceptualization for total defence in Norway. But as Morsut (2020), notes, the return of geopolitics after 2014 may shift this, with total defence regaining a more dominant position.

6.2 Process Tracing Total Defence: Pre- and Post-2022 Development

This section conducts a within-case analysis of each country, using process tracing to compare the pre- and post-2022 documents. Both Finnish documents are government resolutions, both Swedish documents are government propositions and the Norwegian pre-2022 document is a descriptive publication while the post-2022 document is a white paper. Therefore, there is asymmetry between the document types, but the chosen documents are the most comprehensive accounts on total defence for each case. The following within-case analysis assesses the total defence architectures between and within the time periods.

6.2.1. Finland

The Finnish documents examined are strategies for societal security, and they are based on the principle of comprehensive security. The Finnish case illustrates how a deeply institutionalised comprehensive security framework has adopted the post- 2022 security environment without structural displacement. Process tracing the 2017 *Security Strategy for Society* (Security Committee 2017) and the updated document from 2025 (Security Committee, 2025) reveals two main pre- and post-2022 patterns: a clear intensification of threat construction paired with significant continuity in institutional architecture.

Threat construction

The 2017 strategy was published three years after Russia's annexation of Crimea, and the security environment is described in the document as unpredictable and shaped by rapid changes (Security Committee, 2017, p.6). Interestingly, Russia is not once named as a threat actor in the document, but in fact in the context of international cooperation and bilateral agreements, for example, in communications (Security Committee, 2017, p.53). The catalogue of threats lists categories such as "a security policy related crisis which directly or indirectly affects Finland," "a mass influx of migrants," "political, economic and military pressure," and "use of military force" (Security Committee, 2017, p.26). The threat framings in the document are generic and actor-anonymous. Hybrid threats appear as a relatively new category that Finland "is preparing to meet" alongside traditional military threats (ibid., 18). The document, however, primarily talks about hybrid influencing and multifaceted threats rather than using the direct term hybrid threats (Security Committee, 2017, p.96). The document's section on defence capability frames the use of military force as a deterrent rather than in active terms. The strategy reads that Finland will repel military threats "if necessary" (Security Committee, 2017, p.18), but the document is not built around armed aggression as the organising scenario.

The 2025 strategy represents a clear shift in threat construction. Russia is named in the document directly. The introduction states that the lessons learned from Russia's invasion of Ukraine are being incorporated into the development of the strategy (Security Committee, 2025, p.11). The section on defence capabilities opens with a statement that" Finland prepares for the use of military force and hybrid warfare against Finland always and in all circumstances" (Security Committee, 2025, p.64). The task of total defence is framed as preparation for the worst possible outcome for Finland and its allies, which is war (Security Committee, 2025, p.66). Hybrid threats are no longer a generic category to be prepared for but are extensively taken into account: terrorist attacks, sabotage of critical or symbolically significant targets, intelligence gathering, manipulation of public opinion, instrumentalised migration, provocation of violent riots, and cyberattacks (Security Committee, 2025, p.20). The reference to "instrumentalised migration" is itself significant, because Russia's actions at the Finnish eastern border in 2023-2024 are now directly in the threat vocabulary.

The shift between the documents represents a sharpening rather than a transformation of the threat construction. In the terms of Buzan et al. (1998), both documents construct an existential threat across the military, political, societal, and economic sectors simultaneously, just with slightly different vocabulary. The 2025 document clearly lists hybrid threats that significantly span all five sectors, and the 2017 document already organises the seven vital functions across military (defence capability), political (leadership, internal security, international and EU activities), societal (psychological resilience, functional capacity of population), and economic (security of supply) domains (Security Committee, 2017, p.14). The 2017 strategy describes threats in generic terms without identifying who poses the threats; the 2025 strategy names Russia directly. The continuity between the documents is more striking than the change. The comprehensive sectoral scope of securitization is preserved, and the documents continue to frame societal resilience as inseparable from military deterrence. What changes in threat construction are solely the willingness to name the threat actor and the degree of specificity in describing the methods that a threat actor can use. This is consistent with section 6.1, which argues that Finland's securitization of Russia has been stable and continuous, and the 2025 strategy just represents an intensification of this securitization.

Institutional architecture

The structural continuity between the two documents is even more pronounced than the continuity of threat framing. The 2025 strategy keeps the seven vital functions of society introduced in the 2017 strategy (Security Committee, 2025, p.15; Security Committee, 2017, p.14). It also keeps the four-actor cooperation model (authorities, business community, civil society, individuals) (2017, p.7; 2025, p.39), and the Security Committee as the permanent administrative coordinating body (2017, p.7; 2025, p.40). Likewise, the conscription-based defence model (2017, p.18; 2025, p.18) and the security of supplies system organised through the National Emergency Supply Organisation (2017, p.20; 2025, p.42). The institutional architecture is, at its core, identical.

What changes between the documents are what is added to the 2025 strategy and how it is reinterpreted. Three additions are particularly important. First, the 2025 strategy introduces "response" as a central new pillar alongside preparedness (Security Committee, 2025, p.10). The

2017 strategy was framed dominantly around preparedness, while the 2025 strategy treats response, what happens once a threat materialises, as deserving central conceptual and institutional treatment (Security Committee, 2025, pp.33, 35). This is layering in the Mahoney and Thelen (2009) sense: a new institutional element added alongside existing ones without dismantling them.

Second, individuals are elevated to having the status of "key actors" of security in their own right (Security Committee, 2025, p.43). The 2017 strategy treated individuals as one of the four actors and framed their role primarily through "independent preparedness" such as household-level practical preparedness (Security Committee, 2017, p.9). The 2025 document goes further, presenting individuals as constitutive of the comprehensive security system through their functional capacity, civic duties (national defence duty, compulsory education, taxation), and security attitudes (Security Committee, 2025, pp.43-44). This too is layering, but with a particular character: it attempts to distribute resilience downward through society rather than concentrating it in administrative coordination.

Third, and most significantly for the convergence question, the 2025 strategy integrates NATO and instruments into the Finnish institutional architecture. The introduction notes that the NATO Crisis Response System manual has been applied in the strategy's formulation (Security Committee, 2025, p.11). The total defence section states that Finland's total defence arrangements must now cover allied troops on Finnish territory in addition to the Finnish Defence Forces (Security Committee, 2025, pp.66). This represents conversion in the sense of Mahoney and Thelen (2009): the existing institutional logic of total defence is reinterpreted to serve a dual national-alliance purpose, without the underlying institutional architecture being replaced.

The 2025 strategy is clear about this institutional logic. Its introduction states that the strategy does not define new tasks or responsibilities but describes the current state to strengthen a consistent base for action (Security Committee, 2025, p.10). It frames Finnish comprehensive security as something that now attracts international interest due to NATO membership, and presents Finland as an active actor in promoting the principle of preparedness (Security Committee, 2025, p.11). The strategy represents continuity in a way that reinforces that the

Finnish comprehensive security model does not require transformation in the light of NATO membership, but rather that it extends and validates the existing model.

Process tracing the causal chain

Reconstructing the causal chain from founding conditions to current outcomes makes the institutional logic visible. The chain runs as follows. The postwar critical juncture and the constraints of "Finlandization" produced an institutionalised path of comprehensive self-reliance, sustained by stable securitization of the Soviet/Russian threat and by self-reinforcing socialising mechanisms (conscription, the National Defence Courses). This path generated increasing returns through the Cold War decades. The post-Cold War period did not destabilise this path because the structural conditions specific to Finland (a 1,343-kilometre border with Russia, strategic vulnerability) did not change, and the institutional logic was actively reconfirmed and updated rather than dismantled, representing layering and conversing in the path.

The 2017 strategy is the next step in this chain. Published three years after Crimea but before the full-scale invasion, it represents the framework operating with its established comprehensive securitization, but with Russia unnamed and the militarised threat scenarios kept generic. The 2017 document treats the Finnish model as already fit for purpose, requiring updating rather than rebuilding.

The 2022 invasion did not, on this evidence, produce institutional discontinuity in Finland. It produced two related pressures within the existing path: an intensification of the existing securitization (Russia named, threat methods elaborated, military scenarios foregrounded) and an opportunity for institutional layering through NATO. The 2025 strategy is the document in which both pressures can be seen. The architecture is preserved; the threat vocabulary is intensified; and NATO is integrated into the existing model through specific layering (NATO Crisis Response System) and conversion (total defence reinterpreted to serve dual national-alliance purposes).

What process tracing makes visible is that the 2022 environment did not function as a critical juncture for Finland in a significant Capoccia and Kelemen (2007) way. The structural

constraints did not loosen in a way that opened genuinely contingent institutional choices; the post-2022 environment instead activated mechanisms of incremental change (layering and conversion) that had already been operating within the path earlier. This finding aligns with Hacker et al's. (2015) argument that institutional change frequently occurs through these mechanisms rather than through significant displacement.

6.2.2. Sweden

The Swedish case differs from the Finnish case in one crucial aspect: while Finland's institutional architecture was continuously maintained, Sweden had to actively rebuild it before it could be layered with NATO membership. Process tracing the 2020 *Totalförsvaret 2021-2025* document (Government of Sweden, 2020) and the 2024 *Totalförsvaret 2025-2030* document (Government of Sweden, 2024) reveals two distinct aspects between the documents: a sharpening of an already explicit threat construction, and a reorientation of an institutional architecture that was the product of prior rebuilding efforts dating from the 2015 defence resolution.

Threat construction

While the Finnish document from 2017 did not name a threat actor, the Swedish 2020 document names Russia directly and at length. The European security order is described as "challenged", and the 2020 document explicitly connects this to Russian aggression, characterising Russia as willing to use military means to achieve its goals (Government of Sweden, 2020, pp.32-33). Russian military build-up along its western border and in the Arctic, repeated unannounced exercises, aggressive air operations near other states' military assets, and Russian use of hybrid threats against EU and NATO members are described across the document (Government of Sweden, 2020, pp. 33–34). In Buzan et al's. (1998) sectoral terms, the 2020 document constructs an existential threat that spans military (force build-up, exercises), political (pressure on EU/NATO members, rhetoric against Swedish NATO option), economic (sanctions context), and societal (information operations, hybrid pressure) sectors simultaneously.

The 2024 document intensifies and concretises this threat framing. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine is presented as a fundamental change in the security environment, with the use of military violence framed as once again a reality in Europe (Government of Sweden, 2024, p. 9). The 2024 document goes further than the 2020 document in two specific ways. First, it identifies Russia as not respecting the laws of war and treating civil infrastructure and the civilian population as legitimate targets (Government of Sweden, 2024, p. 9). Second, it mentions China's deepened partnership with Russia and its enabling of Russia's war as contributing to the serious security situation in Europe (Government of Sweden, 2024, p.9). The Ukraine war functions throughout the document as an empirical resource illustrating what Sweden and its allies may face while also listing concrete operational lessons from the war (drones, cyber operations) (Government of Sweden, 2024, pp.11-12).

The continuity with the threat construction between the documents is significant as both documents construct the threat as cross-sectoral and centered around Russia, in line with the re-securitization in Sweden since 2014. What changes is the empirical base of the threat. The 2020 document constructs a picture of an environment that *could* produce an armed attack, while the 2024 document constructs a picture of an environment where an armed attack has materialised next door and is being studied for its lessons. This differs from Finland not naming Russia in the pre-2022 document, even though the annexation of Crimea had already happened.

Institutional architecture

The most analytically interesting feature of the Swedish case is that the institutional architecture layered and converted in the 2024 document is not a continuously maintained Cold War model but a recently rebuilt structure. The 2020 proposition documents this rebuilding in details of law proposals: a total defence concept restored as the organising frame in 2015, a five-year plan to substantially expand military capability, the re-establishment of regiments (Government of Sweden, 2020, p. 5), the reopening of civil defence planning, and stepwise increases in military funding from 5 billion SEK in 2022 rising to 22 billion SEK in 2025 above the pre-2019 baseline (Government of Sweden, 2020, pp. 26-27). The 2020 total defence framework keeps the Cold War vocabulary of total defence understood as the combination of military defence and civil defence, built on conscription, the defence forces, and a civil defence framework including state

agencies, municipalities, regions, business, voluntary organisations, and individuals (Government of Sweden, 2024, pp. 84-85, 89).

The 2020 document presents this institutional architecture within an unchanged security policy framework. It emphasizes that Sweden's security policies stand firm and that Sweden is not part of any military alliance (Government of Sweden, 2020, p.27). It identifies solidarity security policy as the founding principle for Sweden's defence and security policy, while noting that Sweden's bilateral agreements do not include mutually binding defence obligations (Government of Sweden, 2020, pp.27-28). The document openly acknowledges that Sweden must therefore have a defence capacity on its own, since the form of external support cannot be reliably expected (Government of Sweden, 2020, p.85).

The 2024 document represents a lot of continuity within the institutional architecture. Total defence is defined in the same way as all activities required to prepare Sweden for war with military and civil defence as mutually reinforcing components (Government of Sweden, 2024, p.57). Conscription is retained and expanded. The Defence Forces are retained as the central military actor. The civil defence sectoral structure introduced in the 2022 preparedness reform (sector-responsible agencies and civil-area responsible counties, coordinated through MSB (since 2026 MCF)) is retained and developed further (Government of Sweden, 2024, pp.111-114). Defence will, and psychological defence will remain significant components of the civil defence framework (Government of Sweden, 2024, p.119).

What changes between the documents is the layering of Alliance commitments. The 2024 document opens by stating that Sweden, as an ally, is part of NATO's collective deterrence and defence (Government of Sweden, 2024, p.10). Sweden's contribution to NATO membership is specified, for example, through Sweden's participation in NATO's Forward Land Forces in both Latvia and Finland, participation in NATO's standing maritime forces, and integration into NATO's air and missile defence (Government of Sweden, 2024, p.10). Host nation support is specified as a new recruitment involving both the civil and military sides of total defence (Government of Sweden, 2024, pp.41, 68).

In the terms of Mahoney and Thelen (2009), the 2024 document includes two mechanisms operating simultaneously. Layering is visible in the addition of specific NATO instruments: Article 3 and 5 commitments, contributions to NATO operations, host nation support arrangements, and integration into NATO's planning processes. None of these existed in the institutional architecture in the 2020 document. Conversion is equally visible in the redefinition of what the existing total defence is *for*. The overall goal of total defence is reformulated not just to defend Sweden but also to participate in the defence of allies according to NATO commitments (Government of Sweden, 2024, p.57). The military defence goal includes a new aspect specifying that the defence forces must fulfil their commitments as an ally (Government of Sweden, 2024, p.60). The civil defence goal includes a new parallel aspect: to contribute to the capacity of military defence within the framework of NATO's collective defence (Government of Sweden, 2024, p.62). The same conscription-based and integrated civil-military framework is now constructed as serving both national and Alliance interests. A clear illustration of this conversion is the new section titled "Society's resilience is part of NATO's collective deterrence and defence" (Government of Sweden, 2024, p.110). The institutional substance within the document stays quite unchanged, but the institutional purpose has been doubled.

Process tracing the causal chain

The postwar institutional path of non-aligned total defence, sustained through the Cold War, was substantially dismantled in the post- Cold War period through displacement and conversion dynamics analysed in section 6.1. Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 triggered a re-securitization of Russia. The 2015 defence resolution opened a rebuilding phase of total defence structures (Government of Sweden, 2020, p.31). By the time of the 2020 document, this rebuilding had led to total defence being re-established as the organising frame, and civil defence planning had resumed. Yet the security policies around this rebuilt framework remained in the principle of non-alignment, producing contradictions that the 2020 document openly acknowledges between the rebuilt architecture's logic of self-reliance and the cooperation-based realities of Swedish security (Government of Sweden, 2020, p.85).

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 collapsed the viability of self-reliance. Section 2.3 (drawing on Lundqvist, 2022; Migliorati, 2024) traced this mechanism: the costs of

remaining outside any formal alliance commitments became too high. Sweden's NATO application, together with Finland, followed in 2022, and accession was completed in 2024. What process tracing between the pre- and post-2022 documents makes visible is that the post-2022 environment and NATO accession did not produce institutional reconstruction, but rather produced institutional alignment between the formal alliance membership and the rebuilt total defence architecture. The architecture itself is the 2015- and ongoing rebuild, now layered with NATO commitments and converted to serve dual national-alliance purposes.

This finding clarifies two analytical points. First, the post-2022 environment functions for Sweden much as it does for Finland: as a moment activating layering and conversion within an existing institutional path, not as a moment of displacement. Second, the institutional path that is being incorporated into NATO is itself the product of quite recent rebuilding, meaning that Finland and Sweden have entered Alliance layering from different temporal foundations. Finland enters the post-2022 environment with a path that has been continuously sustained; Sweden enters it with a path that was dismantled, rebuilt, and is still in the midst of rebuilding, layered with alliance membership.

6.2.3. Norway

The Norwegian case differs from the Finnish and Swedish cases in two analytically important aspects. First, the comparison is based on two different types of documents: A pre-2022 document *Support and Cooperation: A Description of Total Defence in Norway* (Norwegian Ministry of Defence and Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2018) and a post-2022 document *Meld. St. 9 (2024–2025) Total preparedness* (Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2025). This asymmetry is itself analytically relevant, since it reflects a less institutionally embedded total defence model. Second, Norway's institutional path has already been anchored in NATO membership. Therefore, NATO is not a new institutional element to be layered onto the architecture in the post-2022 environment, as it is for Finland and Sweden. The analysis therefore points less toward the construction of a new institutional architecture than towards reactivation and expansion within an existing Alliance architecture.

Threat construction

The 2018 document constructs threats in a broad way, characterizing the post- Cold War Norwegian security policy. The foreword references migration, terrorism, extreme weather, cyber-attacks, and demanding security situation development (Norwegian Ministry of Defence and Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2018, p.5). The document does not reference Russia as a threat actor. Instead, it refers to the disintegration of the Soviet Union as a period that significantly reduced the risk of invasion against Norway (Norwegian Ministry of Defence and Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2018, p.9). Hybrid threats are defined as a planning category (Norwegian Ministry of Defence and Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2018, p.14), and the document states that the boundaries between peace and security crises are no longer clear (Norwegian Ministry of Defence and Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2018, p.27). War and blurred lines between peace and crises are, however, treated in the document more as planning categories rather than foreseeable scenarios.

The 2025 white paper takes a turn on this. Russia is named in the opening pages and is described as an “unpredictable and risk-taking neighbour” (Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2025, p.11). The security environment is characterised as "the most serious security situation in Europe since the Second World War" (Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2025, p.13). The document’s subtitle, “*Prepared for Crises and War,”* reintroduces war into the vocabulary of Norwegian preparedness. Hybrid threats are no longer only defined; they have received a dedicated chapter and specific countermeasures, including the criminalisation of serious influence operations (Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2025, pp.97-101). The document is characterized as a “historic white paper on Norway’s total preparedness,” and it sets the goal for a long-term strengthening of Norway’s defence capacity (Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2025, p.11). The document also positions NATO as the cornerstone of Norwegian security policy and emphasizes that the Finnish and Swedish NATO memberships open new possibilities for preparedness cooperation. The threat construction is extended beyond Russia as a single actor when the document refers to all actors

that are seeking to weaken Western unity (Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2025, p.13).

In Buzan et al's (1998) terms, what occurs between the documents is not the emergence of a new threat construction but a re-securitisation of war as an active category, with Russia named and the existential characterization of threats rather than scenario planning. Norway's pattern is a delayed and more abrupt re-securitisation, consistent with section 6.1's observation that Norwegian securitisation has historically been mediated through Alliance membership rather than performed domestically. In the sectoral terms of Buzan et al., both documents span all five sectors (military, political, societal, environmental, and economic), but the military sector gets much more value in the 2025 document. Additionally, the rhetoric moves from describing to real countermeasures and resources placed into the development of all sectors spanning total defence.

Institutional architecture

The 2018 document describes an institutional architecture organised around a constitutional division: the Ministry of Justice and Public Security is responsible for public security and civil protection, while the Ministry of Defence is responsible for national security and military defence (Norwegian Ministry of Defence and Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2018, pp.13,18). Civil protection and emergency preparedness are organized around four principles and apply at all levels of management: responsibility, proximity, similarity, and collaboration (Norwegian Ministry of Defence and Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2018, pp.16-17). The total defence concept is defined as mutual support and cooperation between the armed forces and the civil society across all sectors (Norwegian Ministry of Defence and Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2018, p.10). The 2025 document returns to this conceptualization and acknowledges that the focus of total defence has changed over time, and after the Russian invasion of Crimea in 2014, civil support for military purposes has gradually gained greater focus (Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2025, p.30). The document confirms that during the post- Cold War decades, several measures that prepared the society for war were dismantled, confirming Morsut's (2020) account of post- Cold War neglect of the civil preparedness pillar.

The 2025 white paper reactivates the war preparedness element of total defence and adds new layers on top, confirming Forfang Rongved's (2025) account on Norway's potential total defence 3.0. The 2025 document retains the four principles for civil protection and emergency preparedness, and keeps the division between the responsibility areas of ministries. Three changes in the institutional framework are specifically relevant.

First, the 2025 white paper presents more binding cross-sectoral coordination.The document promises that the government will establish a common council structure for preparedness planning and status assessment, which will integrate the business sector and voluntary organizations. Additionally, the government promises to develop a national security strategy and directs towards more coordinated prevention of crises (Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2025, p.37. A long-term plan for civil preparedness is to be developed from 2025 as a counterpart to the long-term plan for the defence sector (Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2025, p.40). The 2025 document moves the 2018 flexibility that allowed the Emergency Council to designate a different ministry as lead based on the nature of the situation, instead making the Ministry of Justice and Public Security the permanent lead ministry for all national civil crises (Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2025, p.68).

Second, the 2025 white paper reactivates the capacity of war planning. The 1998 exception from the obligation to build emergency shelters in new buildings is now withdrawn, and a new protection concept introduced (Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2025, pp.15,85). A new act on civilian workforce preparedness ensures the state can prioritise and access civilian labour in security policy crises and war (Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2025, pp.130-131). Funding for voluntary rescue organisations has escalated by up to NOK 100 million over the eight years (Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2025, p.15). Each of these reverses or supplements an aspect of the post-Cold War drift identified in section 6.1.

Third, the 2025 white paper reorients civilian support to military efforts. This is elevated to one of the three primary goals of strengthening civil preparedness (Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2025, p.13). The document stresses that the communication between the military and civilian sides must be strengthened, and the civilian actors must better acknowledge

military needs (Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2025, p.124). This shift is reinforced by Nordic NATO cooperation through the development of a strategic corridor for military mobility through northern Norway, Sweden, and Finland (Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2025, pp.125-126); NATO's new host nation support concept is followed up at the national level (Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2025, p.19); and a pilot project to strengthen civilian resilience in Finnmark is introduced (Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2025, p.127).

In the terms of Mahoney and Thelen (2009), the institutional changes are predominantly done by layering into the existing architecture. Conversion is visible in the redirection of the total defence concept back to its roots, prioritising civil support to the military in the cases of war or crises. The reintroduction of emergency shelters and expansion of civil defence can be seen as reversals of earlier displacements.

Process tracing the causal chain

Norway entered the post-2022 environment with an architecture anchored in NATO membership since 1949, and with a total defence framework that went through changes during the late 90s and early 2000s. As section 6.1 established, the Norwegian post-Cold War experience was best characterised as drift in the civil defence pillar combined with conversion of the total defence concept. The formal architecture persisted while the war-planning content weakened and *samfunnssikkerhet* became dominant (Morsut, 2020, p.71). The 2018 document is a description of this layout.

What changes between 2018 and 2025 is not the strictly architecture but the political and rhetorical orientation toward it. The 2022 invasion triggered the Norwegian government to appoint a Total Preparedness Commission to assess how collective resources can be better utilized to strengthen resilience (Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2025, p.12). The 2025 white paper is a coordinated follow-up from the Commission’s recommendations, pairing a re-securitization of war with a reactivation of war-planning elements on the institutional side. The 2025 white paper presents itself as setting “a completely new direction” (Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2025, p.11), but process tracing reveals path-dependent

continuity in the institutional architecture, while at the same time setting a new direction through layering and a reactivation of already existing paths.

2022 does not, on this evidence, function as a critical juncture in the sense of Capoccia and Kelemen (2007). The structural constraints did not loosen in a way that would have triggered genuine contingent institutional choices. Instead, the post-2022 environment activated mechanisms of incremental change; layering, conversion, and reversal of earlier displacements. This is consistent with Hacker et al's. (2015) argument that substantial policy reorientation can be produced through incremental institutional change rather than through displacement.

6.3 Cross-Case Comparison and a Synthesised Answer

The within-case analyses traced how each case has translated the post-2022 environment into its own total defence architecture. Read together, the cases reveal striking similarities in *how* institutional change has occurred alongside a persistence of *what* is being changed. This section draws out that pattern across three dimensions: threat construction and securitization, institutional architectures, and the mechanisms of institutional change. It ends by returning to the question of whether the post-2022 security environment is producing convergence in Nordic total defence or whether embedded institutional differences continue to keep total defence on different paths.

Threat construction and securitization

The most significant convergence between the cases is in the direction of threat construction. All three post-2022 documents intensify and extend the pre-2022 threat frames, and in all three cases, Russia is framed as the central threat actor. Yet the basis from which the intensification occurs differs.

Finland's 2017 strategy was already organised around a comprehensive securitization spanning the military, political, economic, environmental, and societal sectors, but kept the threat actor anonymous. The 2025 strategy keeps the comprehensive scope and adds Russia by name as the

threat actor, together with an intensified grip on hybrid threats that draws on Finnish experiences at the eastern border. The securitization sharpens within a stable framework. Sweden's 2020 proposition already names Russia explicitly and constructs a multi-sectoral threat, building on the re-securitization that began after 2014. The 2024 proposition deepens this by anchoring it to the reality of an ongoing invasion. Norway represents the most sharp shift. In the 2018 document, the threat framing was broad, but it held the post- Cold War view that the disintegration of the Soviet Union was seen as significantly reducing the risk of invasion. The 2025 document re-securitizes both war and Russia as an actor, which is seen as an unpredictable and risk-taking neighbour.

In Buzan et al's. (1998) sectoral terms, the three cases converge on the post-2022 environment as a cross-sectoral existential threat. The differences are mostly seen on trajectories rather than contemporary content. Finland is intensifying a long and stable securitization; Sweden is deepening a securitization that was re-established in 2014; Norway is presenting a domestic re-securitization on the side of the Alliance mediated securitization. This represents the historical pattern seen in section 6.1: securitization in Finland has been continuous, in Sweden cyclical, and in Norway mediated through NATO and only recently re-domisticated.

Institutional architectures

The institutional architectures present more complexities than the threat constructions. The cases retain meaningfully different structures and the post-2022 documents reinforce rather than vanish those differences.

Finland's 2025 strategy maintains the structures already seen in the 2017 strategy: the seven final functions, the four-actor cooperation model, mandatory conscription, the Security Committee as the responsible coordinator, and the National Emergency Supply Organization as the operationaliser of public-private collaboration on preparedness. It adds "response" alongside preparedness, lifts up individuals as key-actors and integrates NATO resilience instruments into the existing model. The architecture itself is recognisably the same comprehensive security model that the 2017 document described. Sweden's 2024 proposition employs the rebuilt total defence concept of 2015-2020, conscription with an increase of 12 000 conscripts by the year

2032, the defence forces as the military actor, and the civil defence sectoral structure introduced in 2022 and developed further. It adds NATO commitments, host nation support, integration into NATO's planning, and a redefinition of total defence as serving both national and Alliance security. Norway's 2025 white paper retains the division between the responsible ministries, the four principles of civil protection, and the existing definition of total defence as mutual support between armed forces and civil society. It adds a common council structure on preparedness, a permanent responsible ministry for civilian crises, a long-term plan for civil preparedness, the reactivation of emergency shelter requirements, an expansion of conscription from 8,000 to 12,000, and a new civilian workforce preparedness act.

The Finnish architecture illustrates the most institutionally integrated whole-of-society approach, organised around a permanent coordinating body and a codified set of vital functions. The Swedish architecture remains a more conventional dualism between civil and military, with total defence understood as the sum of these two and the recent sectoral reform supporting this. The Norwegian architecture remains ministerially fragmented with *samfunnssikkerhet* and total defence as juxtaposed concepts, and with the post-2022 changes operating mainly through additions rather than redesign.

The documents also position their respective architectures differently relative to NATO. Finland's 2025 strategy frames the comprehensive security model as something Finland brings to the alliance, presenting NATO membership as a layer that extends and validates an already-functioning national framework. Sweden's 2024 proposition frames Swedish total defence as Sweden's contribution to NATO's collective deterrence and defence, with Swedish societal resilience constructed as part of the Alliance's deterrent posture. Norway's 2025 white paper retains NATO as the cornerstone but adds a strengthened domestic civilian apparatus designed in part to support allied military activity on Norwegian territory and through the strategic corridor for military mobility across northern Norway, Sweden, and Finland. These positionings suggest that the Finnish model is so far the most extensive, requiring only minimal modifications when new threats are met. New modifications appeal to be easily applied to the already existing framework. The most intensive model is suggested to be the Norwegian model, requiring a whole new direction of a "historic white paper" and the reactivation of war-planning,

which reflects that structures have not yet been fully institutionalized. Sweden represents a quite quick rebuilding of previously dismantled structures, which suggests that its historical trajectory with total defence has made it easier for institutions to adjust to new rebuilding when the environment so requires.

Convergence in the mechanisms of institutional change

The three cases converge in the mechanisms of incremental institutional change as described by Mahoney and Thelen (2009). The most visible mechanisms for all cases are layering and conversion, with no significant displacement between the pre- and post-2022 documents.

Finland adds new elements, like the response pillar, alongside the existing architecture without replacing it, and reinterprets the total defence concept fitting for NATO by for example allowing allied troops on Finnish territory. Sweden adds NATO specific instruments that did not exist in the 2020 architecture and converts the goals of total defence to include alliance contribution. Norway adds binding cross-sectoral coordination structures, reactivates war planning, and reorients civilian preparedness, while leaving the inter-ministerial division in place. In each case, the institutional path that existed before 2022 is the path that post-2022 extends, combines, layeres and partly converts, but underlying architectures are not replaced.

These shared mechanisms between the cases is itself a finding. The post-2022 environment did not function as a critical juncture in the sense of Capoccia and Kelemen (2007) since the structural constraints did not loosen in a way that would have opened contingent institutional choices. The architectures presented in the post-2022 documents still resemble the architectures that history had produced, and the changes made in them were changes that those architectures were equipped to adapt. The mechanisms converge precisely because the institutional paths constrain how external pressure can be translated into institutional response. This pattern supports Pierson's (2015) argument that institutional paths shape outcomes through the ongoing alteration of resource flows that continuously tilt subsequent decision-making in favour of the established path. The resources, expertise, and coalitions built up around each existing architecture made layering and conversion the most available means of translating external pressure into institutional response.

Comparative synthesis

There is real convergence happening between the cases in three aspects. First, the three countries are securitizing the post-2022 environment in similar ways, with Russia named, hybrid threats elaborated, and war as a serious planning scenario. Second, all three are moving institutionally in the same direction: strengthening civilian preparedness, reinforcing civil-military integration, and aligning national arrangements with NATO-level resilience and crisis-response instruments. Third, they are doing so through the same mechanisms, layering and conversion, within existing paths rather than displacement of the paths. In this sense, the post-2022 environment is producing parallel adaptation across the cases.

Yet despite this convergence, the institutional architectures remain path-dependent. Finland enters the post-2022 environment with a continuously sustained, codified, whole-of-society framework and exits it with the same framework, now extended into NATO. Sweden enters with a recently rebuilt dualistic civil-military structure and exits with that structure layered with Alliance commitments. Norway enters with a NATO anchored but ministerially fragmented architecture and exits with that architecture reactivated on the civilian side, but with the fragmentation, the constitutional division of responsibilities, and the dependence on NATO unchanged. The countries are responding to a shared pressure in parallel ways, but the institutional content of total defence continues to reproduce the differences established during the postwar juncture.

This pattern is what the theoretical framework predicts. Securitization explains the direction of movement. It accounts for why all three countries are intensifying preparedness and reorienting toward war as a serious scenario, and why the rhetorical and conceptual distance between the cases has narrowed since 2022. Historical institutionalism explains the persistence of substantive difference. Path dependency, sustained through increasing returns, structures what kinds of institutional responses are available and feasible in each case. However, the analysis does not suggest that the post-2022 environment has driven divergence between the cases: the substantive differences that persist trace back to the historical trajectories of the three models, not to any divergent movement between the pre- and post-2022 documents, which on the contrary show the three architectures moving closer together.

7. Discussion

This thesis has asked if the post-2022 security environment, with full-scale war on the continent and shared NATO membership, is driving the three Nordic countries toward convergence in their total defence architectures or whether historical trajectories continue to keep them on divergent paths. The answer developed in the analysis suggests that both are happening but at different analytical levels.

The cases converge in their threat construction, in the direction of institutional movement and in the mechanisms of change. All three countries construct the post-2022 environment as a cross-sectoral threat centered around Russia, even though they arrive at this from different trajectories. All three are strengthening civilian preparedness, deepening civil-military integration and aligning national security with NATO instruments. All three are doing so through the mechanisms of layering and conversion within their existing paths, not by displacing existing frameworks.

The cases nevertheless remain institutionally distinct, but the analysis suggests that the post-2022 environment is not driving divergence. The differences that persist trace back to the historical trajectories, primarily to the postwar period and to the differential responses of the post- Cold War period. The comparison of the pre- and post-2022 documents reveal that the three architectures are moving in the same direction; the divergence between them is inherited, not produced by the 2022-environment. The post-2022 environment has therefore been a force of partial convergence, but within institutional paths shaped by earlier junctures. The analysis suggests that the convergence runs in the direction of Norway moving towards the more comprehensive, whole-of-society approach that has already characterized the Finnish and Swedish models. Finland and Sweden are only converging toward Norway in the narrower sense of now operating within the same military Alliance framework.

These findings support several strands of the literature reviewed in chapter 3. The convergence finding aligns with Wrange et al's. (2024) identification of Finland, Sweden, and Norway as a "Nordic Three" with the strongest foundations for a shared security culture in the broader

Nordic-Baltic region. Their argument that shared identity has strengthened across the region since 2022 (Wrange et al., 2024 p.530) is supported, but the present analysis specifies the level at which that identity translates into institutional convergence and the level at which it does not. The findings also align with Petersson's (2011) study that showed that domestic legitimacy, institutional paths, and strategic cultures can drive countries to differing security policy paths even when they share the same threat framings and institutional agreements. Petersson's observations are drawn from post- Cold War defence transformation and this study shows that differing paths hold equally in the post-2022 transformation.

The country-specific descriptions in the *European Total Defence* volume are also broadly supported. Sederholm et al's. (2025, p.125) argument that NATO accession extends rather than diminishes the Finnish comprehensive security model is reflected in the 2025 strategy's framing of Finland's model as something Finland brings to the alliance. Berndtsson's (2025, p.65) characterisation of Swedish total defence as still under reinvention is reflected in the 2024 proposition's continued development of the rebuilt architecture. Forfang Rongved's (2025, p.88) hypothesis of a Norwegian total defence 3.0 is reflected in the 2025 white paper's reactivation of war-planning elements alongside the existing *samfunnssikkerhet* structure. Hilde's (2025, p.239) observation that NATO provides a framework without supranational powers is also supported. NATO instruments such as the Crisis Response System and the seven baseline requirements are visible in both the Finnish and Swedish documents, but in each case they are integrated into national architectures.

The findings support the theoretical framework developed in chapter 4. The combined framework of HI and securitization theory captured a simultaneous occurrence of convergence and divergence at different analytical levels. Mahoney and Thelen's (2009) mechanisms of incremental change proved especially useful. All three cases demonstrated layering and conversion, and a binary between stability versus transformation would have hidden the most important findings. Pierson's (2015) resource flows argument is confirmed at the level of security policy, with the resources, expertise, and coalitions built up around each existing architecture making layering and conversion the most available means of translating external pressure into institutional response. In Cappocia and Kelemen's (2007) sense the post-2022 environment did

not create a critical juncture that would have loosened the constraints for the existing total defence frameworks in a way that would have displaced and rebuilt new frameworks. The changes were made within the existing architectures. The findings also raise a broader theoretical question: whether rhetorical and political change can count as a critical juncture in its own right, or whether the concept requires institutional change in which the structural conditions genuinely loosen. The analysis suggests that the post-2022 environment fits the former rather than the latter: intensified political attention and threat framing, but without the genuine loosening of structural constraints that would make it an institutional juncture.

A few limitations in this study require acknowledgement. The primary analysis relied on six official documents which means that the analysis did not capture how the architectures function in practice or are contested. The asymmetry in the document types complicates direct comparison. The Finnish strategy, the Swedish proposition, and the Norwegian 2018 description and 2025 white paper serve different institutional purposes and make different things visible. The analysis was honest about these differences but it is worth acknowledging that the asymmetry constrains how directly they can be compared. The post-2022 environment is also still unfolding with new updates on the security environment almost weekly, so the conclusions of convergence and divergence are provisional, not final. The operationalization of securitization theory also has limits. The analysis examines securitizing moves in the documents but did not assess audience reception. Finally, theoretically guided process tracing can lead to confirmation bias. The analysis sought to limit the risk by examining each case in turn before moving to the cross-case comparison.

7.1 Implications and Future Research

Combining historical institutionalism and securitization theory was a productive combination and could be further developed in the study of security-policy change. Historical institutionalism alone risks treating institutional outcomes as determined by path dependency; securitization alone risks treating them as more flexible than they are. The distinction between a

political-rhetorical juncture and an institutional critical juncture also deserves further development. The implications also concern Nordic security planning. Convergence in threat framing and directions means that political conditions for the three countries are strong, opening opportunities for deeper cooperation. The analysis also suggests that national total defence frameworks can be greatly combined with NATO membership and they do not lose their significance when combined with Alliance membership.

Four directions for future research follow from the limitations identified above. The most direct extension would move beyond government documents to examine how the post-2022 architectures function in practice through bureaucratic implementation, civil-military exercises, and private-sector integration, testing whether the convergence in mechanism identified here also holds at the operational level. A second extension would examine the audience side of securitization theory, drawing on parliamentary debates, expert commentary, and public opinion to assess whether the securitizing moves in the documents have produced the institutionally embedded acceptance the documents themselves suggest. A third extension would widen the comparison to for example the whole Nordic region and the Baltics. A fourth extension would lengthen the time horizon: research conducted five or ten years from now will be able to assess whether the mechanisms of layering and conversion have accumulated into substantive convergence, whether the architectures have remained on parallel tracks, or whether a genuine institutional critical juncture has materialised.

Bibliography

Empirical Material

Finland

Security Committee. (2017). *The Security Strategy for Society: Government Resolution.* Helsinki: Security Committee. https://www.turvallisuuskomitea.fi/en. [Accessed 2 April 2026]

Security Committee. (2025). *Security Strategy for Society: Government Resolution.* Publications of the Finnish Government 2025:3. Helsinki: Finnish Government. https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/items/0126122a-1e8a-4ffa-9868-6286292efc01. [Accessed 2 April 2026]

Sweden

Government of Sweden. (2020). *Totalförsvaret 2021–2025* [Total Defence 2021–2025]. Regeringens proposition 2020/21:30. Stockholm: Försvarsdepartementet.

Government of Sweden. (2024). *Totalförsvaret 2025–2030* [Total Defence 2025–2030]. Regeringens proposition 2024/25:34. Stockholm: Försvarsdepartementet.

Norway

Norwegian Ministry of Defence and Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security. (2018). *Support and Cooperation: A Description of Total Defence in Norway.* Oslo: Norwegian Ministry of Defence and Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security. https://www.regjeringen.no/en/dokumenter/support-and-cooperation/id2605008/. [Accessed 2 April 2026]

Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security. (2025). *Total Preparedness.* Meld. St. 9 (2024–2025). Oslo: Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security.

Academic References

Anckar, C. (2008). On the Applicability of the Most Similar Systems Design and the Most Different Systems Design in Comparative Research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, vol. 11, no. 5, pp.389–401.

Ångström, J. & Ljungkvist, K. (2024). Unpacking the Varying Strategic Logics of Total Defence. *Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 47, no. 4, p.498, https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2023.2260958

Balzacq, T., Léonard, S. & Ruzicka, J. (2016). 'Securitization' Revisited: Theory and Cases. *International Relations*, vol. 30, no. 4, pp.494–531.

Balzacq, T. (2010a). A Theory of Securitization: Origins, Core Assumptions, and Variants, in T. Balzacq (ed), *Securitization Theory: How Security Problems Emerge and Dissolve*, London: Routledge, pp.1–30.

Balzacq, T. (2010b). Enquiries into Methods: A New Framework for Securitization Analysis, in T. Balzacq (ed), *Securitization Theory: How Security Problems Emerge and Dissolve*, London: Routledge, pp.31–54.

Balzacq, T. (2019). Securitization Theory: Past, Present, and Future. *Polity*, vol. 51, no. 2, pp.331–348.

Beach, D. (2017). Process Tracing Methods in the Social Sciences, in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Beach, D. & Pedersen, R. B. (2019). *Process-Tracing Methods: Foundations and Guidelines*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Bennesved, P., Ingemarsdotter, J. & McWilliams, A. (2024). *Strategy, Deterrence and Civil Defence: How Does NATO Membership Affect Civil Defence? Perspectives*

from Norway and Denmark. FOI Memo 8419. Stockholm: Totalförsvarets forskningsinstitut.

Berndtsson, J. (2025). Civilian-Military Collaboration and the Re-Invention of Swedish Total Defence, in G. Forfang Rongved (ed), *European Total Defence: Past, Present and Future*, London: Routledge, pp.54–74, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003497370-4

Berzina, I. (2020). From 'total' to 'comprehensive' national defence: the development of the concept in Europe. *Journal on Baltic Security*, vol. 6, no. 2, pp.1–9, https://doi.org/10.2478/jobs-2020-0006

Bigo, D. (2002). Security and Immigration: Toward a Critique of the Governmentality of Unease. *Alternatives*, vol. 27, no. 1_suppl, pp.63–92.

Bryman, A. (2016). *Social Research Methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Buzan, B., Wæver, O. & de Wilde, J. (1998). *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Capoccia, G. (2015). Critical Junctures and Institutional Change, in J. Mahoney & K. Thelen (eds), *Advances in Comparative-Historical Analysis*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.147–179.

Capoccia, G. & Kelemen, R. D. (2007). The Study of Critical Junctures: Theory, Narrative, and Counterfactuals in Historical Institutionalism. *World Politics*, vol. 59, no. 3, pp.341–369.

Collier, D. (2011). Understanding Process Tracing. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, vol. 44, no. 4, pp.823–830.

Fedina, K. & Black, J. (2024). What Sweden's Accession Means for NATO. *RAND Corporation*, 22 March 2024,

https://www.rand.org/pubs/commentary/2024/03/what-swedens-accession-means-for-nato.html [Accessed 23 April 2026]

Forfang Rongved, G. (2025). Norwegian Total Defence Concepts – Approaching Total Defence 3.0?, in G. Forfang Rongved (ed), *European Total Defence: Past, Present and Future*, London: Routledge, pp.75–93, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003497370-5

Forfang Rongved, G. (ed) (2025). *European Total Defence: Past, Present and Future*. London: Routledge, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003497370

Friis, K. & Tamnes, R. (2024). The Defence of Northern Europe: New Opportunities, Significant Challenges. *International Affairs*, vol. 100, no. 2, pp.813–824, https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiae019

Furlong, P. & Marsh, D. (2010). A Skin Not a Sweater: Ontology and Epistemology in Political Science, in D. Marsh & G. Stoker (eds), *Theory and Methods in Political Science*, 3rd edn, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.184–211.

George, A. L. & Bennett, A. (2005). *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge: MIT Press. ProQuest Ebook Central.

Gerring, J. (2004). What Is a Case Study and What Is It Good For? *American Political Science Review*, vol. 98, no. 2, pp.341–354.

Hacker, J. S., Pierson, P. & Thelen, K. (2015). Drift and Conversion: Hidden Faces of Institutional Change, in J. Mahoney & K. Thelen (eds), *Advances in Comparative-Historical Analysis*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.180–208.

Hall, P. A. & Taylor, R. C. R. (1996). Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms. *Political Studies*, vol. 44, no. 5, pp.936–957.

Hilde, P. S. (2025). NATO and Total Defence: A Framework for National Efforts, in G. Forfang Rongved (ed), *European Total Defence: Past, Present and Future*, London: Routledge, pp.239–260, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003497370-13

Hopkin, J. (2010). The Comparative Method, in D. Marsh & G. Stoker (eds), *Theory and Methods in Political Science*, 3rd edn, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.285–307.

Iso-Markku, T., Pesu, M., Salonius-Pasternak, C., Särkkä, I. & Ålander, M. (2023). *Finland's NATO Accession: What Will Change?* FIIA Comment 03/2023. Helsinki: Finnish Institute of International Affairs, https://fiia.fi/en/publication/finlands-nato-accession [Accessed 22 April 2026]

Jokela, J. & Iso-Markku, T. (2013). *Nordic Defence Cooperation: Background, Current Trends and Future Prospects*. Nordika Programme Note 21.

Kinnunen, P. & Koivisto, M. (2022). Ylen kysely: Nato-jäsenyyden kannatus vahvistuu – 62 prosenttia haluaa nyt Natoon. *Yle*, 14 March 2022, https://yle.fi/a/3-12354756 [Accessed 24 April 2026]

Larsson, S. (2020). Swedish Total Defence and the Emergence of Societal Security, in S. Larsson & M. Rhinard (eds), *Nordic Societal Security: Convergence and Divergence*, 1st edn, London: Routledge, pp.45–67.

Larsson, S. & Rhinard, M. (eds) (2020). *Nordic Societal Security: Convergence and Divergence*. 1st edn, Oxford: Routledge.

Léonard, S. & Kaunert, C. (2010). Reconceptualizing the Audience in Securitization Theory, in T. Balzacq (eds), *Securitization Theory: How Security Problems Emerge and Dissolve*, London: Routledge, pp.71–90.

Lundqvist, S. (2022). A Convincing Finnish Move: Implications for State Identity of Persuading Sweden to Jointly Bid for NATO Membership. *Studia Europejskie*, vol. 26, no. 4, pp.73–110.

Mahoney, J. & Thelen, K. (2009). A Theory of Gradual Institutional Change, in J. Mahoney & K. Thelen (eds), *Explaining Institutional Change: Ambiguity, Agency, and Power*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.1–37.

Migliorati, M. (2024). New Nordic Pathways? Explaining Nordic Countries' Defence Policy Choices in the Wake of the Ukrainian War. *Journal of European Public Policy*, vol. 31, no. 10, pp.3249–3274, https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2024.2314247

Morsut, C. (2020). The Emergence and Development of Samfunnssikkerhet in Norway, in S. Larsson & M. Rhinard (eds), *Nordic Societal Security: Convergence and Divergence*, 1st edn, London: Routledge, pp.68–90.

NATO. (2024). NATO Member Countries, last updated 11 March 2024, https://www.nato.int/en/about-us/organization/nato-member-countries [Accessed 24 April 2026]

Petersson, M. (2011). Defense Transformation and Legitimacy in Scandinavia after the Cold War: Theoretical and Practical Implications. *Armed Forces & Society*, vol. 37, no. 4, pp.701–724, https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X10382216

Pierson, P. (1996). The Path to European Integration: A Historical Institutionalist Analysis. *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 29, no. 2, pp.123–163.

Pierson, P. (2000). Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics. *American Political Science Review*, vol. 94, no. 2, pp.251–267.

Pierson, P. (2015). Power and Path Dependence, in J. Mahoney & K. Thelen (eds), *Advances in Comparative-Historical Analysis*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.123–146.

Prior, L. (2003). Production, Consumption and Exchange, in *Using Documents in Social Research*, London: SAGE Publications, pp.166–173.

Salter, M. B. (2010). When Securitization Fails: The Hard Case of Counter-Terrorism Programs, in T. Balzacq (ed), *Securitization Theory: How Security Problems Emerge and Dissolve*, London: Routledge, pp.130–146.

Sandberg, J. (2005). How Do We Justify Knowledge Produced within Interpretive Approaches? *Organizational Research Methods*, vol. 8, no. 1, pp.41–68.

Saxi, H. L. (2025). Nordic Defence Cooperation, in *Handbook of Nordic Cooperation*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, pp.293–306.

Sederholm, T., Rannikko, R. & Salo, M. (2025). Total Defence Model at the Heart of Finland's National Defence and Resilience, in G. Forfang Rongved (eds), *European Total Defence: Past, Present and Future*, London: Routledge, pp.115–134, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003497370-7

Thelen, K. (1999). Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics. *Annual Review of Political Science*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp.369–404.

Valtonen, V. & Branders, M. (2020). Tracing the Finnish Comprehensive Security Model, in S. Larsson & M. Rhinard (eds), *Nordic Societal Security: Convergence and Divergence*, 1st edn, London: Routledge, pp.91–108.

Vromen, A. (2010). Debating Methods: Rediscovering Qualitative Approaches, in D. Marsh & G. Stoker (eds), *Theory and Methods in Political Science*, 3rd edn, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.249–266.

Williams, M. C. (2010). The Continuing Evolution of Securitization Theory, in T. Balzacq (ed), *Securitization Theory: How Security Problems Emerge and Dissolve*, London: Routledge, pp.226–236.

Wither, J. K. (2020). Back to the Future? Nordic Total Defence Concepts. *Defence Studies*, vol. 20, no. 1, pp.61–81.

Wrange, J., Bengtsson, R. & Brommesson, D. (2024). Resilience through Total Defence: Towards a Shared Security Culture in the Nordic–Baltic Region? *European Journal of International Security*, vol. 9, no. 4, pp.511–532, https://doi.org/10.1017/eis.2024.15

Yin, R. K. (1981). The Case Study as a Serious Research Strategy. *Knowledge*, vol. 3, no. 1, pp.97–114.