Determinants of Swedish aid policy

A MIDDLE POWER PERSPECTIVE
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Abstract
This research uses Sweden as a case study to understand the determinants of foreign aid donorship, the research goal is to understand the benefits that can come from being an aid donor. This has been done by examining primary and secondary sources and by connecting Swedish foreign aid policy to the theory of middle powers. The results show that despite there being several determinants and benefit apart from it, altruism seem to largely be what shapes Swedish aid policy.

Keywords: aid, middle power, Sweden, donor
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1 INTRODUCTION

Foreign aid makes up an immense sum of money every year that is being transferred from one country to another or one party to another, or perhaps more importantly, from one part of the world to another. Interestingly though, there seems to be surprisingly little consensus on basic issues regarding aid. Even the most basic of questions, whether or not aid is effective and functional in delivering on its purpose, is very much debated with strong opinions on both sides. Even so, many developed countries continually allocate money to foreign aid and many developed countries are directly or indirectly dependent on aid to function, because of this it is important to keep study the phenomenon. Much of the research done on foreign aid and the donor-recipient dynamic focus heavily on the recipient country, leaving a relatively overlooked area for aid donors to operate in. Because of this, this thesis will be based in examining the donors of foreign aid, it will seek to understand and explain the motives and determinants of aid policies.

Governments that donate money to foreign aid tend to publicly claim that it is a decision made largely out of altruism and goodwill in order to help the developing countries ‘catch up’ to their level of development. Despite from this one of the most common criticisms of aid is that it furthers the donor and the developed world more so than the recipients. Without in any way rejecting the notion that there might be a level of altruism in foreign aid policy this thesis wishes to examine what possible motives it could be paired with. To give an idea some possible benefits of being an aid donor could be winning political favor or advantageous trade agreements, this will be further examined in the findings chapter. Sweden is especially interesting in this regard in that it together with the other Nordic countries are considered to adhere to altruism in its foreign policy more so than other countries, but to what extent is this accurate?

For some years Sweden has continuously been one of the most generous aid donors in the world, repeatedly meeting and exceeding the UN target of 0.7% of your GNI. Considering Sweden is not a large global economic power this does not make for a large amount in its totality, but as a share of GNI Sweden is among the very top donors in the world. This makes it relevant to study Sweden even though the sum is relatively modest. Sweden and its Nordic neighbors are generally considered to be driven more so than others by altruism and humanitarianism than others and this makes a case study

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1 OECD, Dac member profile: Sweden
on Sweden additionally relevant in order to discover if this really is the case or if there is more to Swedish aid allocation than meets the eye.²

1.1 RESEARCH PROBLEM & RELEVANCE

Reading literature regarding the issue of agendas behind foreign aid one notices that the Scandinavian countries are often said to be the altruistic exceptions to the rule of self-interest in the international community. Whether this is truthful or not remains to be seen, but there seems to be at least in an international setting, a gap in which Scandinavian countries are relatively unexplored in literature that researches foreign aid donors. However, no country allocated its foreign aid budget equally to every single low or middle income country on the planet, nor is it done randomly. This means that there is unquestionably certain attributes of donors and recipients that determines the way in which aid is allocated, as mentioned these have not been adequately studied in the setting of Sweden or its Nordic neighbors and this is what this thesis will attempt to make right.³

Further, studies on foreign aid are to a large extent focused in the recipient or the donors action in the receiving country. This means that there is a blind spot regarding what takes place in the donor country in terms of decision making. While it is reasonable that the recipient is in the foreground for most of this literature it does grant the donor some anonymity regarding their motivation, something that could potentially be dangerous if this is used to manipulate foreign aid to in an irresponsible way further causes of national interest. This study will therefore be focused on the donors and what the motivations behind foreign and can be, as well as what consequences it can bring to be a donor. But there are as always exceptions and literature that focus on aid donors exist, the issue is that most studies that deal with the motivation of foreign aid donorship are either very specific or focused largely on the USA. By doing a case study on Sweden and bringing in the additional element of Sweden having a reputation of being profoundly altruistic in its foreign policy the ambition is that this study will further enlighten the various motivations, good or bad, that might be determining foreign aid budgets.

Lastly, there is a research gap that the use of theory in this thesis will address. The theory of middle powers or middlepowermanship has been widely applied to countries such as Canada, Australia and to some extent Japan, but there are very few studies that see Sweden through this framework even though as will be explained in the theory chapter the concept fits Sweden rather well.

1.2 Research objective & questions

Using Sweden as a case study, this thesis sets out to investigate what benefits potentially come from being a generous foreign aid donor and thus to discuss what more than pure altruism may motivate a country’s aid allocation. To reach a discussion on this and hopefully an answer the following three questions will be used to guide the thesis:

- What issued motives can be found in official documents from the Swedish government regarding development aid and the allocation of it?
- What might motivate a country to be a foreign aid donor?
- How can the IR theory of middle powers explain Sweden’s behavior regarding foreign aid and development work?

1.3 Limitations & delimitations

One of the foremost limitations of this study is that research such as this that follow a qualitative research approach often work in accordance to a timeline and investigate a process during a set number of years for example. Because the decisions regarding foreign aid are often to some extent politically guided and Sweden changed government as recent as 2014 this is not feasible without drastically increasing the workload and using a somewhat different research objective. Because of this I have chosen to work within a more limited timeframe, 2014 to present day. There will of course be older sources that take a more historic approach but much of the thesis will be based on contemporary sources, this will be further discussed in the methodology chapter.

In especially the first chapter of the findings section, speeches and such from politicians are studied. This will be further presented in the chapter. However, it should be noticed that unless otherwise stated these sources are from the current social democratic government that has been in power since the fall of 2014. In some instances, it might be relevant to use sources from the earlier governments, but this will be clarified if such is the case since the previous government had a different ideological policy platform which would doubtlessly affect aid policy as well.

It would have been possible to also include for example Denmark or Norway in this thesis, as they are mentioned in relatively similar terms as Sweden in literature on development aid and would arguably also fit the description of a middle power. However, I have made a conscious decision not to pursue this since primarily since I do not have the familiarity with these countries as I do with Sweden and this would mean increasing the workload and decreasing the quality. Also, the very reason that these countries are so alike makes it, not uninteresting but, less relevant to study these countries parallelly, would this thesis have been a comparison between Sweden and another aid donor the choice would
arguably have fallen on a country with more to differentiate it from Sweden. Again, this choice will be motivated in the methodology chapter.

1.4 DISPOSITION & ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

After this introductory chapter there will be a theory chapter in which the theoretical framework will be presented together with a motivation on why that theory has been chosen and how it will be applied. A methodology chapter will follow in order to explain the method by which the thesis will be completed, this will also include a literature review. There will also be a background chapter to introduce some practical and philosophical concepts as well as a brief historical outline of Swedish aid and aid policy in order to provide context and help keep the findings more comprehensible.

Following this the findings will be presented, this will be done in three separate chapters which will each deal with one of the research questions. To clarify it is likely only the first of the questions that will in fact be answered in the findings, the following two answers will be provided in the analysis chapter. For these questions the findings chapter will instead be a way of providing the material needed to then answer the questions. The analysis will then attempt to answer the remaining research questions as well as elaborate and reflect upon the findings. There will also be a short ending chapter which will provide conclusions and possibly policy recommendations.

2 THEORY

This thesis will draw on the concept of middlepowermanship in order to contextualize its findings. A vague idea of the concept can be traced back to the 15th century when a Milanese mayor described a middle power as a state or an actor with ‘sufficient strength and authority to stand on its own without the need for help from others’⁴, since then it has been developed and used throughout history until modern times. As a result of this there are several understandings of the concept, but here it will be used as Canadian researcher Adam Chapnick explains it. He begins with the basics, that a middle power actor is a state and that if you are to use this theory you are by definition adopting a conception of the international community that is very state-centric in that an actor, or a ‘power’, is considered to be a geographically defined entity.⁵ This does not however dismiss or in any way diminish the importance of for example international or regional organizations or organs. Neither

does taking on this state-centric world view depreciate more fluid ways of looking at the world but rather it provides one frame of reference.

Chapnick goes on to contextualize the meaning of ‘middle’ as an actor that is neither great nor small and that the concept of ‘middle’ therefore is relative since it depends on the definition of the extremes, being great and small powers. He does not however explain this any further so I will draw shortly from another source; ‘A great power is a state whose leaders consider that it can, alone, exercise a large, perhaps decisive, impact on the international system [...] A small power is a state whose leaders consider that it can never, acting alone or in a small group, make a significant impact on the system’. Interpreting this great powers can be defined as having capabilities to act unilaterally and that are able to function fully without external intervention or assistance, and small powers are the opposite in that they lack military or economic ability to stand on their own and that they are dependent on and at the mercy of greater states in the international system. A middle power would following this be a state that holds sufficient resources and capabilities to support its needs but not enough in for example finances or military power to alone make an impact on a global scale, they are hence still dependent on a multilateral setting in this regard.

Going back to Chapnick he defines three models to how you can define a middle power. This paper will draw on what he calls the ‘behavioral model’, but I will shortly explain the two others as well to give a more nuanced explanation of the concept. The first approach he calls the ‘functional model’ and it defines middle powers by their functional capabilities, he describes that states are according to this model to be defined by the level of influence they have in the international community, no matter the possible circumstances. Great powers have a great influence and small powers have a small level of influence and middle powers fall in between, this naturally provides a quite stale interpretation of the concept. The second approach Chapnick calls the ‘hierarchical model’ and explains as when you organize states in accordance to their position in the international community, this is where it is most clear that it is a relational concept as a middle power is defined per its relation to other powers. For the purposes of thesis however such an approach would require that focus was on the international community as a whole.

In order to somewhat disentangle this theory that can feel non-uniform and vast, this thesis will draw on one model within the theory of middlepowermanship that Chapnick presents, namely the behavioral model as it is precisely the behavior of Sweden in regards to foreign aid policy that is to be

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6 A. Chapnick, 'The Middle Power', *Canadian Foreign Policy*, vol. 7, no. 2, 1999, p. 73
8 A. Chapnick, 'The Middle Power', *Canadian Foreign Policy*, vol. 7, no. 2, 1999, p. 76
investigated. Again, this is not an attempt to deny other models of the theory but simply an assessment as to which model fits the thesis the best. Chapnick explains this model as seeing middle powers as countries that adheres especially to three notions; multilateralism, conflict management and moral power. Middle powers are through this model often seen as mediators and are prone to work with for example peacebuilding and peacekeeping where a great state might choose a more aggressive stance and a small state might not engage at all. Further, one of the most distinguishing features of a middle power is its endeavor to work in a multilateral context which is a notion that will likely be mentioned multiple times in this thesis. This is motivated by a middle power alone lacking the raw power to enforce an effective foreign policy and hence needing the multilateral approach, this also brings a desire to reach greater international status. In this sense middle powers can be understood as ‘regional leaders, conflict managers, multilateral moral powers and status seekers’.  

Drawing from this the concept of middlepowermanship will be applied in order to identify Sweden’s behavior in the foreign aid scene. This theory will be used to add another layer to the investigation of Sweden’s motives for being an aid donor. Since the description of a middle power, while usually applied to for example Canada or Australia, fits Sweden so well it is interesting to the purposes of this thesis to see how Sweden’s status as a middle power has shaped its policies regarding foreign aid. Seeing Sweden as a middle power allows this thesis to categorize Sweden very clearly in a group of states, but more importantly it allows for a distinct categorization of Sweden’s behavior in the realm of foreign policy which plays very well into the objective of the thesis. It is a framework that offers a way of thinking that view international politics as seen by what you would call secondary, rather than primary actors as is often the case. It also provides a way of seeing international influence as coming from skill rather than from size of conventional power in that it sees how states that doesn’t fit into the ‘great power mold’ attempt to shape their surroundings using other means.

It is important to also recognize any possible flaws of a theoretical framework, and in this case the main one is that by using specifically the behavioral model of middlepowermanship you are not able to objectively identify a middle power since in reality a great state or a small state could in theory behave like a middle power if opportunity and interest coincided. This model does not describe a state so much as a behavior in the international community that certain states have in common. Considering the objective of this thesis this does not present what is informally referred to as a ‘deal breaker’ since it is exactly Sweden’s behavior in regards to foreign aid that the thesis sets out to study. To more crudely define Sweden as a middle power one would have to draw from a more complete understanding of the concept, but here it is enough to use this perspective of it.

2.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

There can be a clear distinction made between two types of sources that have been used for this thesis. Sources dealing with foreign aid and related matters relevant to the research objective, and sources dealing with middle power that is relevant to the use of theory. Another distinction can be made by dividing the sources into government sources and non-government sources, being for example journal articles or research that is not connected to the Swedish government. Following will be a literature review in order to provide an overview of the literature used in this thesis.

The subject of aid has been widely covered and most possible stances on the issue is covered in literature, creating of course a vast amount of literature on the topic. It was therefore necessary to delimit the research process, and I will now attempt to provide an overview of the subject by using these delimitations. Since Sweden has been used as a case study one of the first ways to do this was to look for literature that focused on aid policy in Sweden. One of the most suitable articles is one that looks to compare foreign aid flows from the USA, Japan, France and Sweden. The sections on Sweden proved useful in that they gave a perspective on Swedish foreign aid from an external source. One thing that was relatively unique about this particular article was that it highlighted that Swedish aid and development policy is determined in part because of ideological concerns in that Swedish aid has been channeled to a certain type of regime. Through saying this; ‘In the case of Sweden, the consensus of the case study literature is that Swedish foreign aid policy was principally driven by humanitarian goals [...]’10 it also strengthened the perception I had that outside sources saw Sweden primarily as a humanitarian and altruistic power.

Another source that dealt with Swedish aid policy came out in 2016 and focused on how Swedish aid has been changing, while this was not the research topic for this thesis the work still proved useful in that it provided a solid understanding of the historical background of Swedish aid which I think is necessary to understand the contemporary version of it. It also gave a comprehension on the structure of Swedish aid such as which actors were involved and roughly how large the assets were.11 For this purpose I also used various sources from the Swedish government and government agencies, one example is a sort of factsheet from Sida which was relevant as Sida is one of the main actors in Swedish aid. This particular source also gave some historical background but mostly worked to tell the objectives of Swedish aid work.12

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12 Sida, About Swedish development cooperation, 2014
Another division I made when searching for sources was, again, natural as it meant looking for sources that connected or dealt with aid and altruism, or merely determinants of aid. One such document was an article called ‘Nordic Exceptionalism in Development Assistance?’, a title I think that sums up the usefulness of it. It provided together with other sources a pattern of Swedish aid policy and the focus on the other Nordic countries was interesting, even if it has not been used in this thesis it gave me a set of perspectives out of which to approach Swedish aid policies. This source also gave a deeper understanding of the policy process and which actors are influential and so on, along with this it described the ambitious nature of Swedish aid policy compared to its neighbors. This argument was further enabled by a Huffington Post article regarding the Swedish campaign for a UNSC seat, while not directly dealing with aid policy it gave an insight into Swedish thinking and positioning in the international community, something that was relevant for the use of theory in this thesis.

I also used some sources that were not connected to Sweden but that in other ways was relevant. Mostly in that they were about aid policy determinants and motivations, the first example is an article about US Foreign aid. This focused quite heavily on ideological concerns such as how US aid flows changed after the end of the Cold War and how the US had special interests that guided their aid and development policies in the Middle East. The main thing I could take from this was a section in which the authors argued for aid being to policy makers no different from other matters and that a key determinant of aid policy is to please your tax payers, an argument which was applied to Sweden in this thesis.

The works I ended up using in this thesis has largely overlooked the base argument for and against foreign aid that touches much of the literature regarding foreign aid, this was to some extent a coincidence but in some cases a deliberate choice as it is an interesting discussion and I didn’t want this thesis to become distracted into it. There are also other issues to watch out for, one thing is regarding the literature in this thesis is the use of government sources which will almost by default give a biased description of the issue, these have therefore been used when specifically researching for example the first research question and issues that are supposed to reflect the government opinion.

Another distinction can be made between these and the sources that dealt specifically with middle power theory, the article that guided the theory chapter and hence the use of theory was written by

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14 J. Ramos-Horta, ‘Sweden’s Solidarity is Needed on the UN Security Council’, The World Post, 2016
Adam Chapnick who is a Canadian scholar in international affairs. In this document, he detailly outlined what a middle power is and several perspectives you can use when considering it. As will be explained in the theory chapter the thesis build on what Chapnick calls the behavioral model, this choice then guided the following research in that it specifically searched for behaviors rather than for example set structures and similar.

3 Methodology

Looking at the research questions that are set to guide this thesis, a qualitative research approach has been chosen since this is most suitable to answer said questions. A qualitative approach aims to analyze, interpret and understand various phenomena and by doing this to gain a deeper understanding of it. And as one text describes it, qualitative research is appropriate when you set out to investigate and describe a sequence of events or a process, which works well with this thesis as the main focus area will be on processes regarding aid and development policies. The ambition is to use this method to gain an understanding of the phenomena of foreign aid donorship that goes deeper than altruism and goodwill, and with this understanding an explanation and analysis will be made possible.

In order to answer and discuss the research questions I will mostly use what is called a qualitative analysis of content. Using this method allows for an analysis of secondary and primary sources that, as Zhang and Wildemuth describes it, ‘goes beyond merely counting words or extracting objective content from texts to examine meanings, themes and patterns that may be manifest or latent in a particular text’. I will thus read and study multiple sources of various sorts and try to find a pattern among these. This enables the research to connect multiple sources and attempt to extricate said patterns that might emerge from these, which is greatly helpful in for example assessing the motives for foreign aid donorship that goes beyond the obvious as stated in the government sources that will be used. Zhang and Wildemuth further describes this method as grounding research and data collection on carefully and decisively selected sources that aid to answer to research questions and attempting to draw from these a cohesive meaning. This will be applied to mostly secondary data in the form of journal articles and the like, but some primary sources will also be looked at in the case of government documents. These are used with the purpose to both voice what the government

19 Ibid, p. 1
communicates to the public concerning foreign aid, but also to try and see what motives may lay beneath this communication.

The choice to do a single case study rather than a more conventional comparative case study have been discussed slightly earlier, but needs to be further deliberated upon. Doing a single case study allows for an approach that is can provide more depth and understanding as well as consider the topic at hand in its appropriate context. Without having to compare several cases and triangulate the data you collect in order for it to be relevant in all cases there is a larger possibility to find relevance in the topic. The most apparent path to complement Sweden would this thesis have used multiple cases would have been to use cases that are relatively similar in its international position since this would have been most helpful in determining if middlepowermanship was a key determinant in aid policies. But naturally middlepowermanship isn’t the only thing that identifies Sweden or other countries and even among a group of middle powers there would have been differences in history, culture and such things that would have been needed to consider. Limiting the thesis to only use Sweden have thus enabled an approach that takes into consideration features of Sweden that are unique and recognizes that it cannot be adequately understood by using only one of many means of identification.

There are some drawbacks of a single case study approach though, one being that of researcher subjectivity. This would apply to several research methods but needs to be addressed nonetheless. In order to combat this I have actively searched for diverse sources, one example being that there is regarding the first and second research question both government sources and external sources. I have endeavored to throughout the thesis see both sides of any argument and base the analysis on this. More specific to single case studies however is the criticism of validity, it is in many cases better to include a multitude of observation to your research in order to get a result that is as close to reality as possible. While this is valid concerns it has been addresses by making sure the research objective and research problematization is specifically enough oriented towards Sweden, the thesis is realistically not designed to be a model to be applied widely without modifications.

As mentioned in the discussion on research problems there is not much literature connecting Sweden to the theory of middle powers and in order to answer the research questions sufficiently I will hence draw from existing literature describing middle powers and then connect this to Swedish behavior in aid policy and so on. Hopefully a connection can be made in which Sweden exhibits behavior that corresponds to that of a middle power.

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20 B. Willis, 'The Advantages and Limitations of Single Case Study Analysis', *E-International Relations*, 2014
A key feature to reach an understanding of especially the first and second research questions is to understand what guides the decision-making process un Swedish foreign policy. Because of this three actors with close connections to this process will be extra carefully examined in trying to answer these two questions. These will be the foreign minister, the minister of development cooperation and Sida, in the following background chapter these actors will be further presented. The reason for this approach is that these are the three actors that supposedly has the most impact in the decision-making process regarding development aid issues, being in their position also means that they represent the larger consensus in Swedish government regarding these issues and studying the offers a valid opportunity to limit the scope of research process.

3.1 BACKGROUND

This section will shortly introduce some background needed to grasp the following findings and analysis, the main section will shortly introduce some history about Swedish development aid and after that will be explanations on some concepts used later in the thesis.

During the latter half of the 20th century and until today Swedish aid policy was fairly consistent in that poverty reduction has been a dominant theme. During the 1960s Sweden experienced a growing curiosity for global issues and Sweden took steps to be more active internationally outside the UN, for example the bilateral links to developing countries got more attention and development aid became an important contribution to Swedish foreign policy. Motivation wise a lot of effort was put into mediating that development aid was part of a moral obligation, and one of the major methods to limit poverty was to invest in more equal trade relations and move from smaller development projects to less limited development programmes spanning a national or regional scope, in other words aid and development work were largely focused on economic measures.21

The 1970s can be identified by an understanding that development aid policies moved beyond building on the traditional model and Sweden began to focus on more cooperative practices.22 In the 1970s the focus shifted slightly to emphasize that purely focusing on economic growth was not enough for development. Sweden now began to form its aid policies according to the needs and conditions of the recipient and concepts such as ownership, employment and social development played an increasingly important role in Swedish aid policy. In the late 1970s the climate changed

22 Sida, About Swedish development cooperation, 2014
some due to global economic stagnation and Sweden slowly began to follow the implementation of structural adjustment programmes, in the end even conditioning its aid on them.23

The 1990s are also identified by economic turbulence and cutbacks in aid, but some of the spirit from the earlier aid work was reestablished in that the focus once again turned to the recipients and Sweden attempted a less interventionistic aid policy. Concepts such as ‘development cooperation’ and ‘partner countries’ were tested and established. These two paths made for an interesting clash and the result were that Sweden were doing more aid projects and less all-embracing types of aid.24

In present day, Swedish aid has been characterized perhaps more so than earlier by a wish to come across as the altruistic donor, and special attention has been given to Sweden having an explicitly feminist foreign policy, this has been a recurring theme with the new government promoting values such as solidarity, equality and environmentalism.25 To provide context the Swedish budget for development aid in 2016 is 43 billion SEK, slightly less than 5 billion USD. In this is included things such as refugee costs in Sweden and EU assistance, keeping this in mind the total allocation to foreign aid is about 32 billion SEK.26

Next will be a short explanation of a few key concepts that will be used in the findings and analysis in order to contextualize them in the setting of this thesis.

3.1.1 Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals

The Agenda 2030 will be mentioned in the findings, especially in the first section, and therefore it is important to understand the basics of the concept. The UN describes the Agenda as a plan to guide the effort towards universal peace and it recognizes that poverty is one of the main factors that stands in the way of peace and sustainable development. In order to achieve this there are 17 Sustainable Development Goals that are integrated through social, economic and environmental ... of development, and the ambition is to fulfil these by the year of 2030. These goals came into effect in January 1st 2016 and are meant to be the framework for decision making in development issues for the next 15 years.27 The Agenda works together with the Paris Climate Agreement and the Addis

25 Sida, About Swedish development cooperation, 2014
26 Regeringskansliet, Biståndet öker 2017, 2016
27 Sida, Sida administers half of Sweden’s development aid budget, 2009
28 United Nations, Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,
Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) to create a new start for global efforts for sustainable development and poverty reduction.29

3.1.2  Sida
Sida is the Swedish state agency with the responsibility to allocate about half of Swedish aid and implement its aid policies. Every year the government dispatches a letter of appropriation that sets the budget that Sida have at its disposal as well as the objectives it is to reach, the money is then allocated through bi- and multilateral cooperation, the EU and several Swedish NGOs that work closely with Sida.30 Additionally Sida is an advocate of working with the private sector and companies since that can further ‘contribute to economic, social and environmentally sustainable development through their activities, production processes and value chains’31.

Sida was established in 1965 and has since kept a relatively steady profile within Swedish politics, while it is ultimately controlled by the government it is quite autonomous in how to go about its missions.32

3.1.3  Foreign minister and minister of development cooperation
The other half of Swedish aid goes through the ministry for foreign affairs, of which the foreign minister is the head but that also includes the minister for development cooperation. The ministry’s task is primarily to represent Sweden in the international community and to promote Swedish interests in for example economy and foreign policy.33 Margot Wallström holds the position of foreign minister of Sweden and as such she is the foremost representative of Swedish foreign policy, since she got appointed Wallström has been known to be outspoken against injustices around the world and for advocating her flagship project of a feminist foreign policy.34

Isabella Lövin is the Swedish minister of development cooperation and climate and is the minister in charge for Swedish aid. She is a former journalist with a strong interest for climate issues. Pairing the minister post responsible for aid with that responsible of climate is a sign of Sweden seeing these two as joined and interdependent.35

30 Sida, How we are governed, 2009
31 Donor Committee for Enterprise Development, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida),
33 Government Offices of Sweden, Organisation, 2014
35 Regeringskansliet, Isabella Lövin
3.1.4 Different forms of aid

Whenever you talk about foreign aid you can divide it into several groups, but the most common and generalized way is to split it into humanitarian aid and development aid. The difference between the two is quite logical with humanitarian aid or humanitarian relief being a response to emergency situations such as a natural disaster or a conflict. It is generally a short-term intervention that is intended to save lives rather than to make any long-term contributions to development.36

This thesis however will mostly focus on development aid or development assistance as it is also called, the definition goes that this is aid that is provided by actors such as states and local governments and that has the objective of furthering the development and welfare of developing countries. It is transferred in the shape of commodities or services and it cannot contain elements such as military aid or peacekeeping.37

4 RESULTS

4.1 Visibly declared motives of foreign aid

In this first section, governmental documents of different categories will be reviewed in an attempt to find what declared motives the government endeavors to communicate to the general public, with regards to aid and development work internationally. To contextualize the official general objective for all Swedish aid is to ‘create opportunities for people living in poverty and under oppression to improve their living conditions’38 through humanitarian aid and development cooperation. An alternative wording that has also been used to express this is that Swedish aid are to ‘save lives, easy suffering and work to maintain human dignity of people affected by conflict, catastrophe or other similar conditions’39. By looking at these formulations it is apparent that Swedish development work and aid policy are to be understood in a context of altruism and humanitarianism according to those conveying these messages.

The budget bill is arguably one of the most important policy documents which the government uses to set out the direction for Swedish aid. In the budget bill for 2017 it was declared that the Swedish development policies will be based upon Agenda 2030 and simultaneously that Sweden are to be a leading actor globally in delivering on the ambitions made in this agenda and implementing its components. Leading up to 2017 the government has announced that the 2030 Agenda will form the

36 Organisation for Economic Cooperation, Is it ODA?, 2008
37 Ibid
38 Sida, About Swedish development cooperation, 2014
39 Regeringskansliet, Regeringen tar första steget mot en ny humanitär strategi, 2016
foundation of Swedish aid and development policies that year. In a speech regarding the launch of Agenda 2030 the Swedish Prime Minister stated that there are two reasons for this, firstly that it is morally correct due to our responsibility for people all over the world as well as for future generations. Secondly, he defined that it is also brings economic benefits as it would mean that it could very well be Swedish companies that develop technology to further for example the development in work against climate related problems and this is a notion that will be further investigated in the next chapter.

A lot of focus from government sources is put on Sweden being a country with a tradition of ambitious and generous development aid and this seems to influence large shares of aid policies. While stating the targets for Sweden’s developmental work in the budgetary proposition it is mentioned that Sweden has a moral responsibility to work for and support people that live under oppressive structures and poverty, it also expresses that Swedish aid are to be bold in its nature. In this sense you could discern altruistic patterns in Swedish aid policies. One example of an issue which seems to be largely motivated by altruistic determinants is the relatively intense focus Sweden puts on a gender perspective, for example the Swedish minister for development assistance, Isabella Lövin, conveyed in a speech that ‘the evident vulnerability of women and girls remains one of our main challenges when now looking at the humanitarian system with critical eyes’, and that because of this Sweden has a feminist government and is the first country to practice an expressively feminist foreign policy.

This sense of Sweden being a morally superior nation can be found also from foreign sources, as illustrated by an article by a former president of Timor-Leste who argues that Sweden is identified by its ‘solidarity with those less fortunate and those subject to oppression and inequality’. The article then immediately brings up Sweden being one of the largest humanitarian donors globally and other examples that exemplifies Sweden being a moral superpower of sorts. Further it is conventionally understood that aid policy from Sweden is predominantly driven by ‘humanitarian goals of broadly shared economic development and the provision of basic human rights’. All these statements makes it clear that Sweden is indeed considered and most likely is driven to an extent by a moral

41 Regeringskansliet, Statsministerns tal vid lanseringen av Sveriges arbete för att nå de Globala målen, 2016
42 Regeringskansliet, Mål för internationalt utvecklingssamarbete, 2014
43 Regeringskansliet, Tal av biståndsminister Isabella Lövin vid Call to Humanity, 2016
44 Ibid
45 J. Ramos-Horta, ‘Sweden’s Solidarity is Needed on the UN Security Council’, The World Post, 2016
46 Ibid
responsibility, or altruism if you want. However, the next chapter will investigate what other aspects to Swedish aid donorship there might be. As is argued in a recent article research on the real determinants of foreign aid is often stalled by inadequate transparency from policy makers. She argues that ‘the motivations behind aid policy are typically not well-documented’\textsuperscript{48}, which is why the answer for the next research question should reasonably not be found solely in government sources.

4.2 Possible benefits and motivations of foreign aid donorship

This section will aim to discern what benefits a country like Sweden might obtain by being a foreign aid donor, in a sense it will therefore in part study what undeclared motives might be the base of Swedish aid policies. One of the basic hypothesis of this thesis is that there is more than a strong moral compass that motivates a country to engage in generous aid donorship. In a joint document representatives of several governments, including Sweden, cooperatively laid forth arguments for building sustainable peace and work towards the Agenda 2030. In between the expected moral argumentations there was also a line stating ‘for moral reasons, for security reasons and for economic reasons we must become more effective in preventing violent conflicts before they start’\textsuperscript{49}. This sentiment is one of the key things that this chapter will study, namely how much of an impact for example economy and domestic security has in a country’s aid budget and the allocation of the same.

It is the opinion of some scholars that aid might in a sense do better for the donor than for the recipient, one article argues that this ultimately goes back to aid efficiency being tied not to specific urgencies of aid, but to how it is spent. The conclusion of the argument in this particular article is that under some specific circumstances aid might indeed have a paradoxical effect in that it enriches the donor rather than the recipient, one reason being that donors often require that aid is spent in ways that have some positive effect for themselves and this can cause the opposite for the recipient, intentionally or not.\textsuperscript{50} One of the most obvious example is the custom to use the implementation of so called structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) as a requirement for financial assistance, a practice that just as foreign aid has both strong opposition and strong proponents. One of the most common arguments against SAPs is that they are ultimately a tool to strengthen the donor countries

\textsuperscript{49} A. Mohamed et al., Amidst Crises, Countries Need to Invest in Sustaining Peace, Regeringskansliet, 2016
and the west by strengthening that particular political and economic tradition, and that it therefore neglects the needs of the recipient and ends up causing more harm than good.\textsuperscript{51}

Decisions regarding the allocation of foreign aid can be argued to be made with strategic interests in mind in some/many cases, this means that the humanitarian need of the recipient country might not be the top priority. Helen Milner and Dustin Tingley argues in an article that ‘the position legislators take on foreign aid [...] are at base no differently motivated than other issues’\textsuperscript{52}. Rationally foreign aid signifies nothing else than a transfer of wealth from the taxpayers to a foreign country, this would not seem very attractive for a country and other aspects would hence be present as well.\textsuperscript{53} To further strengthen this argument it is relevant to also look at different forms of aid or development. ‘Regular’ bilateral aid are influenced more than other than the level of democracy and democratic institutions in the recipient countries, which is interesting as it differs significantly from foreign direct investment. Foreign direct investment is influenced less by democratic values and more by rule of law in the recipient country, which would indicate that ‘private capital flows are influenced by the enforceability of contracts, rule of law, and economic liberty, they are not sensitive to political democracy per se’\textsuperscript{54} This does indeed show that aid in different shapes are subject to different strategic and political variables when being decided upon, if pure altruism were the determinant of aid this wouldn’t be the case.

As promised in the last chapter this paragraph will examine what economic benefits might become Sweden due to its aid work. Citing this government source, it is visible that trade and investments are indeed considered in development policy,

‘increased trade and foreign investment of the kind that creates jobs with decent terms and conditions and contributed to knowledge transfer [...]. Swedish enterprise can play a part here. As part of its enterprise and development policies, the Government intends the emphasize the vital role of private enterprise as a driver of growth and development’\textsuperscript{55}.

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid p. 203
\textsuperscript{55} Regeringskansliet, Global Challenges – Our Responsibility, Government Communication 2007/08:89, 2008, p. 20
These types of initiatives benefit both the donor and the recipient country, but surely the incentive to form such policies grows a bit stronger when there is a national benefit at stake. It is in any case a notion that must be kept in mind when considering these types of proposals and policies.

Using another quote that describes Swedish aid policy in relation to Namibia you can glimpse behind the curtain of altruism that covers Swedish aid policy and development work; ‘Although trade with Namibia may not be a top priority concern of these nations, many would welcome increased commercial cooperation with the country’\(^\text{56}\) While this is quite vague in that it does not mention which particular actors that would welcome trade connections, it shows that there is a concern that goes deeper than pure philanthropy from Sweden. Continuing down this document there is a paragraph that states that one ambition with the work in Namibia is to phase out bilateral aid and replace it with for example ‘commercial investment’\(^\text{57}\) and further that at the time 10 Swedish companies were present in Namibia, which should reasonably present the Swedish government with certain interests in how it directs foreign aid to the country.\(^\text{58}\)

Despite Sweden and the Nordic countries in general attribute a very small share of its exports and imports to the countries that receive most of its aid this is interesting to look at and important to understand the complete notion of aid being a promoter of national interests as well as the recipients. Although Sweden has been careful to differentiate its humanitarian objectives with national economic benefits, for example beneficial trade relations, there was a change in the rhetoric regarding this after some economic difficulties in the 1980s. Aid policy came to accept and include the connection of aid and the procurement of Swedish goods and services, in the 1990s this engagement was strengthened further by focusing on aid working in collaboration with for example trade and investment.\(^\text{59, 60}\) Again considering the small share of exports and imports Sweden has in for example southern Africa, it has been noted that this is a region that is on its way of becoming a bigger market and an increasingly important actor in global trade patterns. This at the same time as in many cases they are heavily reliant on foreign aid, which makes it plausible that countries such as Sweden hope to in the near future benefit from having a good relation with these emerging markets.\(^\text{61}\)

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58 Ibid, p. 25
59 S. Hook, Foreign Aid Toward the Millenium, 1996, p. 23
Preferences in aid distribution is driven by more than material interests, ideology and political alliances have undoubtedly had a large impact on foreign policy and it can surely be expected to play into the distribution of foreign aid as well, rationally donors should be more prone to collaborate with recipients that share similar ideological beliefs. Although Sweden has historically been more politically neutral than some other countries, ideologically it has been more left than right and historically aid has more often gone to regimes that lean towards socialism. The exact cases will be further examined in the following chapter since it can be connected to seeing Sweden as a middle power, for now the general idea will be considered in looking at what ideological reasons might motivate Swedish foreign aid. In traditional Swedish aid policy, there have been an unwillingness to cooperate with recipients that exhibit authoritarianism and oppression. In a document by the Swedish government meant to communicate policy for global development, it is stated that;

‘at the same time, it is disturbing to note that bloggers and other people who use the internet to spread information are increasingly subject to arrest and persecution. Freedom house reported in 2007 that countries such as China, Vietnam and Iran have in recent years imprisoned large numbers of journalists and cyber-dissidents’

This shows that Sweden actively looks at what track record regimes have on a multitude of issues and that it picks development cooperation partners that more or less adhere to a certain set of principles.

A significant factor that differs Sweden from some other major aid donors is history. In contrast to Sweden countries such as France or the UK has a history of colonization that with much probability has an influence in how their development budget is allocated and in what manner the allocated money is spent. In a paper from 2000 it is explained like this; ‘an inefficient, economically closed, mismanaged non-democratic former colony politically friendly to its former colonizer, receives more foreign aid than another country with similar level of poverty, a superior policy stance, but without a past as a colony’. Following this argument the authors found that certain donors, most notably Nordic countries, seem to take the ‘correct’ motives into account when managing their foreign aid. To counter this one could state that a country such as the United States has a foreign aid policy that doesn’t seem to adhere to the same level of altruism as that of Nordic countries even though it too lacks a history of colonization in its literal form, but as is well known the USA often has unique conflict of interests when it comes to foreign policy in general and the Middle East in particular which

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influences their aid pattern and this is a phenomena that doesn’t affect Swedish policy makers to the same extent.65

4.3 THE MIDDLE POWER PERSPECTIVE

Something that is and historically has been an important determinant of Swedish aid policies is its status as a middle power. A country such as Sweden that has a relatively high level of socioeconomic development but that lacks the vast financial power of hard powers must choose which countries and/or regions to support with its aid budget, a concept that is sometimes called ‘niche diplomacy’. As this is the case it is required of countries such as Sweden to decide upon certain limitations to guide its aid and development policies. Perhaps the most obvious such limitation is that of geography, middle powers often choose to focus much of its aid budget on a specific region in order to?? Another example of niche diplomacy in Swedish aid policy is ideology, historically Sweden has been more prone to support what some call ‘progressive, socialist-oriented regimes’.66 Examples of this can be found in support of countries such as Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia as well as in assistance of the South African anti-apartheid movement and similar causes. Looking at Swedish development assistance in the 1980s one can see that about 80 percent of foreign aid to Africa went to the regimes described above.67 This number is very high and makes this a determinant that cannot be overlooked, especially not as ideology and ideological coalitions remains important and the choices Sweden makes here also marks its preferences to the rest of the world.

As explained in the theory chapter middle powers generally prefer to work in a multilateral setting in foreign policy dealings. This is something that is without a doubt true of Sweden’s behavior as well as much of Swedish aid is channeled through multilateral systems. As one author describes it Sweden is through multilateralism allowed to be more flexible and it gives a clear advantage for a small nation.68 The government itself also has several arguments for channeling aid through multilateral organizations and many of these are well suited to the behavior of a middle power. For example, the argument of using joint goals and methods and in that way strengthen the effectiveness of you aid, something that again is a big advantage of you are a smaller nation with an ambitious aid policy. This of course requires that you find a bigger setting that in large shares your vision for development work, but if that can be done it could potentially increase the effectiveness of your foreign aid.69

65 Ibid, p. 1 and 7
67 Ibid, p. 11
69 Regeringskansliet, Sweden’s Strategy for Multilateral Development Cooperation, p. 6
Another example is that a country the size of Sweden realistically won’t have a major impact in countries that are in a fragile state, and working through the UN is thus a clear advantage. This will either grant you a voice in the international community or the opportunity to team up with other smaller states and in that way gain power through numbers so to speak, both will plausibly allow for a way to more efficiently promote and implement your foreign aid policies.70

Recently Sweden acquired a seat in the United Nations Security Council, and a debate has formed on what it was that granted Sweden this position. Many argue that it was partially due to Sweden’s work internationally and in part its developmental work, this correlates to the opinion of some that one of the rotating seats at the UNSC can be attained by exhibiting a certain behavior in the foreign policy domain. It was indeed part of Sweden’s campaign for a seat that Sweden is an important donor to UN humanitarian funds and a generous donor of foreign aid.71 It therefore seems justifiable to examine if appearing as a generous donor of foreign aid and similar acts can be used to gain a seat in the UNSC, and in that way, be self-serving. Directing foreign aid in certain ways while pursuing this position could without difficulty be interpreted as grasping for votes.72 For example one of the opposition party’s’ in Sweden expressed concern that the campaign for a UNSC seat would mean compromising on values of human rights in an attempt to gain votes from various dictatorships and democratically questionable nations.73 This thought, that Sweden might have used foreign aid and development projects in order to gain influence in international politics, is a clear connection between aid and middle power behavior.

There are however exceptions in which Sweden doesn’t adhere to a typical middle power behavior, an example that comes to mind is when Sweden in 2016 became the first of the western countries to officially recognize the state of Palestine, a move that was intensely criticized by Israel and its allies, such as the USA. This is not characteristic of a middle power as it meant Sweden went directly against some of the big players in the international community and actively sought to lead the way for others.74 This also affected aid allocation as there was a pledge to continue and increase bilateral aid to Palestine in order to help Palestinian state-building and development. Another deviation from middle power behavior from Sweden lately have been the choice to form a feminist foreign policy, to do this and to do it so vocally as Sweden has done indicates an attempt to break the status quo in international politics. This choice also of course makes a mark in the area of aid allocation as

70 Ibid, p. 19
71 Swedenabroad, Sweden for the UN Security Council 2017-2018
development aid in general and Sida in particular now focus especially on women’s empowerment and gender equality and “Swedish development cooperation places a strong emphasis on women’s health, particularly with regard to sexual and reproductive health”\textsuperscript{75}. This clear choice of direction would not have been as distinct had the government not made the choices it made.

5 Analysis

This analysis chapter will attempt to conclude the answers to the research questions and reflect on the findings. One of the major curiosities that got this thesis going, especially regarding the use of theory in it was to see how Sweden’s position in the international community influenced its development and aid policies. There was a wish to understand what it was that possibly enabled to allegedly base your policies in these areas on altruistic and humanitarian values, and a thought came to mind if it were in fact Sweden’s position as a middle power that shaped these policies. Would its aid policies and have been different had Sweden been a so called great power, imagine a hypothetical Sweden that had the same international standing as say the United States or Russia, would it still have these defining values of humanitarianism in its policy making process? Maybe it would and there are other things that determine this, or maybe it is exactly the fact that Sweden is a middle power that brings with it these values. The somewhat restricted resources and dependence on the international community might work to restrict what you can realistically visualize and achieve foreign policy wise and this restriction might be exactly what creates the tradition of altruism.

The first research question dealt with what motivations for foreign aid that Sweden openly and willingly communicated to the public, and the answer turned out to be much as expected. The overwhelming majority of the time the reasoning is focused on a tradition of altruism and a moral obligation to help those in need, and by assessing the complete findings chapter it would probably be fair to say that Swedish aid policy is indeed driven to a large degree by these factors. This is not to say that there are no other determinants as well, these will be discussed shortly, but it can and should not be overlooked that a decent amount of goodwill seems to contribute to the policy making process. Were this is coming from is the next step to discuss, looking at present day policies the humanitarianism in them seems to have come largely from tradition. Although Swedish aid policies have shifted in structure over the course of modern history they seem to mostly have had a foundation in these altruistic thoughts. Having this history and these traditions makes it an integral part of Swedish foreign policy and is probably considered to be to some extent sacred in the policy

\textsuperscript{75} Donor Tracker, What are Sweden’s strategic priorities for development?
making processes, were some party in this process to suggest an addition to aid or development policy that were entirely self-serving it would undoubtedly not pass under normal circumstances.

With this knowledge in mind it is possible to start answering the second research questions, namely what actual determinants might be behind Sweden’s aid and development policies. In the section of the findings that dealt with this question a number of possible such determinants were mentioned, but interestingly not all those expected. Doing research on what national interests might motivate aid allocation one would expect to find a decent amount of data on the topic of security, be it national, regional or global, and would the thesis have been on for example the United States or another great power this would arguably have been the case. Sweden however have during modern history been quite non-confrontational and doesn’t have any what you would call enemies, countries that would threaten it militarily or otherwise in a serious way. How these facts could influence Sweden’s aid policies I don’t know, but considering the attention security issues get these days it is impossible to avoid the issue. Again, the logical thing to do is connect back and consider if this is not one more instance in which Sweden has been allowed by circumstance to enjoy a tradition of altruism. To form your policies after such values are surely more problematic had you been involved in conflict or such state of affairs.

Seeing past Sweden for a moment it is as mentioned in the findings possible to find plenty of arguments for why aid is self-serving rather than altruistic. I mentioned the example of SAPs which in the opinion of many are a way to ensure the fortification and the spread of the ways of the west, in culture, ideology, economy and such matters. Considering the fallouts of the time when SAPs and the likes were practiced most intensely, these opinions are surely not grasping for air so to speak as in the overwhelming majority of cases these programmes led to little or no progress. Whether or not this was a deliberate design is of course another issue, but it stands clear that there was a flaw in that those they were intended to help received little such help in the long run. Also, as sources in the findings, there is the matter of funding. Aid is in normal cases funded by tax money which means that it has to be made to seem like an attractive investment. This makes how you communicate your aid allocation highly strategic as it impacts the future of that same aid. It also means that legislators likely take into account the opinion of all of their constituents, even if those were to be misinformed. Would this be the case there runs a risk of aid policies being misoriented and possibly harmful simply in order to please those voters.

What makes for a successful strategy naturally differs from country to country, in Sweden one of the most effective ways to make aid funding attractive is likely to use concepts such as humanitarianism and solidarity and share the ways in which it helps bring along development and also how it furthers
democracy and the like. Would news reach the Swedish population about aid money being used in a questionable way the backlash would plausibly be quite rough. In another country, foreign aid might seem more attractive if you consider other aspects of it. This being said the nature of the issue of course makes it so that development always takes a central place but you can choose to couple this with other arguments when selling the notion of foreign aid donorship to appeal to the specific concerns of a particular population or interest group. It might in this way be beneficial to state that you indeed have motives other than pure altruism as taxpayers might appreciate a more pragmatic approach that considers for example security or economic benefits, as with all other issues the discourse you chose to use will mostly likely have a determining part in the success of said issue.

In the findings, it is presented that there are certain interests in trade and foreign investment that goes alongside aid policy. The specific example stated that there was at the time 10 Swedish companies present in Namibia, a country that Sweden has a deep development cooperation with and that receives a significant share of Swedish aid. In this case, more beneficial trade relations would of course be valuable to Namibia, but it cannot be overlooked that it would further Swedish interests as well and a healthy trade between Sweden and aid recipients such as Namibia presents a for Sweden profitable chance to promote Swedish goods and services in a growing market. Also, as presented in the findings, in many cases developing countries are quite dependent on foreign aid and doesn’t always have the established industries and such to support the level of development and growth taking place. This again makes for a beneficial situation for Sweden as they can pitch Swedish goods and services to fill any gaps in the domestic scene, and in that case benefit from a continued relationship even if it in the future moves away from aid.

A possible line of thinking offers the idea that a reason for the alleged Swedish altruism in the realm of aid comes from Sweden not having a colonial past, it is sometimes mentioned that former colonizers such as Britain or France stay in the countries they formerly colonized in a manner that benefits them with trade and political interests. Sweden and its Nordic neighbors doesn’t have these post-colonial interests and maybe this enables them to act more according to humanitarian principles. Related to this argument you can also find the one about former colonizers feeling they have some responsibility towards former colonies and that aid in that case is simply a way to lift their conscience. Not having this ‘obligation’, real or imagined, to help you can imagine a more sincere and therefore effective approach to development and aid. Frankly a country such as Sweden should consider it in its best interest to make sure that the money from its aid budget is used in the most efficient way possible and work towards the end goal to ultimately abolish the need for development aid.
The third research question set out to find out how the concept of middle powers could assist to understand Swedish aid policies and behavior around aid issues. Something that became visible during the research process was that the relevance of conceptualizing and categorizing your international standing, which is what the theory of middle powers does, was unclear. But researching this topic there have been an underlying sense that knowing your status in the global order brings a feeling of confidence and refuge that guides your actions. A country such as Sweden that knows it’s status as a middle power will likely adopt a behavior that matches this and that therefore matches the conditions that country has. Having a way of defining yourself in the international community also brings stability to the community as a whole, in a world that is fairly unstable it is important to understand how states relate to each other and how they interact. In the case of middle powers they are decidedly interdependent and therefore an integral part of keeping the international community significant and operative. This notion is important in general but also when looking specifically at foreign aid and development work, considering that there are so many people living in poverty and distress today makes the existence of effective and righteous development aid important and this is arguably only made possible by a well-functioning international community that has space to include a portion of altruism in its work. When thinking of the elements of a middle power you can imagine that such an actor would be prone to exhibiting this altruistic behavior that would seem so important to the stability of the international community.

Another thing that comes to mind when considering the typical middle power is the notion of valuing strong welfare, something that is visible in Sweden but also in countries more traditionally considered middle powers such as Canada. This coupled with the middle power behavior of working through multilateralism does rationally create a resolve to spread those values in the belief that they will benefit developing countries as they have your own. By being a generous foreign aid donor you are considered a good member of the international community while at the same time promoting your particular way of life. Perhaps middle powers see foreign aid as the for them most efficient mean of assisting other parts of the world, whereas a great power might use for example military interventions or such measures instead. In a world that is increasingly interlinked issues such as security and growth depends on countries working together in a multilateral setting. Middlepowermanship in this sense brings a reputation of middle powers as moral forces on the international scale which in turn would bring about a desire to live up to this reputation, as well as a constant demand on the government to engage in global humanitarianism from the population.

In the answer to this first research question is also a connection to make to the use of theory, this is the recent focus put on the Agenda 2030 that features prominently in Swedish aid policy today. Using a clearly multilateral platform like this in order to promote your aid policies is a show of
middlepowermanship, as explained earlier. Sweden has always been a strong advocate for agencies such as the European Union and the United Nations and is clearly dependent on these to implement its foreign policies in an effective manner. In this way Sweden, despite its limited conventional means of power such as financial and military assets, can enjoy a position of influence due to an ability to act through multilateralism. There have been instances when Sweden has diverged from its status as a middle power, the one brought up in the findings dealt with its recognition of Palestine which preceded many of its allies and big power in the international community. This action along with a few others indicates that Sweden, in some areas, are prepared to transgress from middlepowermanship. These could be attempts to guide the way and take a sort of moral leadership or possibly it could be a way of taking action where it is possible when lacking huge financial or military means, nonetheless it shows that Sweden will not always follow the direction of the multilateral settings it so often operates smoothly in. As clarified in the theory chapter this thesis draw from a behavioral model of middle power theory, through this notion one can imagine that middle powers are created and defined through the political reality of the world they exist in as they adapt their behavior after this. As political reality inevitably changes, so will middle power behavior and these instances of Swedish independent actions might be a sign of this, in which case it will surely affect aid and development policies as well.

6 CONCLUSION

The research problem that started this thesis was mainly that literature on the topic of aid is overall very focused on the recipient, which is something that is problematic considering that from start to finish in the process of foreign aid it is a cooperation where two or more parties are involved. When the recipient is independent and no donor involvement is needed or appropriate then there is no longer a need for an aid process. The second part of the research problem dealt with the almost completely consensual view in literature that Sweden and the Nordic countries are superiorly altruistic in their foreign policies in general and aid policies in particular, while I of course could only hypothesize about this I figured that Nordic countries too would have some motives and determinants other than altruism to back their foreign aid budgets. These problems were both according to my research objective and research questions to be met by seeing Sweden as a middle power and more importantly as a country adhering to middle power behavior in the realm of aid and development.

The results of the research were in part surprising and in part not. As expected there were a number of determinants of aid policy that went beyond altruism, these were for example that the
government and other actors hoped beneficial relationships with an emerging market would provide opportunities for Swedish companies or that a humanitarian profile in the international community helped grant Sweden political favor in the shape of a seat at the UN Security Council. What was less expected was that despite all this, altruism despite all seems to be the main determinant of Swedish aid policy. However much the literature accounted for other motivations, there was always a sense that altruism still preceded these. The next step then became to in the analysis try and discern what this could be a result of, and the conclusion is that the altruism or humanitarianism is not something Sweden and its Nordic countries have simply chosen because of our goodness, but rather a position that circumstance has enable us to take. Circumstance in this case means that by having been one of the richest and most stable countries for some time, there have been opportunities to put focus outside from ourselves and help other, whether or not you agree with the shape that help takes is another issue. As this have been the case for several decades now a tradition of altruism has been born which makes it a default in modern times.

Regarding the middle power angle this is something that Sweden in most cases definitely fits into. To avoid specifics and draw from a more general approach a key thing to take from this research is that middle power behavior is very much defined by the political reality of the time. The definition of a middle power as an actor that is in between small and great powers makes it a concept that is decidedly interdependent on what the world around it looks like. Looking at aid a key thing for middle powers is to find a niche to work within, all countries must in to some extent do this but in order for middle powers to realize their development visions it is absolutely essential. As explained earlier middle powers are often seen as humanitarian powers that keep the international community morally accountable, and they are often considered to be politically and economically significant, even if they are not dominating in those areas, and internationally respected. Perhaps this is another explanation for Sweden’s seemingly altruistic approach to aid and development policy in that it sets a pressure built up from reputation and expectations to do good on a global setting. Additionally, Sweden has historically done the journey from a poor nation to one of the wealthiest on the planet, something that might contribute to the humanitarian outlook on the world around it.
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