The Swedish Defense University

States’ defense policy formation

A study of Sweden in front of the election 2014
from a rational choice perspective

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Abstract

This study uses variables derived from Rational Choice Theory to examine the theory’s predicted covariance between public opinion and the parties’ policies. The collection of material has been guided by three arenas: the parliamentarian, the media and the voter’s. It has categorized the analysis based on the strategy concept, using ends, means and ways. It asks how the Moderate Party and the Social Democratic Party changed their strategy within the period of 31 May 2013 and 14 September 2014, and how this can be understood from a rational choice perspective. The purpose of the study is to examine the assumptions of Rational Choice Theory in the Swedish context in front of the election in 2014, and to understand this from the perspective of the theory. This can help in our understanding of defense policy formation and to our understanding of states’ relations on the international arena. The results show that there has been a more ambitious change in defense policy which covariates with the indicated positive change in public opinion on defense issues, but this did not make defense issues one of the 2014 election’s most important questions for the voters in choice of party to vote for. This can be understood as rational, seen from a RCT-perspective, since the other issues renders more support, a circumstance that is in line with the history of Swedish elections.

Key words: Rational Choice Theory, strategy, public opinion, Sweden, the Moderate Party, the Social Democratic Party, defense policy
# Table of contents

Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 1

Disposition ............................................................................................................................ 2

Theory ...................................................................................................................................... 2

**Rational Choice Theory** .................................................................................................... 2

- The assumptions of RCT on human nature ........................................................................ 3
- Defining rationality .............................................................................................................. 3
- The rationality behind voters and politicians .................................................................... 4
- The voter decision ............................................................................................................... 4
- Adapting policy to maximize votes .................................................................................... 5
- Are humans really only selfish? ........................................................................................... 5
- Two variables from RCT: defining opinion and policy ...................................................... 6

**Strategy** ........................................................................................................................... 7

- Defining strategy ............................................................................................................... 7

**Method** ............................................................................................................................... 8

- Setting the time frame ........................................................................................................ 8
- The predictions of Rational Choice Theory ........................................................................ 9
- Discussing the environment ............................................................................................... 10
- Research questions .......................................................................................................... 11
- A case study ....................................................................................................................... 11
- Arenas guiding the collection of material ........................................................................... 12
- Material ............................................................................................................................... 12

**Critique towards the method** .......................................................................................... 12

**Research design and operationalization** ........................................................................ 13

**Analysis** ............................................................................................................................ 14

- The reference point .......................................................................................................... 14

**Research question 1** ........................................................................................................ 15

- The parliamentarian arena ............................................................................................... 15
- The media arena ................................................................................................................. 16
- The voter arena .................................................................................................................. 17

**Research question 2** ........................................................................................................ 18

**Conclusions and discussion** .......................................................................................... 19

**Future studies** .................................................................................................................. 21

**References** ....................................................................................................................... 22

**Literature** .......................................................................................................................... 22

**Material** ............................................................................................................................. 23
Introduction

Alike foreign policy, defense policy is an area where consensus is considered to be high valued. Swedish politicians speak of ‘broad agreements’ where the most of the parliament’s parties should be aligned with the government’s policy before final decision. Consensus is not defined as ‘no debate’ but that the agreement in the end should render the broadest support, and “the absence of different views between the political parties” (Bjereld & Demker, 1995: 30). The effect of consensus is to minimize open political conflict with the purpose of upholding national unity. The opposite of consensus is to seek political public battle and to politicize former un-politicized questions and engage in political debate (Bjereld & Demker, 1995: 28-31). The reason for logic of consensus is twofold: one, it is seen as a part of the national security strategy to show inner coherence internationally, and two, no party wishes, of party strategic reasons, to be seen as the one sowing a split in the national unity (Bjereld, 2010: 99). Ulf Bjereld and Marie Demker (1995) questioned that foreign policy should be an area where consensus policy is applied, and suggests that that field, as well as any other political field, is exposed to party politics and competition in order to gain votes in the next election. Even though it is perceived as a political sin to put party strategies before the national good, which would therefore hinder this kind of party competition, it would nevertheless be naive to think that these considerations did not take place in order for the parties to realize their political programs (Bjereld & Demker, 1995: 17). The same is here suggested to be valid referring to defense policy: that defense policies are as any other field – open for party competition that adapts its policies to public opinion in order to gain votes and political support.

It is important to state that defense issues has not been on the top of the agenda in Swedish elections since 1979. In fact, only between 1-6 percent of the voters perceived defense issues to be “an important question” in the elections between 1979 and 2010. Important questions has instead been, repetitively, healthcare, employment, environment, education, and elderly care (SCB, 2011: 60). Even though, it is interesting to explore the logic of political behavior concerning defense policy, and to understand the behind-the-scene drivers of a state’s security policy. Is it so, that public opinion is an important factor in understanding defense policy formation, or are there other variables that are more or equal important, and how does all these variables interact? This study does not seek to answer the completeness of these questions, but it seeks to explore change in party behavior during a period when a change in public opinion seems to have been taken place regarding defense issues. It is not possible to state a causality which says that public opinion should be the sole variable affecting policy formation, more variables interact in a complex pattern, but it is interesting to explore the covariance between them and shed light on this from a RCT-perspective, based on the assumption that parties strive to maximize their share of the votes.

This study is a part of the problem to understand what drives states’ security actions on the international arena, by observing parties behavior domestically. Traditional realism would predict that change in a state’s defense policy is a result of a competition between states, explaining it through a lens of world anarchy, with states in a prisoner’s dilemma, by looking at the state as unified actor exerting power into the system forcing opposing states to react for its survival (cf. Donnelly, 2000: 7-12). Realism is a powerful theory which explains a lot with little.

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1 All translations from Swedish in this study is the author’s
This study seeks to explore another approach to the understanding of what eventually may lead to a state’s defense policy. Essentially it is analyzing state behavior on a deeper level of abstraction by looking at individuals and parties’ behavior, inspired by the depth of analysis by Graham Allison (1971) in *Essence of decision*. Even though the Rational Choice Theory does not share all of the assumptions of realism, it shares, nonetheless, the assumptions about human nature as being selfish and rational.

The purpose to discuss the assumption, from Rational Choice Theory, that parties will align its policies to public opinion in order to gain support in elections and, basically, to survive as parties. The purpose is also, where applicable, to understand parties’ behavior in defense policies from a Rational Choice perspective. The problem at hand is about how to understand defense policy formation and how increases or decreases in defense spending, capacity, and alliances materialize. This is a part of the larger problem of how to understand the drivers behind state’s action on the international arena. The study engages in the events in front of the election in Sweden 2014, with a focus on the two biggest political parties, and their actions to counter the indicated increase in public opinion for defense issues.

**Disposition**

The following theory section describes and discusses the Rational Choice Theory and its assumptions and will from this derive two variables: opinion and policy. Rational Choice Theory is not one coherent theory which is not being debated, but consists of contributions from a set of scholars who share common ideas about how to understand human behavior. These sets of ideas have explanatory power as it shares with realism, by starting out from an assumption about human nature, which is, as will be discussed, not an all unproblematic assumption. Still, it represents one of the perspectives which will help us understand human and political behavior. The second part of the theory section will define and discuss the concept of strategy in the context of this study, and extracts three categories that will be used in the analysis: ends, means, and ways. The subsequent section will discuss the method used and how the selection of material has been guided through three arenas: the parliamentarian, the media, and the voter arena. It will also lay out the research design. The analysis section presents the empirics from three arenas and searches for change within the strategy categories, and thereafter it seeks to cast an understanding on this from a rational choice perspective. The concluding section discusses the conclusions and points forward to areas still in need of research.

**Theory**

This section will describe Rational Choice Theory and its assumptions about human behavior and extract this to two variables relevant for understanding of party behavior through a rational choice perspective. This section will conclude by describing the concept of strategy.

**Rational Choice Theory**

Rational Choice Theory challenges the assumptions that politicians and political parties are working in the best interest of the public good and that their end is to maximize social utility and social welfare. Instead, according to Downs, they are not primarily interested “in promoting a better or an ideal society” (Downs, 1957: 96) but instead in gaining power, influence, and office. This view confronts “the Platonic view that political life is about the pursuit of wisdom, knowledge, virtue, justice and other qualities intrinsic to the ‘good society’” (Petracca, 1991:
293-4). John C. Calhoun (1955) formulated the self-interest axiom on which Downs bases his work: “Each [person] has a greater regard for his own safety or happiness, than for the safety of others: and, where these come in opposition, [he/she] is ready to sacrifice the interest of other to his own” (cited in Tullock, 1976: 15).

**The assumptions of RCT on human nature**

Rational Choice Theory (RCT) views human beings as self-interested, purposeful, maximizing beings (Petracca, 1991: 289), and is, among its proponents, seen as a “coherent and unified theoretical view of politics and economics” (Alt & Shepsle, 1990: 1). In essence, it’s a way of combining the two sciences by centering on human behavior, and applying “economic principles to political science” (Hauptman, 1996: 2). “Rational choice theory is a general theory that seeks to explain a great deal of human behavior as the product of individuals’ instrumentally rational choices” (Hauptman, 1996: 3). Mark P. Petracca summarizes his view over the characteristics of rationality by the following phrases: self-interest, utility maximization, selfish ends, purposive behavior, and, egoistic behavior. This gives a picture of the nature of human beings as “egoistic individuals seeking to maximize their own good or well-being” (Petracca, 1991: 296).

**Defining rationality**

An individual is defined as rational when its objectives “are pursued by means that are efficient and effective for achieving these objectives” (Olson, 1971: 65). “Rationality refers to consistent, value-maximizing choice within specified constraints” (Allison, 1971: 30). “[I]f a person acts rationally, his behavior can be fully explained in terms of the goals he is trying to achieve” (Harsanyi, J., cited in Allison, 1971: 31, italics in original). A rational person adapts to the situation and the outcomes of previous decisions to reach its goals, while an irrational person does not. A rational person will adjust its method if it is found to be inefficient and if the costs “of eliminating [these inefficiencies are] smaller than the benefits therefrom” (Downs, 1957: 9). A person which acts irrational is not primarily motivated by efficiency towards its goals (Downs, 1957: 9). Efficiency is defined as “maximizing output for a given input, or minimizing input for a given output” (Downs, 1957: 5), combining rationality and efficiency in a meaning of moving towards goals in a way that, based on available information, “uses the least possible input of scarce resources per unit of valued output” (Downs, 1957: 5) to reach the preferred ends. Rational is not used in a sense of an actor’s goal, only of its applied means to reach that goal. Downs defines, formally, a rational person as a person that (Downs, 1957: 5-6):

- always is able to make a decision when confronted with alternatives
- ranks its alternatives according to its references according to preferred, indifferent to, or, inferior to
- keeps the preference ranking transitive
- always chooses the highest ranked alternative according to preferences
- always makes the same decision when confronted with the same alternatives

A person can be rational in neurotic terms, when considering psychological aspects of rationality, i.e., a person may be irrational in an economic and political realm but perfectly rational in a psychological neurotic way. There are reasons referred to the length and scope of

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2 “To have transitive preferences, a person, group, or society that prefers choice option x to y and y to z must prefer x to z” (Regenwetter, et al., 2011: 42).
this study not to weigh in all the aspects of psychology, but instead assume that the absolute majority of humans are rational actors in terms of political, economic and social decisions (cf. Downs, 1957: 6-11). This study, therefore, narrows down the definition of rationality to the individual (party) striving for preferred ends in the most efficient and cost-effective way known to the actor.

**The rationality behind voters and politicians**

RCT has its background within theories of economics, and it may seem challenging to comprehend what corporate logics has to do with the logic of politics, but “just as firms that do not engage in the rational pursuit of profit are apt to cease to be firms, so politicians who do not pursue votes in a rational manner are apt to be politicians” (Downs, 1957: x). Gordon Tullock analyses the motives and activities of politicians, civil servants and voters, and noted that “voters and consumers are essentially the same people. Mr. Smith buys and votes; he’s the same man in the supermarket and in the voting both” (Tullock, 1976: 5), drawing resemblance between behaviors, helping us understand and express that people fundamentally are functioning in the same basic way concerning decision making, not matter if the subject is consumption or politics. Downs is, as referred to above, critical about politicians being motivated by altruistic motives, and criticizes this by saying that the social functions, which is the outcome of politics, is not identical with what actually motivates politicians. Drivers for politicians is instead maximization of votes, as opposed to, maximization of welfare, and what really takes place in politics is a “competition for control of government apparatus” (Downs, 1957: 51, italics added). Downs treats the social functions of politics as “by-products” of individual political strife towards private ends (Downs, 1957: 29).

**The voter decision**

*The costs of being a well-informed voter*

Choices and decisions are made under uncertainty. There are few moments where a decision maker has all the relevant information, and even if one thinks so, there might be lies, “errors, false information, and ignorance” (Downs, 1957: 46). The personal effort of being informed about alternatives demands costs of acquiring this information. These costs could be expressed in time, money, education, debates, etc. and are comparable to the enlightened understanding which Dahl refers to as one of the criteria for a well-functioning democracy (Dahl, 1998: 37). To make rational choices a person must know what his preferred outcome is, what alternatives there are, and the related consequences to each alternative (Downs, 1957: 208). Without “effective opportunities for learning about the relevant alternative policies and their likely consequences” (Dahl, 1998: 37), there will be no enlightened and rational choice in the best interest of the chooser.

*The human limited ability to process information*

Bounded rationality concerns the “argument that there is a restrictedness on the amount of information the human brain can hold and process” and that there are “severe limits” to the ability to understand and evaluate the information collected (Black, et al., 2012, e-dictionary, search word: bounded rationality). So, a person cannot know every aspect of an issue, which implies uncertainty, and “whenever uncertainty increases greatly, rationality becomes difficult” (Downs, 1957: 11). Based on this, optimization of decision making has its limits. Therefore “individuals and organizations consider only a relatively small number of alternatives, and frequently stop searching once they find a tolerable course of action, rather than seeking the best possible” (Black, et al., 2012, e-dictionary, search word: bounded rationality). This makes it
likely that the communication from the political parties is intended to have a message that is easily understood. And when this message is packed, it would be rational to do this in the most efficient way as possible towards the preferred ends of the sender.

The power of habit, here defined as making the same tolerable decisions that satisfies one’s cost-benefit analysis, is an example of human behavior making decisions easier. Since information is costly, in terms of collecting and analyzing this information, then, also reevaluating of a decision already made is also resource consuming. In terms of the definition of rationality the benefits of a reevaluation must be bigger than its costs. This produces hindrance in one’s decision making about decisions that have already ones been made. This can be exemplified by consumer decisions one makes, by often buying the same articles ones elected, or voting for the same party year after year. This phenomena is well situated within the utility of ideology, which Downs defines as an “image of the good society and of the chief means of constructing such a society” (Downs, 1957: 96). The utility of ideology here is to assist with an image which mirrors the fundamental believes of a voter, simplifying the process of decision (Downs, 1957: 97-102).

**Adapting policy to maximize votes**

Choice of ideology is about philosophy, not a societal issue *per se*, hence, political action in concrete issues does not automatically have to be coherent with a party’s ideology. Rational choice is not about ideology, which is the societal goal of a specific party, but about the strategy that the party applies towards their primary goal. Within each ideology, different policies can be formulated. The utility of ideology differs between party and voter: party choses ideology out of winning votes; voter choses ideology out of utility maximization (Downs, 1957: 111). The basic hypothesis of Downs is that political parties are primarily driven by gaining power in elections, not by upholding an ideology in every aspect of political life, even though coherency with its ideology is important for a party’s reliability and trustworthiness and thereof voters rational choice can also adapt itself when needed (Downs, 1957: 105-7). “Each party wants to appeal to as many voters as possible, or at least as many as possible within some range of social spectrum” (Downs, 1957: 110). Therefore, pragmatism leads to that also ideologies, and therein policies, are set for competition between parties, and changeable and adaptable depending on the circumstances in the political environment. According to Downs, parties will adjust its ideology and policies confronted with continuously election loses, and thereof move into the winning party’s policy field to attract votes from the same group. This results in policies that “will resemble each other much more closely than before” (Downs, 1957: 101), effectively leading to the policy position of the median voter.

**Are humans really only selfish?**

There is a problem with Downs focus on individuals as actors only interested in their selfish utility when seeking to explain party behavior. Individuals, both voters and politicians, can also have altruistic motivations besides the selfish utility maximization. The assumption about preferences being selfish is not either widely accepted by all rational choice theorists as a crucial assumption (Munger, 2011: 291) but instead it is the assumption the most attacked by other scholars. Petracca notes that “the influence of values, ethics, and ideas on individual motivation are alien to rational choice theories of human behavior” (Petracca, 1991: 297). Robert Grafstein criticizes by saying that: “One, it reflects the understandable desire to explain more with less. […] Two, the assumption reflects particular theorists’ intuitions about human motivation and rationality” (Grafstein, 1992: 260). In this, RCT misses to take into account that actions may not look to strive for one’s greatest good, but in the longer perspective leads to this goal. An
example: while in a war torn society where the state is failed and a Hobbesian society rules, there might be the most rational choice to seek to maximize one's utilities in the current situation, and therefore within this seek to maximize one’s power. But on a longer perspective it might be more rational to have less utilities in the short run, but, maximizing these in the long run by a reformation and stabilization of the society and its organization. This could mean that a warlord could benefit (maximize utility) from a process of stabilization of a society, for example, by the absence of violence and the security for its family and friends, whilst it may not appear so at a first glance. “We know that people donate anonymously, sacrifice for their children, […] vote in mass elections, and exact revenge over past acts. These are public actions, often of great public consequence” (Grafstein, 1992: 261). Rational Choice Theory, in the original form of, among others, Anthony Downs (1957), lack the component of people being able to take responsibility for a greater good, beyond its closest selfish calculations, and therefore misses the fact that there are people striving for a better society, even altruistically, e.g. for democracy in an authoritarian rule, or with deadly and infectious deceases in remote areas, despite the obvious risk for one's life and the rationality this bears. It is possible, writes William H. Riker, that:

> while all actions are by definition self-interested, some self-interested goals are self-regarding and other self-interested goals are other-regarding. In short, what people want to do varies widely, ranging from private advantage, power over others, or greed for wealth, to the intention of helping others even to the extreme of wishing to sacrifice one's own life.

(Riker, 1995: 37)

**In defense of Downs**
The essence of Rational Choice Theory is the assumption about humans as rational actors towards goals, in the meaning of choosing, to their best knowledge, means that are effective in reaching their preferred ends. This would include altruism in the explanation that otherwise would not fit in. Following this line, politicians, may be motivated by other ends then party survival and winning elections, but, parties as such, depends its survival on votes, in the same way as politicians depend on basic human needs, and are therefore in this study assumed to follow the logic of party survival through gaining maximum votes.

On the matter whether humans are truly egoistic one would say that it also can be egoism and selfishness in working for a good greater than the obvious rationality appearing close to the individual. Having a society that is well functioning and secure is also in the best selfish interest of an individual, as well as maximizing one’s revenues in a competing state of society alike that of Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) Leviathan.

Even though this critique and the limitations those bear it does not punctuate the explanatory power of political behavior that Rational Choice Theory posits. It can still explain how people act while confronted with alternatives and that there are few that would chose alternatives that does not lead to some kind of selfish benefit, be it physical, social, economic or political.

**Two variables from RCT: defining opinion and policy**
An opinion consists of the views, values and attitudes of one or a group of people. The opinion can be private or on a societal level. What is here interesting is the sum of private opinion shown in public opinion through surveys. The public opinion is here defined as a view on a subject that is held by a not insignificant amount of people or groups, which, exerts pressure on the political
parties to act or adapt. The existence of an opinion on societal level consists of a disputed question with at least two alternatives that are widely known and debated in public. There can be a change of public opinion. This is a process on societal level, and can be a result of shifts in the environment or as a result of advocacy (Rosengren, 2015). Surveys of public opinion give parties insights of the public opinion, and as they seek to maximize their political influence and political survival, they will be affected of this and are expected to act and adapt in accordance with their preferred goals. Policy is defined as the actual substance in any question given by politicians and political parties (Andrén, 2015).

A wider discussion about the variables and their application in this study will be presented in the method section. For now, it will suffice to summarize that RCT predicts humans to choose the alternative that will give their preferred ends the most utility. This gives consequences in the political life as well as in any other situation. Since voters’ and politicians’ (and their staffs’) behavior are human, they will act according to this rational logic. Voters’ opinion will affect politicians’ choices and their parties’ policies, not as the only variable affecting policy formation, but as one of them.

**Strategy**

Rational Choice Theory understands parties as actors trying to “maximize their chances of electoral victories rather than any particular ideological agenda” (Green & Shapiro, 1994: 4) and that parties are “interested in gaining office per se, not in promoting a better or ideal society (Downs: 96, italics in original). Since, according to Rational Choice Theory, parties are mainly interested in winning elections through maximizing votes, parties use strategies to get there.

A party in a minority position would [according to Downs] engage in positional maneuvering: It would move toward the median voter in an effort to gain votes and gradually overcome its minority status. […] [P]arties do not accept perpetual defeat; thus, we expect them to deemphasize the main dimension of conflict and to stress other, more specific issues where they enjoy a potential majority position [in order to gain or regain political strength].

(De Sio & Weber, 2014: 870)

**Defining strategy**

There are similarities between strategies and policies, they are both intertwined when discussing politics. What differs is that policies are (or should be, where lack of strategy) the result of a strategy. Policy is the outspoken, the actions, the written, and the manifests. The policy is publically official, where strategy is the behind-the-scene idea to reach objectives (not necessarily undisclosed), and may be needed to be observed between the lines and through patterns. Defining the traditional concept of strategy often starts in the military context by referring to the use of force for the ends of policy. The strategy is thereof planned on three levels: the political, military, and the operational level (Edström & Gyllensporre, 2012: 3). This way of defining strategy does not make it usable to all sets of situations in which strategies may be applied, instead it makes it specific to a given context: politics and war. Even though this study explores the Swedish defense policy, it is not all about defense (war), it is also about politics, and in politics several logics and rational behavior can be at play at the same time. And even though the concept has its origins in warfare, the general definition and the purpose of the term is used as a way of reaching goals. It can be defined as ways to an end, but must also take in consideration available resources and the context of the situational context in which it seeks its objectives (cf. Westberg, 2015: 22). When using the term strategy in this study it will be
conceptualized by four components: the ends, the means, the ways, and the environment. With these four components it is possible to use the term strategy for all sets of situations where there is a plan to reach a goal. It is thereof possible to discuss personal, organizational, political, economical, and media strategy, or whatever situation where people and/or organizations are seeking to reach a desired end. Strategy is thus defined as the method to reach a preferred end with regard to available resources and the situational context. The ways is in the center of the strategy, which has to adapt to ends, means and environment. When these change, the ways needs to adapt in accordance.

The environment is the context in which the strategy is planned; the ends are the overall political objectives; the means consist of the political, military, and economical resources; the ways are the methods in which all this is synthesized (cf. Westberg, 2015: 22).

Method

The method used in this study is a qualitative text analysis of a single case which seeks to explain a general behavior in politics. “The overall idea of qualitative research is to exemplify” writes Conny Svenning (2003: 86), “with one’s empirics showing […] that a theory or a generalization is possible” (Svenning, 2003: 74). This study has chosen to look at the two biggest parties in Swedish politics, the Moderate Party (s) and the Social Democratic Party (s) in order to understand political behavior within defense politics. These parties are not only the two biggest parties in Swedish politics, they have also, and thereof, been the foundation of Swedish governments, and no government can, hereto, be formed without either of them involved. The choices of persons who will represent the stand of each party have been selected out of prominence in defense issues, and from a selection based on who represents the parties in defense issues. From this, two categories emerges: the party leaders: the then Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt (m) and Stefan Lövén (s): and the defense spokespersons: the then Defense Minister Karin Enström (m) and Peter Hultqvist (s). Additional to these persons, also selected statements from the chairperson of the Defense Commission, Cecilia Widegren (m), has been chosen. She has had a prominent position as a representative for the Moderate Party in defense issues, and has been publicly debating with Peter Hultqvist (s) somewhat intensively within the period.

Setting the time frame
The Rational Choice Theory sets out that parties adapts its policies in order to gain more power in elections, thereof, what is interesting here is how public opinion affects parties’ policies towards an election. The election chosen is the one in September 14, 2014. To be able measure change, there needs to be a point of reference. In May 31, 2013, the Defense Commission
presented their report “Vägval i en globaliserad värld”, in which the consequences for the Swedish security and defense policy is described. In this, both the Moderate Party and the Social Democratic Party shared their views on defense and security policy with no different opinion added (Försvarsberedningen, 2013). This document will thereof be this study’s starting point, from which change will be observed. The time period of analysis is between May 31 2013 and 14 September 2014 – a period of about 15 and a half months.

The predictions of Rational Choice Theory
The following part will describe the expectations of RCT, based on a logic of parties seeking to maximize its votes and its political influence. The opinion variable is not the only variable affecting policy, but it is a variable that has been extracted from RCT as a variable that will affect party behavior seen from the rational choice perspective. There are two variables in figure 1, opinion and policy, and these can result in nine outcomes. RCT expects voter opinion to affect parties’ policies in order for them to gain more votes. Increased public opinion for a specific issue is expected to lead to increased policy change within that policy field. Change can be either positive (+), no change (0) or negative (-). If RCT’s predictions are correct then policy would change as a result of change in opinion (marked in grey). If there is no change in opinion, then policy would not be expected to change. If the empirics observed guides the result towards the white fields, then there needs to be discussed whether RCT is relevant or not, and in what way that turnout can be understood.

![Figure 1: Marked in grey: the outcomes of cause and effect predicted by RCT. Rows and columns are numbered 1, 2, and 3.](attachment://image.png)

Variation in the opinion variable
This study will focus on change in the policy variable. When asking 1000 peoples in two surveys, one in Mars 17-20 2014 and the other in September 4 2014, if they had the opinion that the defense should receive increased, decreased or equal allocations, 41 percent answered increased in the first survey (Sifo, 2014a) where this figure had changed to 61 percent in following, approximately five and a half month later (Sifo, 2014b). The Swedish Civil Contingency Agency (MSB) asked in two surveys, the first between September 24 and October 15 2013, and the second, about one year later, between October 13 and November 10 2014, whether Sweden should have a military defense (MSB, 2014: 79). The result from 2013 was

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3 Question: Do you think the defense should be enhanced, reduced or stay as it is? (n) 1000: enhanced: 41%; reduced 9%; as it is: 34%; doubtful/don’t know: 16 %
4 Question: Do you think the defense should be enhanced, reduced or stay as it is? (n) 3374: enhanced: 61%; reduced 8%; as it is: 18%; doubtful/don’t know: 18 %
5 Question: Do you think Sweden should have a military defense? Answers: We should definitely have a military defense: 2013, 52%: 2014, 63%. We should probably have a military defense: 2013, 33%: 2014,
that 52 percent answered absolutely, had increased to 63 percent in the same survey in 2014. These surveys show a positive change (+) concerning the voters’ preferences about the defense. In both surveys the importance of a defense, both in spending and in importance, have increased. In the Sifo survey in September 2014, just about two weeks before the election, there was a majority (61 percent) that answered in favor of more spending on the defense.

Variation in the policy variable
The surveys referred to, indicates that change in opinion has taken place. This presumed change in the opinion variable motivates this study to continue its exam to look further into change in the policy variable, presented in figure 1, row 1. This variable has three different outcomes: positive, equal, or negative. When observing a positive change of policy in the material, then policy is developing into something more ambitious within the policy field. It can be more money, added tasks, more cooperation, or just something that are signaling that the party is reacting in a more ambitious way. The opposite to this is to develop defense policy in a less ambitious way, i.e. less money, less tasks, less cooperation, all being examples of a general downsizing of the defense. If neither more nor less policy is observed then there is no policy development, no new propositions, or no debate which drives the development of the field to a new policy.

Discussing the environment
Change in policy can be observed in four categories: ends, means, ways, or environment. Within the research period, and also before, there has been events in the security environment that has affected both the voters, the media and the politicians. Examples of these events, or patterns of events, is the well reported change of Russian exercise behavior, and the Russian/Ukrainian conflict, about Crimea and eastern Ukraine (see for example SvD 4/10/2014). And it can also have been other events and factors, both state external and state internal, which could have affected the environment in the same time period. The percentage of Swedish people who were very or pretty concerned about the “current political situation in the world” increased from 58 percent to 68 percent between 2013 and 2014, which are the highest percentage since 1985 (MSB, 2014: 41-2). Thus, the environment affects voters which in turn may affect public opinion and is predicted by RCT to affect politicians’ policies. But this is not a one-way effect. It is not necessarily the environment that effects voters, which effects policy. The causality can also work all other ways around, where politicians creates opinion through for example debates, statements, and proposals, and thereof affects the public opinion and the environment. It is also possible that voters or media creates opinion through different engagements in public life. As a result, all may affect all, and it is not workable to only state a one-way directed causality.

This study is not intended to lay out all of the events from the period examined, but just acknowledges that this is happening in the situational context and that this also affects the defense policy in Sweden. This study examines a case were change in public opinion on defense policy have been observed during the same period in time, and searches for covariance with change in policy expressed as party strategy, without claiming that this would explain all

26%. We should probably not have a military defense: 2013, 6%: 2014, 6%. We certainly should not have a military defense: 2013, 4%: 2014, 2%. No opinion: 2013, 5%, 2014, 2%.

perspectives of policy formation. Therefore, this study acknowledge that the environment, as well as other variables and directions of cause and effect, are important to examine, to understand the total complexity of a state’s defense policy formation, but it hereby leaves it to future studies to scrutinize even more.

Research questions
The purpose of this study is to examine the Rational Choice Theory’s assumption that parties will align its policies to opinion in order to gain support in elections and, basically, to survive as parties. The purpose is also, where applicable, to use the rational choice perspective to understand the behavior of the Moderate Party and the Social Democratic Party in defense policies. When seeking to describe and understand a specific behavior using how and why-questions, it is needed to confront the phenomena in close. To ask ‘why’ is in itself a question of trying to understand something. Quantitative methods, resulting in numbers and statistics, would describe ‘who, what, where, how many, how much’ but would not explain a behavior’s how or why-aspects, thus, the question asked is a ‘why-question’ (Yin, 2009). The study asks the following questions:

1. How did the Moderate Party and the Social Democratic Party change their policy in defense issues, defined as strategy and categorized as ends, means and ways, in the period between 31 May 2013 and 14 September 2014?
2. How can the results be understood from a rational choice perspective?

A case study
“[T]he distinctive need for case studies arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena [and] allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events” (Yin, 2009: 4). This study will engage in a case consisting of the period in front of the election 2014. When using the case study method, one can study historical documents (including digital media), make direct-observations, or conduct interviews (Yin, 2009: 5-12) and for the purpose of reducing invalidity these could be combined in a triangulation of methods “in order to see if they converge and support the same conclusions. The more diverse the sources and methods, the greater confidence there is in the convergence of the findings” (Bickman & Rog, 2009: 22-3). A method to increase the credibility of a case study could also be to employ an intensive long-term employment within the frames of the phenomena (cf. Brickman & Rog, 2009: 244). In this case, this could be represented by an imbeddedment with the actors following the events and exploring the logics by which parties act. Within this approach one could perform in-depth interviews with several key actors. This would demand a long term commitment, longer than what is here available, but the results would be of great interest and “rich data” (Brickman & Rog, 2009: 244), beyond what is possible to find in archived documents, would be possible to collect. Applying interviews has its own pros and cons, with the possibility of finding explanations that would otherwise not be observed. Interviews risks being time consuming beyond the scope of this study. Another option of rich data, which is less time consuming, is recordings or transcripts from the events of interest (Brickman & Rog, 2009: 244). In this study, the official website of the parliament offers such a first class transcript as one of the sources applied. But, in order to receive a more complete picture of what really has taken place in the actual case, and in order to strengthen or modify the conclusions, interviews with the chosen representatives, as part of a triangulation, would be preferred, and is suggested as a continuation in future studies to understand the phenomena. This study, for the reasons of validity and structure, uses material from three different arenas.
**Arenas guiding the collection of material**

Ulf Bjereld and Marie Demker describes six arenas in which politics needs to balance: the voter arena, the parliamentarian arena, the media arena, the internal party arena, the international arena, and the implementation arena. On the voter arena the goal is to maximize the party’s share of the votes. On the parliamentarian arena, the parties strive for the maximization of the influence on the decisions. On the media arena, the parties strive for maximization of their support from the voters on the voter arena, through maximizing the media attention on their preferred ends. On the internal arena the goal is to uphold coherence and unity within the party and to maximize the support for the actions of the party. On the implementation arena the parties are seeking to maximize its influence on the implementation of the decisions. And on the international arena, parties are striving for prominent positions in international organizations, to build alliances, and to create good-will (Bjereld & Demker, 1995: 18-20). In all of these arenas parties weigh their communication to attract support for their policies. This study has chosen to look further into the first three arenas: the voter, the parliamentarian, and the media arena. This is a delimitation with consequences. It would also be interesting to observe what is happening within each party on the other arenas as well, to understand the parties’ behavior even more. This is though left for future studies for reason of the time and space of this study.

**Material**

Within the voter arena, election manifests has been analyzed. Within the parliamentarian arena the material has consisted of two defense debates, one governmental handout of the government’s defense proposition, and the report from the Defense Commission from 2014. In the media arena, debate articles, signed by selected party representatives, published in several Swedish newspapers has been collected, and also public recorded seminars published on the internet. In addition, relevant statements which is covered in newspaper articles has been used, among this survey results from Sifo and the Swedish Civil Contingency Agency. The election manifesto of the Moderate Party was presented as a joint manifesto from the Alliance (the Center Party, the Christian Democrats, the Liberal Party, and the Moderate Party). Nevertheless, this study assumes that the biggest party in this alliance, the Moderate Party, had a lot to say about its content. Therefore, this is treated as a statement of the Moderate Party.

The document used as a reference point (Försvarsberedningen, 2013) does not mention economical resources, and this is not either the task of the Defense Commission. What is interesting in this study is to measure change, and for the purposes of this, the date of the report is set as index 0. If politicians act for a change of economical resources this is categorized as a positive (more) or negative (less) change relative to the index.

**Critique towards the method**

A common critique towards single case studies is that it is hard to generalize its conclusions. The response given by many scholars is that the case studies are generalizable to “theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes” (Yin, 2009: 15). The goal of the case-study is thereof to “expand and generalize theories” (Yin, 2009: 15) as an analytic generalization as opposed to statistical generalizations (Yin, 2009: 15). The problem with the research design, which this study is an example of, is that it cannot prove the casual effects of a phenomena. It can instead describe it and add a theoretical perspective which will be more or less convincing in understanding what has taken place, but it lacks the hard evidence that would prove that A
has led to B (cf. Yin, 2009: 16). Instead, more is left to the analyst to make a convincing case. The challenge with this study and its operationalization of the theory and the research design is to have any claims on causality. It can only, based on the empirics and the method, at most, show a covariance between the two variables extracted from RCT, not to prove that one has led to the other. But this does not have to mean that the contribution is insignificant. It can still shed some light on a phenomena in defense policy formation and how this can be understood.

The case selected may be confronted with questions about if it really is a case. It is not a specific event like a crisis, a happening, or a single decision, rather, the case has the parties as the unit of analysis, in which its behavior is compared in time, and which, from the change there between, seeks to explain this change of behavior. So the case is about a specific behavior rather than an event, about a phenomena in politics which needs to be understood and illustrated. The rationale for doing a single case study is that the case is unique or representative for a phenomena (Yin, 2009: 47-8). The case selected in this study is perhaps not unique in its kind, it has surely taken place before in other areas of policies, but it represents a phenomena in politics that is not uncommon and can thereof be representative and theoretically generalizable to a bigger understanding of politics and policy strategies made by politicians and its staff.

**Research design and operationalization**

This study will start with a reference point, from where change in defense policy will be measured by extracting categories of strategy: ends, ways, and means. It then analysis material from the three arenas: the voter arena, the parliamentarian arena, and the media arena in order to describe change from the reference point.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference point</th>
<th>Strategy: ends, means, ways</th>
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<td>- change over period from reference point</td>
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<td>- observations from the two parties, searching for change in ends, means, and ways in</td>
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<td>▪ the parliamentarian,</td>
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<td>- presenting the results</td>
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<td>Seeking understanding of the results from a rational choice perspective</td>
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Strategy is here defined as ends, means and ways. The *ends* are the overall political objectives; the *means* consist of the political, military, and economical resources; the *ways* are the method in which all this is synthesized. These variables can change in three ways: positive (+) or negative (-), or, no change (0). When observing a positive change of strategy, expressed in either ends, means, or ways, then this is developing into something more ambitious. It can be expressed as more economic resources, added tasks, more cooperation, or just something that are signaling that the party is reacting in a more ambitious way. The opposite to this is a strategy that is developing in a less ambitious way, i.e. less money, less tasks, less cooperation, all being examples of a downsizing. If neither a positive nor a negative change is observed then there is
no change towards a new position, no new propositions, or no debate which drives the
development to a new position. The analysis searches for change based on this
operationalization in all three arenas. The study is using a reference point from where it will
measure change. In this reference point it is possible to extract ends, ways, and means, but not
means in economic terms, since it is not mentioned in the material. Therefore, means in
economic terms, are as a reference point set to index 0. In the rest of the analysis, deviations
from 0 in the means-category are defined as change, where more or less can be expressed. This
allows that change also in means in economic terms can be measured.

The analysis of research question one is structured after the three arenas and are presented
chronologically as far as possible. It would also have been possible to present the analysis
structured after the three categories of strategy, but this would have affected the overall picture
of the events and how these relate to each other. It would also have been possible to have one
section presenting the Moderate Party and another presenting the Social Democratic Party,
making comparison between them in a divided way. But, this would also affect the
comprehension of the context and the presentation of the interactions between the parties. The
analysis starts with a reference point from May 31, 2013, from where change is measured in
research question one. The analysis of research question two presents an understanding of the
results in research question one from a RCT-perspective.

Analysis

The reference point

The following is extracted from the report from the Swedish Defense Commission
(Försvarsberedningen, 2013) and will be used as a reference point from where change is
observed.

The ends of the security policy is to:
- protect the life and health of our citizens;
- safeguard the functioning of society
- safeguard our ability to maintain our fundamental values such as democracy, rule of
  law, and human rights.
(Försvarsberedningen, 2013: 214)

The ends of the defense policy is to:
- uphold state sovereignty
- uphold freedom of action
- protect Sweden against military attacks
- protect the society against crises
(Försvarsberedningen, 2013: 224)

Sweden should enhance its political and military cooperation with other countries and
organizations, and enhance its ability for cooperation in military terms. The Nordic cooperation
is important (Försvarsberedningen, 2013: 227-8). No expression of means in economic terms
were found, but is, as discussed above, set to an index of zero, from where change in the
following research question will be measured.
In political terms, security is built through cooperation with other countries and organizations, without being a member of a defense alliance with mutual defense commitments. The strengthening of the UN is an important factor. Continued European integration as well, and a continued enlargement of the EU (Försvarsberedningen, 2013: 216). In military terms, the cooperation with NATO is written to be decisive for the development of a competent Swedish Defense Force. The EU should be strengthened in its capacity to act in military and civilian crisis. The Defense Commission also sees great possibilities in the enhanced defense cooperation with the Nordic countries (Försvarsberedningen, 2013: 218-9). The overall method in the report is enhanced cooperation, and is expressed as follows: “Security is built in solidarity with others, and threats to peace and security are averted in fellowship and cooperation with other countries and organizations” (Försvarsberedningen, 2013: 216). The text in this part is defined as an expression for ways.

**Research question 1**

How did the Moderate Party and the Social Democratic Party change their policy in defense issues, defined as strategy and categorized as ends, means and ways, in the period between 31 May 2013 and 14 September 2014?

**The parliamentarian arena**

*Defense debate: December 10, 2013*

Peter Hultqvist (s), Cecilia Widegren (m) and Karin Enström (m) all argue in the same manner, saying that their proposed budget is an increase in the total amount spent on the defense, only to differ in the exact amount on different allocations (Defense debate, 2013). This argumentation is here defined as an increase in means.

*Defense debate: January 29, 2014*

The analysis of debate was delimited to Peter Hultqvist (s) and Hans Wahlmark (m). Hultqvist gives expression of the need to increase Swedens military presence at Gotland, defined here as an expression of increase of both means and ways, since this idea will both affect the resources and the method. Both debaters were aligned in their view of continued and enhanced Nordic cooperation. Peter Hultqvist defended the policy of military non-alignment. (Defense debate, 2014)

*Communique from the government: April 22, 2014*

In April the government presented a proposition that would increase the total defense budget, aiming at year 2024 (Regeringskansliet, 2014). This is a proposition that is signaling an increase in the means.

*Report from the Defense Commission 2014: May 15, 2014*

In the report the ends for the Swedish security policy and defense policy stays as it were in the previous report, with the exception that more space is allowed for the presentation of the ends in the later report (Försvarsberedningen, 2014: 21, 44). The Defense Commission gives priority to increase the operational capability (means) of the available military resources beyond 2015 (Försvarsberedningen, 2014: 35). There are increases in demands for availability, which also is an expression for increasing means. (Försvarsberedningen, 2014: 47-50)
The media arena
Between October 17 and November 6, 2013, there was a debate in the daily Uppsala Nya Tidning between Cecilia Widegren (m) and Peter Hultqvist (s) about the defense budget related to the then forthcoming defense debate. Widegren argued that their budget proposition would give an increase in means, while Hultqvist wrote it was not enough and argued for broad consensus decisions about the defense budget. Widegren encountered by saying that the numbers were the same for the Social Democrats (UNT: 10/17/2013, 10/22/2013, 10/30/2013, 11/06/2013). While Widegren argued for the government’s budget and their proposed increases, which also Karin Enström (m) did December 10 (UNT: 12/10/2013). Hultqvist argued for broad agreements, on which he continued with in Dagens Arena (11/25/2013). To shed light on the subject whether the defense budget is sufficient for the tasks that the Swedish Defense Force have or not, the Swedish National Audit Office, presented a report in December 9, 2013, saying that the resources for military missions abroad are not sufficient relative to the goals that the government and the parliament have specified (Riksrevisionen, 2013). This report met the public and are supposed to have affected the idea of what kind of amounts in the budget that are relevant or not. The argumentation from Widegren and Enström is defined as an argumentation for an increase in means.

During the yearly defense conference in Sälen in January 12-14, Fredrik Reinfeldt (m) and Stefan Lövén (s) defended the military non-aligned policy together with enhanced cooperation with NATO, the UN, the EU, and the Nordic countries. Lövén referred to the newly published report from the Audit Office about the situation in the Swedish military defense, and made reference to the Defense Commission’s task to work out a broad agreement. Lövén said that he was aware of the Social Democratic Party’s proposed budget being a small increase. There were a clear statement from both that the defense begins nationally, a shift from the international approach that have been valid before. Reinfeldt said that there were no other alternative government that wanted to increase defense spending more than the incumbent, and that there was a great understanding over this in closed negotiations. Reinfeldt defended the government’s policies against the Audit Office, as did Karin Enström (m). Enström said that the budget for the Swedish Defense Force was in balance, and that there have been increases in the budget. Peter Hultqvist (s) pointed at the additional 100 million SEK in the Social Democratic budget, and the strategic importance of Swedish military presence at Gotland, and investments in submarines and fighter planes. (Enström, 2014; Hultqvist, 2014; Reinfeldt, 2014; Lövén, 2014). Within the period January 12 and 14, 2014, both parties gave expression for an increase in their defense spending. Nevertheless, it seems to be a gap between what these parties sees as sufficient spending and the reported critique from the Audit Office. With a defense budget of approximately 47.2 billion SEK (Prop. 2013/14:1), an additional 100 million cannot be seen as a big increase. The analysis therefor defines the increases, which both the parties here announces, as more in the form of an increase in the argumentation about the defense spending and not as an increase in actual economical means.

As a reported response to the events in Ukraine, the Moderate Party, through the minister of finance, signals increased spending in the defense in Mars 2014 (Svd, 3/5/2014), and Peter Hultqvist (s) argues again about defense resources on Gotland (Aftonbladet, 3/3/2014). April 3, the minister of defense said that she wants to buy 70 fighter jets instead of the 60, an amount which had earlier been decided by the parliament. She also said that the submarine fleet should be strengthened (DN, 4/3/2014). The report from the Audit Office was presented April 8, 2014 (Svt, 4/8/2014). The Audit Office presented another report about the status of the defense in
relation to its tasks in March 21, 2014, saying that the national military defense ability is limited relative to the goals set out for it, even when the defense reform is completed, and concludes that it is unsure whether the reform will be able to be completed at all (Riksrevisionen, 2014). Stefan Lövén and Peter Hultqvist announced April 29, 2014, economical increases with 400 million SEK in their upcoming alternative budget for exercises and defense material (Lövén & Hultqvist, 4/29/2014), and Karin Enström announced an increase with additional 110 million SEK for military exercises in May 3, 2014 (DN, 5/3/2014). On May 14, 2014, the Social Democrats presented an additional 900 million SEK increase of the defense budget compared to the government, as a result of the Defense Commission’s report within the same days, but there were no broad made agreement over the defense budget (DN, 5/14/2014). This inability to come to an agreement was used as a political point by Peter Hultqvist later in June 15 (Hultqvist, 6/4/2014). In April 22, the government presented their own proposal, without a broad agreement, which stated 5.5 billion to the defense until 2024 (Regeringskansliet, 2014).

The study has analyzed four seminars held July 3, 2014, in Almedalen with focus on the both parties (Säkerhetspolitisk sommartorg 1-2, Försvarspolitisk Arena 1-2). Nothing new could be added to the analysis in terms of ends, means, or ways, from these seminars. The Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI) reported on July 3 that the announced increases in 2012 and 2013 was actually decreases when all circumstances were considered (SvD, 7/3/2014). This was later used as an argument against the government’s defense policy by Peter Hultqvist August 10 (Hultqvist, 8/10/2014). The minister of defense announced August 26, 2014, that an agreement with NATO, within the Partnership for Peace, for Enhanced Opportunities for Cooperation were to be signed. There was a broad unity between the Moderate Party and the Social Democratic Party about this agreement (SvD, 8/26/2014). Later, on September 4 the document was signed (Försvarsmakten, 9/4/2014). The agreement with NATO is defined as an increase in both means and ways, since it both affects the political military means available and as it is a development of the ways utilized, when enhancing the cooperation with NATO even further.

Fredrik Reinfeldt wrote, together with the party leaders within the Alliance, in the run-up before the elections on September 3, 2014, that they would invest an additional 1.3 billion SEK in the military defense, an increase in the economical means. This is the last defense policy gambit in public that has been found before the election on September 14, 2014. On September 4, 2014, Sifo presented a survey in which 61 percent of the population had the opinion that the Swedish Defense should be strengthened (Sifo, 2014b). When looking back on the hot topics of the election 2014 on the website belonging to state media one can read: employment, economy, environment, school, healthcare and elderly care, and immigration, not defense issues (Svt, valåret 2014).

The voter arena

Election manifest

In the Alliance Election Manifesto 2014, published September 1, the salience of the defense issues are clear. It has its own heading which says “A stronger defense”. The manifesto is speaking about increases in defense material, personnel, exercises and military presence on the island of Gotland (Alliansen, 2014: 122-3). This is an expression of increases in military means,
which also is presented in a clear way, compared to the Social Democratic Party’s election manifesto where the presence of defense policy is not obvious. In terms of political means the manifesto expresses the will to continue the development of the international cooperation, and that the UN is an important actor. It is speaking about strengthening the UN and the EU as actors on the international arena. The manifesto gives expression for continued military non-alignment and security in cooperation with others, and that the defense and starts in Sweden should be strengthened (Socialdemokraterna, 2014: 45-6). This represents an expression for increases in military means, but the way it is presented in the manifest does not make the case convincing. It is mentioned under the headline of foreign policy, together with other policy areas. The Moderate Party has presented their defense policy in a more explicit way.

Results

The study has sought evidence of change within three categories of strategy: ends, means and ways within the time frame of May 31, 2013 and September 14, 2014. It has not found any change of ends since the point of reference in May 31, 2013. It has though found numerous of examples of change in economical means, and in some extent change in military and political means. The most obvious change has been the frequent debates over the defense spending, which has, on several occasions been increased by both parties, where the Social Democratic Party has had the role of an opposition party, slightly bidding over the government but arguing, more obvious, for increases. With reference to the National Audit Office’s report of the financing of the military defense, one must conclude that the spending here offered is not in balance to that which has been expressed by the revision. There have been observations of increases in political and military means, referring to enhanced cooperation with countries such as Finland and organizations such as NATO. In military means, additional fighter jets, strengthened submarine fleet, investments in the army, and the deployment of troops on Gotland, have been observed. The expressed views and the proposals from the parliamentarian arena were also observed in the media arena. The salience of defense issues were clear in the Moderate Party’s election manifest, but did not have the same distinctiveness in the Social Democratic Party’s manifest. The defense issues were not one of the election’s hot topics when presented by state media.

Research question 2

How can the results be understood from a rational choice perspective?

Rational Choice Theory predicts that politicians would adapt its policies in accordance with public opinion in order to gain political support and ensure political survival, and what actually is taking place in political life is the competition of political power and the control of government apparatus. What have been observed above is that there are no bigger differences between the two biggest parties in Swedish politics concerning defense issues. Their argumentation may differ, but expressed in actual economical, political, or military means, they resemble each other, one bidding over the other during the period observed. Using RCT, this can be understood as an attempt to not to lose voters to the other, therefore they resemble each other’s position in a game of bidding, closing in on the preferences of the median voter. The statements made by the parties could be understood as political communication and an attempt of voter persuasion using argumentation which communicates decisiveness towards the electorate, in order to gain political power, without necessarily increasing the means to the amount which may be relevant (according to the National Audit Office, 2014). Decisive
argumentation and winning the debate in the eyes of the electorate, would, from a RCT-perspective, be a cost-effective way of increasing its political support.

RCT predicts that politicians and parties will covariate with the public opinion to strengthen their political position. Surveys referred to in this study (Sifo 2014a, Sifo 2014b, and MSB 2014) indicates that there has been an increase in public opinion regarding defense spending and the importance of a military defense within the period of examination. There has been proposals, argumentation, and actual policy adaptions that have had covariance with the increasing percentage of the population in favor of the military defense and of increased defense spending. This would be in accordance with the predictions of RCT.

Conclusions and discussion

This study has used variables derived from Rational Choice Theory to examine the theory’s predicted effect from public opinion on parties’ policies. The collection of material has been guided by three arenas: the parliamentarian, the media and the voter’s. It has categorized the analysis based on the strategy concept, using ends, means and ways. It asked how the Moderate Party and the Social Democratic Party changed their defense policy within the period of 31 May 2013 and 14 September 2014, and asked how this can be understood from a rational choice perspective. The purpose of the study was to examine the Rational Choice Theory’s assumptions in the Swedish context in front of the election in 2014, and to understand this from the perspective of the theory. This can contribute to the knowledge on how to understand state behavior domestically in their formation of defense policy, which gives repercussions on the international arena, and helps us in our understanding of international politics.

Given that that the survey from Sifo (Sifo, 2014b) showed 61 percent of the population in favor of increased defense spending, an increase of 20 percentage since Mars, 2014 (Sifo, 2014a), this should, according to Rational Choice Theory predictions, affect parties’ defense policy. But does the results in the study support this prediction? It does not in the extent that could be expected. One would think that this also would affect the election, but the results does not support this. It has been obvious that the parties have had a need to communicate action towards the new challenges present in the environment and as a response to the increasing public opinion concerning defense issues, but this did not reach the center issues of the election in September 14, 2014. Why?

Rational Choice Theory assumes that political parties strive for survival and increased political influence, based on the assumption that humans are from a selfish, utility maximizing nature. They will act rationally according to their preferred ends, which in politics are defined as vote maximization. They do, nevertheless, have constraints on their behavior. They cannot leave their internal arena, consisting of the process and support from within the party, for an external, seeking to expand its support base, with the risk of losing inner support and losing themselves as a party, but they can move towards another policy and new groups of voters. While the public opinion increases within an area it would be rational to meet that raising interests from the voters with adapted policy.

The results indicates a covariance between increases in public opinion and policy change, notably within the means-category. Even though a covariance has been observed, it is not possible to draw any conclusions on this in terms causality. This study cannot rule out the
importance of other variables, such as the environment. This variable is supposed to affect both voters’ and politicians’ opinions and through this be the basic variable affecting policy. And also, the public opinion cannot be understood in a vacuum, and the way politicians formulizes their policies is not only affected by voters’ opinion, but the understanding of the context as well. In fact, many variables are a part of this complex pattern of forming policy.

The basic assumption of RCT is that people is selfish and utility maximizing and that this would lead politicians to formulate policies that would maximize their own and their party’s survival and maximization of votes. And based on this, an increasing opinion for defense issues should, according to Rational Choice Theory, increase the parties’ ambitions in a specified policy area to meet this changed voter preference. The pressure on politicians to act, even though 61 percent in favor of increases in defense spending just ten days before the election (Sifo 2014a, Sifo 2014b), was not enough to win the rational calculus of the parties. It would be expected that the tipping point of public opinion would be around 50 percent, following the idea of the majority principle of democracies, and that this would have changed the priorities in policy formation of the parties. But the surveys show 61 percent without any significant impact on the election 2014. How can this be understood?

One way of understanding this is that defense issues are not the only questions in Swedish politics, as shown by the “hot topics” focused on by Swedish state television – none of these were defense issues (Svt, Valåret - 2014) and which also is the case historically, at least since 1979, shown by Statistics Sweden (SCB, 2011). Defense issues has not been a hot topic in Swedish elections for a long time, if ever. In competition with other areas, defense issues were not seen as an important question for voters in their choice of party to vote for in the election. This is in line with the electoral history of Sweden, where defense issues does not come high on the voters’ priorities. Therefore, it would be more rational to focus on the employment, the economy, the school, the care of elderly and the immigration. And this is also something that Rational Choice Theory foresees: parties act in ways that maximizes their survival and political power the most, and a strong focus on defense issues would not be the most cost-effective way to reach these preferred ends in the election 2014. It is, even though, interesting to ask if defense issues will ever be high on the agenda in Swedish elections. If so, what kind of development must Sweden and the voters in Sweden experience before this reaches their priorities? Is it so that an imminent threat must be perceived? What role does the media, and how these report of events, play in shaping this perception? If the surveys continue to show high support for an increased significance of the military defense for a continued period, perhaps throughout the next mandate, how will the parties act, and how will the defense policy formation continue? Defense issues differ from subjects of employment, healthcare, elderly care, and economics in terms of proximity to everyday citizens. Defense issues are not in the lives of the majority in the same way as unemployment, sickness, or problems to pay the bills. It may be the proximity to one’s everyday life which play a role in prioritizing issues, and defense issues haven’t had this proximity in Swedish politics to play a decisive role in the elections, at least during the period where this study have found research, since 1979 (SCB, 2011: 60).

The empirics have indicated that there are not only consensus building within the field of defense policy, and that this field also is open for party competition, in line with the findings from Bjereld and Demker (1995) about foreign policy. But it has though been observed, that the culture of consensus has a power of dragging the two biggest parties towards mutual agreements, also used as an argument by especially the Social Democratic politicians, Lövén and Hultqvist,
in their speeches and debate articles. This field can be considered as open for party politics and competition, but it seems to be constraints on how open and wide the political battle can be.

This study has contributed with one perspective on the larger question on how to understand state’s domestic defense policy formation, and a small piece of the puzzle on how to understand international politics. But questions remains. This study has done delimitations which opens up for future studies within the same subject.

**Future studies**

Here has been analyzed three arenas: parliamentarian, media and voter, delimiting itself from taking into account the other three arenas described by Demker and Bjereld (1995): the internal, the implementation, and the international. It is suggested that these also could be taken in account in future studies. It also delimited itself from taking in account the change of environment, except for the acknowledgement of its importance and that it has taken place. The environment is a variable that most likely could be supposed to affect all voters and set the stage for policy change, and vice versa. It is suggested for future studies to examine these variables further and observe the effects on policy formation. It is also not clear in what way these variables interact and how they affect each other. The time period observed in this study opens up for it to be relevant to examine other periods, e.g. the period after the end of the Cold War, when Sweden decreased its spending on defense. One can also look into what happened after the election of 2014. How did the different variables change: environment, opinion, and policy? And how does these interact? There are several questions remaining in the understanding on how to understand states’ behavior. This study have asked some of these questions in this section, but that research is left for the future.
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