The Friendly Neighbor to the East?
A Study on Russian Media’s Attempt at Influencing the Swedish NATO-Debate.

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Abstract

This essay aims to explain the means by which the Russian media and government representatives attempt to influence the Swedish national debate regarding a membership in NATO. Since the Russian invasion of Crimea 2014, this debate has become one of the most important on Swedish political agenda. Through studying a Russian government-owned online newspaper, a pro-Putin online news website, and the interviews with the Russian ambassador to Sweden, different types of messages have become ascertained. With a role theory perspective these can be analyzed and interpreted. The sources continually and repeatedly describe Swedish tradition and history as one defined by neutrality. They also describe a russophobia that in Western country only presents itself in Sweden. Lastly they depict Russia a victim of a western agenda, implying that Swedish fears of Russia are unjustified.

Keywords

Sweden, Russia, NATO, role theory, russophobia, role expectations, neutrality, non-alignment.
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Introduction

In June 8, 2014, Vladimir Putin’s foreign minister Sergei Lavrov asked the journalists of *Dagens Nyheter* and *Svenska Dagbladet* “Vill ni vara med och starta ett tredje världskrig? Antisemitismen startade andra världskriget, russofobin kan starta ett tredje. Finland är ett av de mest russofobiska länderna i Europa, efter Sverige och de baltiska länderna.”¹ The reason that he said this was due to the recent increase of discussions regarding a Swedish membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and what the Russians perceive as negative publicity from Swedish media. Sweden has despite its non-alignment policy approached NATO informally, through affiliation in the organization. The cause of this is the growing hostility that the Russian government has shown recently in the annexation of Crimea, military intervention in western Ukraine, and maybe to some extent intervention in the Syrian civil war. Such aggressive behavior has moved Sweden not to openly join NATO, yet discuss attachment with it.

Sweden is already one of NATO’s most reliable partners; however, due to the reason mentioned above, Sweden has avoided signing any binding contracts. This makes Sweden into the Nordic regions’ great enigma.² Its neighboring countries have found it difficult to understand how Sweden looks at its own role in security complex that the region is. Sweden has since January 2002 participated in the NATO-led UN troops in Afghanistan, International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).³ Sweden remains non-aligned, even if the Swedish policy of neutrality is replaced by a post-neutral position, which among other things means that Sweden is involved in close cooperation with NATO and is an active member of the EU including on issues which involves developing the organization’s capabilities for international crisis management. Sweden is thus example of a state that is militarily non-aligned, but still part of a security community.⁴

The expansion of NATO and the European Union is leaving Russia feeling encircled and threatened. Numerous conflicts and crises, both weaponless and armed, have emerged as a

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¹ Winter, Jan, ”Putins sändebud varnar för tredje världskrig”, *Dagens Nyheter*, 2014-06-08, http://www.dn.se/nyheter/varlden/putins-sandebud-varnar-for-tredje-varldskrig/, accessed 2016-01-03; Eng. “Do you want to be a part of starting a third world war? Anti-Semitism started the Second World War, the russophobia can start a third. Finland is one of the most Russo-phobic countries in Europe, after Sweden and the Baltic countries.”


⁴ Brommesson & Ekengren, p. 121.
result. For example, John J. Mearsheimer blames the West for the Ukrainian crisis, arguing that foreign policy the West is operating is too aggressive and that Russia naturally feels threatened by Western expansionism.\textsuperscript{5} At the same time, the membership in the EU meant that the Swedish traditional politics of neutrality has been left behind. This means that Sweden is more susceptible to armed conflicts or war. This has of course sparked the discussion whether military backup is needed. This would be a very controversial step as it has been the core foreign policy for Sweden since 1814.

The majority of Swedes are still against a membership in NATO, and of course so are the Russians. The main argument to why Sweden should not join is the retaliation of the Russians. Even though Russia is very different from the Soviet Union, some things have been lingered, such as their great power complex, and that they endeavor for no one to be able to dominate over Russia.\textsuperscript{6}

The Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency showed in 2012 that 45\% of the Swedish population is against a NATO-membership while 17\% say yes.\textsuperscript{7} The continuity in Swedish opinions since the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency started these polls in 1994, show that opinion for a NATO-membership has never been higher than 24\%, and against been lower than 41\%.\textsuperscript{8} In Figure 1 below, the graph shows that Swedish sentiments towards membership in NATO has not changed much since 1994. Political parties in Sweden, who of course want to gain votes, are mostly against a membership. The Left Party, Social Democrats, Centre Party, Christian Democrats and Sweden Democrats want Sweden to remain militarily alliance free. The Moderate Party is admittedly for a membership but don’t discuss extensively. The Liberal Party, with Jan Björklund, is the only party that is for a membership.\textsuperscript{9}

\textsuperscript{7} Neretnieks, p. 137.
\textsuperscript{8} Neretnieks, p. 139.
Purpose and Question

The relationship between Sweden and Russia is a subject thoroughly analyzed, and so is Russia’s relationship with NATO. Russia would like neighboring countries in its sphere of influence to stay clear of NATO for security and economic reasons among other things. Its politics, the execution of how Russia dissuades other countries from joining NATO, is an issue that has been studied extensively. The fact that Russia deters countries from joining NATO is nothing new. However, it is of great relevance to study Russian attempts at influencing a national debate, a form of soft power that has not received much scholarly attention. Even though studies may show that Russia clearly does not want Sweden to join NATO, previous studies fail to extensively mention how this is expressed. In order to prevent Swedish public opinion and the opinion of the politicians to further fall into the pro-NATO movement, a wave of appealing to central views that Swedes hold has commenced. Naturally, Russia appeals to Swedish neutrality.

What we can see in today’s Sweden is that the traditional role conceptions of neutrality are as strong as ever among the public yet the political establishment is more open-minded towards role changes. This neutrality is of course something that the Russians wish to continue because it simply means that Sweden will not become a NATO member. The question here is

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10 Neretnieks, p. 129; table can be seen in the appendix.
how Russia is appealing to this neutrality not to change? Apart from military threats or intervention, this alluring from an original belief must be conducted in a number of ways. Therefore, the research question of this essay will be:

*How is Russia promoting a non-alignment narrative in Sweden's debate on NATO-membership through media?*

After the Crimean crisis, Russian “propaganda” or the operationalization of a political narrative that favors Russian interests has emerged. The so-called “war of information” is an area that Swedish authorities are now working to establish competence on.\(^\text{12}\) Since this concept is relatively new, the specific case of Russian propaganda to Sweden has not been studied greatly. One of the purposes of this essay will therefore be to illuminate to extent what has been written in the Russian media in its attempts to sway minds, and to a degree fill in the gap where previous research has not been able to analyze due to the issues’ location in time.

It is also very important to analyze what types of messages the Russian media is trying to convey to Sweden. One of the purposes of this study will therefore be attempting to shed light on what the Russian media are writing regarding Sweden. How they are writing it, what styles of writing are being used, what tones can be found in the texts are all questions that will need answering.

As previously mentioned, the NATO-integration debate is relatively new, in the sense that in Sweden it is now bigger than before. Changes in the political arena has now enabled Sweden to theoretically make the decision to join, and as one can see in Swedish news, articles and other sources of media, it is one of the most important questions on the political agenda. Other situations that Russia has been involved in makes this issue even more relevant. The recent wars and military interventions conducted by Russia suggests that not only Sweden, but other Russian neighbors, have reason to be cautious which makes an alliance with NATO central to secure its sovereignty.\(^\text{13}\)


Previous research

The relationship between Sweden and Russia is a thoroughly studied subject. The politics between Russia and NATO has also been systematically analyzed. However, Sweden and NATO has only these past two decades become a major topic of study. Since Sweden is not, and will most certainly not be in the near future, a formal member of NATO, previous research deals with the theories of what might happen if Sweden does indeed join, and the pros and cons for a membership. Ulf Bjerelde has studied the Swedish public opinion regarding membership, and has come to the conclusion that since 1994, opinion for a NATO-membership has never been especially high, not nearly high enough for politicians to consider applying for a membership. Swedish public opinion seems to be the most important topic when discussing Sweden and NATO. **NATO – för och emot**\(^\text{14}\) by edited by Karlis Neretnieks is an example, and in books with multiple authors include such opinion-based chapters as well such as “Varför är den svenska NATO-opinionen så negativ?”\(^\text{15}\) by Bjerelde, “Den svenska NATO-opinionen: en fråga om säkerhetspolitisk identitet?”\(^\text{16}\) once again by Bjerelde. These are examples of how important Swedish public opinion is when studying the relationship between Sweden and NATO.

The propaganda wave that Sweden is experiencing now is not the only time that this has happened due to NATO. During the Yeltsin-era, the NATO expansion was fought in similar style as it is today. Bo Hugemark commented that the Russian propaganda campaign against NATO enlargement became more and more violent and thus ultimately counterproductive. The Russians tried to scare the ghost of enlargement because it could potentially have led to reactionary forces coming to power in Moscow, which naturally made the West think that Russian democracy was so fragile, which led the West to acquire the former Soviet states into NATO as soon as possible.\(^\text{17}\)

Sweden has, like any other actor in the international arena, multiple roles. The last war that Sweden fought was in 1814, and despite controversies, it has adapted the role of a neutral state, which in Sweden’s case means that its official policy since then has been non-aligned in peacetime and neutrality in war.\(^\text{18}\) Rachel Folz also argues that Sweden has a teacher-role.

\(^{14}\) Neretnieks
\(^{17}\) Neretnieks, p. 126.
\(^{18}\) Harnisch, p. 154.
“coaching not only the Nordic states but the entire world in its concepts of security, welfare, and international solidarity.”\textsuperscript{19} Self-conceived roles can vary greatly, for example in Sweden’s case from “force of good”\textsuperscript{20}, independent foreign aid donor\textsuperscript{21} to “pioneer in environmental issues”\textsuperscript{22}. These of course vary over time. However, this essay will be mainly concerned with Sweden’s role as a neutral state. According to many authors, being neutral is almost synonymous to being Swedish.

Over the years, neutrality became as close to the Swedish heart as the famous smorgasbord, or the traditional celebrations of Midsummer. A good Swede is a neutral swede; politicians and academics chose to challenge the sanctity of neutrality faced harsh social punishments.\textsuperscript{23}

Even though neutrality has been officially renounced, it is still a big part of the Swedish mindset and politics. This can be seen through the statistics showing Swedish attitudes before and after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, revealing that this event only increased the opposition to NATO, meaning that it would take a lot for Swedish neutrality to fully be abandoned.\textsuperscript{24}

One of the reasons that the door to neutrality is still being kept open – if not the only one – is the strong position that neutrality and Swedish non-alignment enjoy in Swedish public opinion. Even though the Cold War is over and Sweden is now a member of the EU, the Swedish public has obstinately refused to heed either the sirens or reproaches of those who want to abolish non-alignment and take Sweden into NATO.\textsuperscript{25}

As mentioned previously, Sweden wants to be identified as a force of good. Joining NATO would mean that not only would be joining a purely military organization, something that the majority of Swedes are against, but would also mean that they would be identified as a part of the “bad, military Atlantic cop” instead of the “good, civilian European cop.”\textsuperscript{26}

\textbf{Theory}

Role theory and national conceptions have emerged into a significant subcategory of foreign policy analysis in the past few decades. Until the 1970’s, role theory had been developed in

\begin{footnotes}
\item[19] Harnisch, p. 159.
\item[20] Harnisch, p. 160.
\item[21] Brommesson, p. 160.
\item[22] Brommesson, p. 192.
\item[23] Harnisch, p. 161.
\item[24] Harnisch, p. 162.
\item[26] Harnisch, p. 160.
\end{footnotes}
other fields of study such as sociology, social psychology and anthropology.\textsuperscript{27} In 1970, Kevin Holsti published a seminal article regarding national conceptions which was groundbreaking in the field of foreign policy analysis.\textsuperscript{28} In this commentary, Holsti analyzed how leaders see their state, meaning what beliefs or identities he holds for the state and how does this affect the country’s actions and interactions with other states in the political arena.\textsuperscript{29} In 1987, Stephen Walker’s \textit{Role Theory and Foreign Policy Analysis}, the author “argued that role theory has descriptive, organizational, and explanatory value for the study of foreign policy.”\textsuperscript{30}

Descriptively, role theory provides a rich vocabulary for categorizing the beliefs, images and identities that individuals and groups develop for themselves and others, as well as the types of processes and structures that govern their deployment in particular situations. Organizationally, role theory allows the analyst to focus on any level of analysis commonly used in the study of foreign policy in addition to bridging those levels through a process-orientation that joins agents and structures. The explanatory value of role theory may derive from its own middle range theories as well as harnessing its concepts to other theoretical approaches.\textsuperscript{31}

Roles are a product of a national socialization process influenced by history, culture and societal characteristics.\textsuperscript{32} When analyzing a country’s foreign policy one has to take many different factors into consideration. In her chapter in \textit{The European Union’s Role in International Politics} edited by Ole Elgström and Michael Smith, Lisbeth Aggestam discusses the importance of including institutional and international role expectations, and the situated actor. Actors are never really making decisions on their own, their surroundings affect them.\textsuperscript{33} “There is no individual apart from the network of systems in which he or she is embedded.”\textsuperscript{34} However, a policy-maker is neither simply just a product of his or her environment. “Roles call for judgement, which involves reasoned belief, self-monitoring of aims and a general shrewdness.”\textsuperscript{35} Aggestam simplifies role theory with the following diagram:

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{role_diagram.png}
\caption{The Role Theory and Foreign Policy Analysis Diagram}
\end{figure}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{27} Thies, Cameron G., “Role Theory and Foreign Policy”, May 2009, \url{http://myweb.uiowa.edu/bhlai/workshop/role.pdf}, accessed 2016-01-03, p. 2.
\item \textsuperscript{28} Elgström, Ole & Smith, Michael (red.), \textit{The European Union’s roles in international politics: concepts and analysis}, Routledge, London, 2006, p. ??.
\item \textsuperscript{29} Thies, p. 2.
\item \textsuperscript{30} Thies, p. 2.
\item \textsuperscript{31} Thies p. 2-3.
\item \textsuperscript{32} Elgström, p. ??.
\item \textsuperscript{33} Elgström, p. ??.
\item \textsuperscript{34} Elgström, p. 15.
\item \textsuperscript{35} Elgström, p. 17.
\end{itemize}
An actor’s role, while being largely formed by internal factors such as ideas or processes, are also decided by external actors’ reactions and expectations. The external role expectations are also decided by actor characteristics and the social context at hand.

Third-party understandings of an actor and its roles form a part of an intersubjective international structure that helps shape the practices of this actor; in a dynamic fashion, it is the recognition of others that shapes the role performance, in turn affecting future recognition.

For example, a leader is not only a leader because he holds the formal position, but also because he is believed by others to hold that necessary characteristics to be one. A role is according to Aggestam a road map that a leader uses in order to make a decision or adopt a policy. She says that:

The actors in foreign policy are thus not simply confined to acting according to the roles prescribed in a script […]. Indeed, they may be actively involved in reconstructing the identities within these structures through their interaction with other international actors… Whilst foreign policy role conceptions are primarily shaped within the broader political cultural of a state, the interaction and elite socialization taking place on the European level may influence and change their perceptions.

There are manners in which an external party tries to influence a country’s perceived role. This mode of roles being ascribed bilaterally or externally as altercasting. Even though this term has been used in international relations since the 1960’s, it is a term that can be used where a role is re-shaped or manipulated by an external actor to another actor. It is a compliance gaining technique and distinguishes itself from other forms of social influence due to its product,
compliance gaining attempts to make the public accept a message that does not necessarily mean an internal attitude change.\textsuperscript{40}

This normative persuasion can occur to a social group where the norms are yet to be determined. It occurs “when actors engage in linguistic interaction to assess the appropriateness of roles in a situation of uncertainty.”\textsuperscript{41} External actors can try to influence another actor to a certain role due to their expectations of that actor. These role expectations can however be very specific but also indistinct.\textsuperscript{42} The role performance of a country, meaning how it behaves in a social context, can be modified or reshaped when confronted with others role expectations.\textsuperscript{43} What has been described so far is positive altercasting where for example an actor would by an external actor be projected as a “good” actor, and would therefore attempt to affirm a role that has been expected of him. In contrast to this is negative altercasting, where an external actor would give the actor a “bad” role, since the actor does not want to be seen as a “bad” actor in international politics, it would change its behavior to better its role.\textsuperscript{44}

What can be concluded in external expectations or altercasting, is that it can be conveyed in several ways. Since a role is partly derived from an actor’s own situation, and the image that actors have of each other, it is to these original criteria that messages must be conveyed to in order for a role to be changed or remain. When a country is experiencing a role conflict, something that “arises when significant others have inconsistencies of their leaders or when leaders’ self-conceptions diverge from the expectations of their surroundings,” it can according to Hall be resolved in three ways.\textsuperscript{45} “An actor can communicate with others so that they alter their expectations, he can reflect on his own position and change his own role conception, and he can temporarily adjust his behavior according to the expectation of others.”\textsuperscript{46} These means


\textsuperscript{41} Harnisch, p. 13.

\textsuperscript{42} Harnisch, p. 76.

\textsuperscript{43} Harnisch, p. 114.

\textsuperscript{44} Turner, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{45} Harnisch, p. 76.

\textsuperscript{46} Harnisch, p. 77.
are going to be discussed in this essay. If a country has a certain expectation of another country, appeals must be made in order for another role to be adapted or remain status quo.

**Method**

The design of this essay will be a case study. One of the goals will be to try to analyze the complexity and specific nature of the case that is the Russian propaganda targeted at Sweden to dissuade from NATO-membership. Case studies are often connected with qualitative methods since these are perceived as suitable since they work well when making an intensive and detailed examination of a case.47

This essay will be studying a representative case since what we are interested in capturing is describing the circumstances and conditions as an everyday or common situation exhibits.48 One of the pros with a case study is that it can be generalized to other broader or more general categories or cases.49 However, only certain aspects of the case can be generalized, or specific circumstances, this will be commented below.

The method that will be used in this essay to answer the research question adequately is content analysis. This means that the technique will involve a search for the underlying themes in the material to be analyzed.50 However, this means that the external validity is very low, and the method can seem arbitrary. Since this method relies so heavily on interpretation, it is important to show how categorizations of themes have been made. Therefore, a coding scheme will have to be done in order for the reliability to increase as well. These categories have been created after reading the sources.

This means that the method in this essay is deductive; based on what is known in a particular field and the theoretical considerations of this area, the researcher derives or deduces one or more hypotheses that will be subjected to empirical analysis.51 Within role expectations from external actors, three categories can be extracted. The expectations from one’s own setting or public opinion, how the actor in question views the limits of his or her liberty of action and what the external actor thinks the actor in question should do. Based on these three groupings, sources can be found. Meaning that for instance when looking at an article from *SputnikNews*,

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48 Bryman, p. 77.
49 Bryman, p. 77.
50 Bryman, p. 505.
and the title is “Sweden Should Refrain from Joining NATO – Parliamentarian” then it is relatively certain that this newspaper is using actors own setting against him. Of course there are articles which can be somewhere in between these categories, but the important part here is that it still is an appeal to Swedish roles, meaning that if an article can fall into one of these categories, it means that the article is appealing to a Swedish role, and can be used to analyze in this essay, which to an extent should to some extent improve the replication possibilities of this study.

The two remaining criteria for the assessment of social science research, reliability and validity, also have to be commented upon. According to Alan Bryman, the necessity of these two criteria in qualitative research is debatable. Researchers such as Robert Yin claims that these are suitable criteria for a case study while academics like Robert Stake asserts that they are irrelevant.\textsuperscript{52} Bryman concludes that most qualitative researchers tend to downplay or ignore the importance of these factors, while those with a quantitative approach give greater weight to these criteria.\textsuperscript{53} However, something that has been given great scholarly attention is the generalizability or the external validity.\textsuperscript{54} It is difficult to prove that one case can be generalized to other cases. In this case, the information and publicity that Russia is directing Sweden’s way is part of a larger propaganda organization that is targeted at Russia’s neighbors. As we will see in the sources section, Russia is spending large sums on informing the countries in their spheres of influence of their version of the story. Since Sweden is important to the security of northern Europe, meaning that a Swedish membership in NATO would dramatically alter the balance of power, Russia’s attempts at influencing Swedish politics in this matter can theoretically be representative of how the country conducts propaganda to other countries such as Finland. So even though the propaganda that Sweden is receiving will not be the same as what Ukraine receives, certain themes such as appeals to peaceful traditions and norms can be seen in other countries as well. These overarching themes is what makes this study generalizable to other cases.

**Source material**
To answer the research question, the essay will focus on media outlets that permits subjective tendencies. As mentioned before, these newspapers or media outlets are government-owned or

\textsuperscript{52} Bryman, p. 76.
\textsuperscript{53} Bryman, p. 76.
\textsuperscript{54} Bryman, p. 76-77.
pro-Putin since what this essay is looking for is why Russia would not want Sweden to join NATO and how it formulates its reasons. Hence, these sources would be following a government policy. These would also therefore be mediators of the Russian role expectation of Sweden.

Swedish media has during the past six months highlighted what they call “war of information.”\(^{55}\) In this type of warfare, the objective or ambition is not only to inform or to produce one’s own message, but also to confuse, distract, divide and demoralize the opponent. According to Dagens Nyheter, these types of campaigns are attempting to influence Swedish society daily.\(^{56}\) The creation of SputnikNews in 2014 was in order to give Russian side of the story. According to Dagens Nyheter:

> För två år sedan skrev han under en lag som förändrade hela det statliga medieinnehavet i Ryssland. Nyhetsbyrån Ria Novosti och radiokanalen Radio Rysslands röst slogs ihop och blev Sputnik News som sedan dess ingår i Rossia Segodnya, även känd som Russia Today. Koncernen har mer än 1 000 anställda och en budget på 60 miljarder rubel, 9 miljarder kronor, de kommande tre åren. […] Uppdraget är tydligt: Sprid rysk politik och världsbild utomlands.\(^{57}\)

According to political commentators and analysts, this newspaper is one of the most obvious examples of the open and ongoing information campaigns in Sweden, with the aim of achieving weakening of Sweden as an international player.\(^{58}\) It is the Russian governments’ propaganda tool; the Russian president Vladimir Putin himself ordered the creation of this newspaper. Its articles are mostly written in its headquarters in Moscow and they are unsigned.

Another such newspaper is Pravda.ru. When writing about this newspaper it is very important to include the “.ru” not to confuse it with the Soviet communist party’s official newspaper. While the newspaper is not government-owned it is pro-Putin.\(^{59}\) It does not publish

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\(^{57}\)Sköld & Carlson, Eng. “Two years ago he [Putin] signed a law that changed the whole state media holding in Russia. The news agency Ria Novosti and the radio station Radio Voice of Russia were merged and became Sputnik news that has been included in Rossia Segodnya, also known as Russia Today. The group has more than 1,000 employees and a budget of 60 billion rubles, 9 billion Swedish kronor, over the next three years. […] The mission is clear: spread Russian politics and its worldview abroad.

\(^{58}\)Sköld & Carlson

articles as often and distinct as SputnikNews yet it will be relevant and interesting to analyze, and maybe, since it is not government-owned, it can provide other types of subjectivity or views regarding Sweden and NATO.

The Russian embassy in Stockholm obviously has a more diplomatic mission, yet when for example Swedish foreign minister Margot Wallström published an article in Dagens Nyheter regarding the Russian annexation of Crimea, the embassy responded to it on their website. The Russian embassy has a mission to further Russian interests in other countries, meaning that it is government opinions regarding Sweden. even though they do not address Sweden and NATO directly, they are writing about common themes that will be discussed in this essay such as anti-Russian sentiments and whose fault the rising tensions really are. The Russian ambassador to Sweden, Viktor Tatarintsev, will also be analyzed. He has been interviewed at a couple of occasions in Swedish newspapers, mainly Dagens Nyheter and Svenska Dagbladet. He is an employee of the Russian state, meaning that he will try to relay the official policy that Russia has towards Sweden, which should be similar to other newspapers.

Traditions and history

One of the most important themes that SputnikNews writes about is the neutral Sweden. In their articles, Sweden is referred to neutral numerously. Even though this is common knowledge and an obvious fact, the Russian newspaper restates this fact a great deal. Not only the fact is stated, but accounts of Swedish neutral history is reiterated, even though it is very brief and overly simplified. In titles, an example of this could be “Neutral Sweden unlikely to Join NATO in Near Future” or “Swedish Neutrality May Be the True Object of Hunt in the Country’s Waters.” This repeating of Sweden as a neutral country can also be seen in the articles themselves of course. The usage of this repeating is to underline and reinforce the message. This is especially clear when, in some of the studied articles, a brief statement regarding Swedish neutrality policy is repeated. In April 22, 2015, the newspaper concluded an article with “Sweden has been neutral since the early 19th century. Stockholm opted not to join NATO in 1949, declaring a security policy of non-alignment.” Using almost the same words, the

62 “Neutral Sweden Unlikely to Join NATO in Near Future”
online newspaper ended another article writing “Sweden has been pursuing a policy of neutrality in armed conflicts since the early 19th century. Stockholm opted not to join NATO in 1949, declaring a security policy aiming for non-alignment.” Sweden is at the moment not pursuing non-alignment, but military non-alignment; if Sweden wants to keep this policy then a “no” to NATO would be as suitable now as it was in 1949 according to the newspaper.

The SputnikNews includes many articles where Swedish politicians themselves say that Sweden will not be joining NATO or should not. It looks sort of as if the newspaper is trying to use Swedes against Swedes. This category includes views from media, politicians and analysts. In one article the newspaper writes about a publishing in Dagens Nyheter written by Linus Hagström and Tom Lundberg. Both are researchers at the Swedish National Defense College, something that the newspaper highlights. In it they write that:

Even though economically and militarily Russia is no match for the Soviet Union of the Cold War period, Sweden’s joining NATO would pose a serious risk to the country’s security.

That’s why we do not think joining NATO would be the right way to go, because the existing security problems will not go anywhere, just as our lingering sense of insecurity. Therefore, we need to avoid quick fixes and learn to live in an unstable world.

It seems the Russian newspaper agrees with the Swedish analysts that NATO would only be a quick solution to a problem and eventually would lead to further conflicts. It is debatable what the last sentence of the quote actually means. However, after looking into the Swedish analysts’ article, it seems that some issues have been either lost in translation or simply the fact of ignoring. The fact that the Russian newspaper can show tendencies of subjectivity can be ensured from this article as the authors in their original commentary in Dagens Nyheter discuss how Russia is insulted due to the international community’s denial of it being a superpower. By joining NATO, Hagström and Lundberg write that we would give the Russians a picture that they are a superpower, that Sweden as a country and Europe has to defend itself against it.

Even though the authors point out that this is one of the smaller reasons for Sweden not to join NATO, this shows that the Russian online newspaper choses what it wants in order

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to reinforce a message. They use excerpts to portray Russia as a victim of international aggression, which will be discussed later in this essay.

Swedish politicians who are opposed to NATO are also used by SputnikNews. In an article dating from April 21, 2015, Olof Lavesson, a Swedish Moderate Party MP, says that “I don’t see it [Russia] as a danger of the Swedish territory, however the situation is escalating and it is quite near us also geographically.”66 Another member of the parliament, from the social democratic party, said that “Sweden should not become a member of NATO, because being free of military alliances is an important part of the country’s defense policy.”67 This quote is also important due to the Russian newspapers’ choice in including an appeal to Swedish traditions.

The Russian newspaper writes repeatedly about the history and tradition of neutrality and non-alignment that the Swedes hold. “Sweden and Finland have become world leaders in terms of quality of life and the economic development due to their policies of non-involvement and military neutrality, pursued over the last two centuries.”68 Here we can see an example of how neutrality has benefited the Swedes, something that they should keep in order to preserve their way of life. Extracts such as the following once again shows how the newspaper considers the tradition of neutrality to be of outmost importance. “While Sweden is only a partner country, and not a member of the military alliance, there are many opposed to the strengthening of Swedish-NATO ties over a fear it will conflict with Sweden’s traditional neutrality.”69 When describing the general public opinion and how it does not want to join NATO, the newspaper uses words such as “abandoning neutrality”70 and how the country has had “a long […] non-aligned stance on defense.”71 The technique of repetition has once again been used in order to reinforce the newspapers’ message regarding the tradition of Sweden. The newspaper has put great effort into making words emotionally charged or have a certain connotation to them.

66 “Swedish Pro-NATO Sentiment Growing, Spurred by Ukraine Crisis”
70 “Neutral Sweden Unlikely to Join NATO in Near Future”
SputnikNews even includes financial reasons for Sweden not to formally allied to NATO. As previously mentioned, Sweden has one of the highest standard of living and it costs to uphold that system. In their article “Svenskt Nato-inträde: vem ska betala?” SputnikNews write about how the standard of living will continue to decline, and to add to that, a NATO membership would be very bad for the economy. They write that it costs a lot to look for Russian submarines and invest in the underdeveloped military. This article is openly directed towards pensioners and students as the newspaper writes that these are not the social classes who should pay for this. This article is not directly linked with Swedish tradition and history, only maybe that Swedes are not used to pay such expenses atop the ones they already have.

Pravda.ru is also restating neutrality as something that has been Sweden’s policy for a long period and is something that the Swedes are simply giving up. Even though this article is from 2011, it still shows relevant topics. Sweden joined the NATO taskforce to bomb Libya despite of its neutrality. The author headlines the article with “Politically neutral Sweden thirsty for war.” The choice of words is in this context showing both subjectivity and relating Sweden to be a warmongering country, and later in the article showing that this is an emerging trait, that Sweden was not an aggressive country. Similar to SputnikNews’ repetition regarding Swedish neutrality traditions, this newspaper has the “for nearly 200 years, Sweden has been a neutral country” set on repeat. Yet the newspaper is questioning this strategy, and writes that this entails increasing cooperation; this would be worse for Russia than Libya.

Pravda.ru portrays the strength of the Swedish army, in a form of flattery. While the country is small, the military is tough. It is stated by the newspaper that the Swedish military-industrial complex is comparable to that of Germany, and that it is the seventh biggest weapons dealer in the world. Despite there being a hidden tone of sarcasm at the army being “25,000 people strong”, they continue asserting that this number can be doubled quickly. Stating the fortitude of the Swedish army, its strengths and its multitude in different weapons and transportation equipment gives the reader an impression that while Russia would undoubtedly be able to conquer Sweden, it would indeed be a pyrrhic victory. Sweden would be a vital

73 “Svenskt Nato-inträde: vem ska betala?”
75 “Politically neutral Sweden thirsty for war”
76 “Politically neutral Sweden thirsty for war”
77 “Politically neutral Sweden thirsty for war”
acquisition to NATO. Even though it was Sweden’s choice to join the NATO-led bombing of Libya, it was the US who lured Sweden to the organization in order to enclose Russia. “The Alliance is a well-honed, sophisticated American system designed to encircle Russia,” according to interviewee Leonid Ivashov.78

The Swedish policy of neutrality is something that has been and is highly respected by the Russian government, according to the ambassador. He says that this policy is basically a guarantee for Swedish peace, as it has always been a strategy that the Russians have valued in high regards. It is also interesting that Tatarintsev says that it is a policy which, through Russian eyes, has made Sweden looks strong. He says that this policy is one which the Russian management desires to see continued.79 Comparable to the other sources studied in this essay, the ambassador does also repeat the fact that Sweden is an alliance-free country. Therefore, it is especially safe in this case to say that the sources other than the ambassador, are following an official Russian way of conveying the message.

Russophobia

According to the three sources, Sweden, or at least Swedish media, is consistently depicting Russia as a bad force and an enemy. The first sentence in the introduction, although exaggerated, shows how a Russian official statesman’s opinion regarding the Swedish media could be like. Pravda.ru focuses a great deal on the Swedish submarine hunts and how that is tied with the supposed increasing desire to join NATO. The same mocking tone in the articles as in the texts written by SputnikNews can be found, maybe even clearer. “Sweden continues to suffer from Russian submarine syndrome” heads the article on 20 October, 2014.80 The newspapers depict this as both something that can have been conjured by Swedish officials and the result of russophobia:

Swedish media, due to a navigation error, entered Swedish territorial waters and ran aground near the main base of the Swedish Navy, Karlskrona. Since then, prior to adopting the defense budget, a “Russian submarine” always appears in the Swedish waters. Later,

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78 “Politically neutral Sweden thirsty for war”
though, it turns out that the submarine was actually a shoal of fish, seals, or abandoned fishing nets.81

The Russian newspaper writes that even though Swedish military officials are being careful in accusing parties, Pravda.ru include what Svenska Dagbladet has written about the submarine, that its radio receiver was located in Kaliningrad, Russia. According to the Russian newspaper, experts are confident that this information is unconvincing, and that the “Sweden Armed Forces spent $2.7 million on the search operation that returned zero result.”8283 The newspaper does not tie this together with NATO membership discussion, but this overarching theme of fear of the Russians is clearly connected to it.

After the Russians air exercises in April 2013, the Swedish fears were almost palpable. According to Ritt Goldstein, who wrote in Pravda.ru, the newspapers were filled with headlines which gave the impression that Sweden was under attack. He goes onto stating that this fear was not rooted in the people, but in the government, created in order to push Sweden towards a NATO membership and fund defense spending. According to a respected commentator, Göran Greider who was not “smitten with ‘bear fever,’” said that this fear was indeed needed for the government to make change, because having a pro-NATO stance would be a political suicide.8485 Once again, this fear seems to be ridiculed by the author of the article, this is especially prevalent in this quote:

Notably, Sweden is in fact being regularly invaded by ‘the Russians'...and the 'invaders' go to Stockholm's very upscale NK department store to shop, and flock en masse to the Junibacken amusement park, for some reason having a longstanding fondness for its exhibition of Astrid Lindgren's 'Carlsson på taket' (Carlsson on the roof) character. Frankly, it's my understanding that quite a few Swedes would sorely miss these folks if they stopped 'invading', and I won't even mention the Russian oil Sweden has come to depend on.86

The Swedes should according to this writer have good relations with Russia, due to the tourism that Sweden is experiencing due to the growing number of Russians visiting, the economic dependency that it has towards Russia. Sweden should not be alarmed when Russia have announced their exercises beforehand and the sources of Russian attacks.87

81 “Sweden continues to suffer from Russian submarine syndrome”
82 “Sweden continues to suffer from Russian submarine syndrome”
85 “Neutral Sweden Unlikely to Join NATO in Near Future”
86 “Sweden, Russia, Nato, and the theatre of military-industrial complex?”
87 “Sweden, Russia, Nato, and the theatre of military-industrial complex?”
The Russian ambassador has been in Sweden for over 15 years now, and has noticed a growing hate or fear of the Russians. The same reason for the worsening of the relations between the countries, that is to say expansion of NATO, has caused tensions in the Baltic sea region, according to the ambassador. The intensification of the Russian presence in the region is simply an answer to the growing NATO activities. He asks the rhetorical question to the interviewer at Dagens Nyheter, “Vad skulle din reaktion bli om fienden kom fram till din port?” Russia’s official policy on how to answer why its military activity is growing is to portray oneself as a victim, and not the enemy. Once again, the US and NATO are the regions’ real enemy. Russia spends 13 times less on the military than the US, which means that the US is obviously stronger out of the two. Thus, the US should be counted as a bigger threat than Russia. When asked whether Russia is overstepping and breaking international law when annexing part of another country against its will, the ambassador replies that the US has done the same in Iraq, Libya and Yugoslavia. Likewise, NATO is conducting flyovers in the Baltic region four times Russia’s amount. With this logic NATO is therefore more aggressive than Russia. Using statistics, the representative can portray a somewhat convincing exposé of what is happening according to them.

The established fear that the Swedes hold for the Russians is a factor that will affect relations negatively between the two in the present and in the future and Russia is not to blame for these escalations. In spite of the West treating Russia like a child, and regardless of the aggressive propaganda campaign that the Swedish media is waging, Russia has given guarantees that Sweden is not on its military radar, yet undesirable and harmful attitudes have developed. In these specific interviews, this phobia is not expressed in long term causes, just that this has increased as a result of the Russian activities in Ukraine. A Russian official, Sergey Markov, said in an interview that Sweden is one of the most russophobic countries in the world. Even though this is an extreme comment, there is some truth to it, it is only in Sweden that this type of a discussion about the Russian threat occurs. Markov was even so bold as to

88 “”Man kan inte behandla oss som småbarn””, Eng. “What would your reaction be if the enemy came to your door?”
90 Winiarski, ”Rysslands ambassadör: Vi har gjort allt för att starta en dialog”
91 “”Man kan inte behandla oss som småbarn””
92 “”Man kan inte behandla oss som småbarn””
93 Neretnieks, p. 174-5.
say that this fear would cause World War III.⁹⁴ According to the ambassador, the Swedish public opinion in regards to Russia, is strongly formed or altered by the mass media. In it, he is concerned with how “Russia is often described as an attacker who thinks only of waging war and threatening others.”⁹⁵ Once again Russia is portrayed as a victim. This is also noticeable when Tatarintsev remarks that he and his colleagues are met with a “frosty attitude” by the Swedish government.⁹⁶

Ryssland är ingen fiende till Sverige, utan en god och pålitlig granne för all framtid. Jag vill säga en sak till: trots att Sverige har stängt kanaler för offentlig politisk dialog på statsrådsnivå, förklarar jag med fullt ansvaret att Ryssland förblir öppet för dialog med Sverige på alla nivåer, inklusive den högsta.⁹⁷

This last part of the quote brings us to the next part of the essay, discussing the technique of being a victim, but also a friend to Sweden.

Russia – the victimized friend

Russia is a victim of the expansionistic policies of the West and are therefore not the aggressors. This is a very important reason according to SputnikNews for Sweden not to join. The West is perceiving Russia to have an aggressive foreign policy, but according to for example Linus Hagström and Tom Lundborg, this is due to NATO's expansionism.⁹⁸ When discussing Russian aggression, the newspaper seems to be surprised that Swedish politicians and military leaders have it as a number one priority. For example, the title of the newspapers’ article on 12 November, 2015, “NATO to expand Nordic presence to counter Russian ‘aggression.’”⁹⁹ The last word in the title is marking it to be of comical or sarcastic character. This hint of sarcasm can also be found in numerous cases, such as when the newspaper discusses the financial costs of joining NATO. “Meanwhile, the state spends huge sums to defend against “Sweden’s biggest enemy” – Russia.”¹⁰⁰ Since Russia is not the real enemy of Sweden, its involvement in NATO

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⁹⁵ Rysslands ambassadör: Vi har gjort allt för att starta en dialog”.

⁹⁶ Rysslands ambassadör: Vi har gjort allt för att starta en dialog”

⁹⁷ Tatarintsev, Viktor, ”Debatt: Ryssland är ingen fiende”, Dagens Industri, 2015-04-09, [http://www.di.se/artiklar/2015/4/8/debatt-ryssland-ar-ingen-fiende/](http://www.di.se/artiklar/2015/4/8/debatt-ryssland-ar-ingen-fiende/), accessed 2015-18-12., Eng. ”Russia is no enemy to Sweden, but will remain good and reliable neighbor for all eternity. I want to say one thing: despite the fact that Sweden has closed the channels for public policy dialogue at the level of the Government, I declare with full responsibility that Russia remains open to dialogue with Sweden at all levels, including the highest.”

⁹⁸ “Joining NATO Threatens Sweden’s Security – Media”


¹⁰⁰ ”Svenskt Nato-inträde: vem ska betala?”
is redundant. The newspaper does not point to another country as their biggest adversary, yet to facts regarding the country who has intruded on Swedish territory the most – the US.\textsuperscript{101}

While Sweden's armed forces have accused Russia of acting aggressively in Europe, the release of the official statistics have shown that in fact the US, other NATO nations and allies of Sweden are collectively responsible for the overwhelming majority of territory breaches.\textsuperscript{102}

Russia is in this case not the enemy, but NATO. “Russia has consistently denied claims that it is acting aggressively in European affairs and has pointed to the build-up of NATO forces in Eastern Europe as a factor contributing to tension across the continent.”\textsuperscript{103} Since Sweden’s main objective with a NATO-membership is defending itself from Russia, and now that the newspaper has made clear that Russia is not the enemy, Sweden can continue with its tradition of neutrality. In fact, Russia is a source of stability for the region. A widely known Swedish anti-NATO activist, Sven Hirdman, is quoted in bold by the newspaper saying that Sweden and Russia have lived in peace for over 200 years, so why can’t that continue?\textsuperscript{104} In other controversies, Sweden has portrayed a very negative picture of Russia. For example, in the submarine crisis in Stockholm October 2014, Sweden conducted a “witch hunt”.\textsuperscript{105} Even if these words are not written by the authors of the newspaper themselves, it is their choice to include such texts. An obvious example of this is the picture that the newspaper published in 21 may, 2015, and can be seen in the appendix.

The newspaper does the opposite as well, using these own politicians to describe how they feel Russia is the threat and then proving how this is absurd. Through the instrument of ridiculing the Swedish army, the defense exercises that the Swedes, often together with other Nordic countries, hold are ridiculous and unnecessary.

Having just breathed a sigh of relief after finding a hopefully efficient way of defending itself from Russian submarines with the help of “gay propaganda”, Sweden is on alert once again: what if Russia invades by air? Prime Minister Löfven, however, reassures that the country has a plan of action should it face “possible Russian aggression.”\textsuperscript{106}


\textsuperscript{102} “US Tops List of Swedish Foreign Intrusions Over the Past Five Years”

\textsuperscript{103} “Social Media Wars: Sweden Considering Reaching Out to NATO Propaganda Unit”


\textsuperscript{105} “Swedish Neutrality May Be the True Object of Hunt in the Country’s Waters”

In this excerpt we can find two themes that this Russian newspaper uses in attempting to sway Swedish minds and possibly others as well. According to the SputnikNews, the Swedish defense is a joke and uses senseless and simply stupid tactics in case of war. In a picture further down in the article, there is a picture titled “‘Singing Sailor’ uses anti-homophobia Morse code to deter Russian military.” With an army like this, how will Sweden be able to defend itself in an attack by the Russians? Not only is the newspaper mocking Swedish military, but also its stance in homosexuality questions. It is possible that the reader could be intimidated by such mockery, yet it is more plausible that this mockery means that Russia has no need to invade Sweden due to its ridiculous army stances in important social questions – Sweden poses no threat. Also, SputnikNews and Pravda.ru often writes that it is the military, not Sweden itself, that is looking for Russian submarines, that they are creating a negative picture of Russia.

NATO is portrayed as a negative organization by the newspaper, a union that focuses on illusions. During the European migrant crisis of 2015, the newspaper reported that NATO, which has plenty of resources, is playing war games amid all the chaos. Instead of providing humanitarian aid and securing the European Union’s borders. Instead, it is practicing prior to the Russian threat. NATO and the US are closely linked, and according to the newspaper, the US tramples on international law. How it does that is not specified, just that great world powers often do. In order for Sweden not to do that, it has to reject NATO.

Analysis

In the sources studied in this essay, three main themes can be extracted, Swedish fear of Russia, Sweden is traditionally neutral, and Russia being a victim and a friend. All of the three sources were following an agenda that the Russian government had authorized since the first newspaper is government-owned, the second is pro-Putin and the third is a representative of the Russian government. These are messages that the Russian government wants to convey to Sweden.

According to the sources studied in this essay, Sweden in NATO is not only a security problem. Trying to persuade through merely security arguments is not a sufficient method as the encirclement of Russia does not concern Sweden in the same way it concerns Russia. Of

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107 “All Over Again: Sweden Claims It Has Action Plan Against ‘Russian Threat’”
108 “Nato "leker krig" mot Ryssland medan EU faller sönder”, SputnikNews, 2015-11-06,
109 “Sweden Shouldn’t Be Scared to Say ‘No’ to NATO Membership”, SputnikNews, 2015-05-29,
course, it does affect Sweden when Russia feels too encircled and will retaliate. Yet, in order to adequately motivate Sweden not to join, arguments have to appeal to something that is at the core of all Swedish foreign policy, specifically military non-alignment. If Sweden were to join NATO, that would mean an abandonment of its traditions, a fear of the Russians, and the relationship between the countries would have a set-back to that of cold war proportions. This projection of one’s own ideas and objectives on to others is the main objective of course of such propaganda apparatuses, such altercasting.

There are many arguments why Sweden should not join NATO according to the Russian propaganda analyzed in this essay; however, the strongest points made by all of these sources are not really for security reasons but how neutrality is synonymous to being Swedish. Through numerous techniques and appealing to specific traditional and historical Swedish roles, Russia desires to keep Sweden militarily non-aligned. Through methods other than sheer threats, Russia seeks to remind continually and regularly of the reasons Sweden was neutral and what positive outcomes this has led to.

All of the sources studied have used the technique of repetition to reinforce their message, and sending a “don’t forget you’re neutral” type of expectations. The use of repetition serves as a reminder of history and why such measures were taken, meaning why Sweden in 1949 declined a NATO-membership. The Russian sources are clear that non-alignment was followed in the aftermath of World War II and if Sweden wants to continue such a pursuit then it must decline NATO. Through the use of repetition, the Russians reiterate the importance of non-alignment, reinforcing their message. It also promotes the acceptance of an idea, as when retelling and accentuating one idea, other ideas are subordinated. This is a technique used in many other areas where messages need to be conveyed such as speechwriting. This is also in a way reminding Sweden of their own international role, Sweden has been neutral for nearly two centuries and have an established role in the international arena.

The sources are also very comfortable in using words such as “neutrality” and “non-aligned” and adding a positive connotation, it is connected with the good things that Sweden has been able to accomplish, and according to the sources, accomplishments are thanks to Swedish traditions. When the Russian newspaper writes about the high living standard Sweden is able to maintain, it connects it directly to neutrality. This is a message to the people, that if they want to continue living satisfyingly then a certain policy has to be implemented. In the same way, bad connotations are used as well. When describing leaving the policy of non-alignment the sources use words such as “abandoning” and Sweden as “war-thirsty.” This has
a subconscious effect on the reader, with this meaning and of course suggests that non-alignment is positive and military involvement negative. These are the basic premises that the Russian propaganda apparatus works from.

Another technique is using the opinions of Swedish politicians and experts to show that Swedes themselves do not want to be a formal part of NATO. These analysts have clearly said the security issues that Sweden has will not go away due to NATO. They have also stated that the relationship between Sweden and Russia has been relatively peaceful for these two centuries. This is connected to one of the main themes that can be extracted from the different texts, Russia is innocent. One the main reasons for Sweden to join is due to Russia, if this so-called enemy is proven to be peaceful, then there is no purpose to join an intergovernmental military alliance. If the enemy is not an enemy but a friend, the motivation is even further lessened. Thus Sweden can focus on remaining a non-aligned country that continues to prosper. The sources are even making fun of the idea of a Russian invasion. This can be seen through the submarine articles, where the Swedish army is ridiculed, as well as the reasons for Russian aggression.

The issue of who is actually threatening Sweden ties in with the fear that Sweden has of Russia. Since Russia is a victim of an American and European expansionistic agenda in NATO, Swedish fears are founded on nothing, and should therefore continue being non-aligned. This is very central according to all of the three sources, NATO is expanding to contain Russian hostility, yet these worries of Russian aggression are founded on the Ukraine crisis. In each of the sources analyzed, when discussing Swedish and NATO fears, the interviewee or author of the article defends what has happened in Ukraine with the justification of annexing Crimea and attempting to show that this was a necessary act of violence. Even if the world is not convinced by what Russia has done in Ukraine, the sources asks "what has USA done in other regions of the world if not the same thing?" One of the main issues that Russia is fighting today is its fight for the world power status it had during the Soviet Union, while also keeping its policies justified to its people and to the outside world.110 When Russia tries to justify what is happening in Ukraine, it tries to pacify its neighbors as well. Once again, when this happens, Russia wants

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to appear a friend and therefore Sweden, and other neighbors, do not have to join NATO. Not only does Sweden not have to fear Russia, but it needs it for the well-being of its country, as shown in the part where Russian tourism and oil are imperative. In order for Sweden not to join NATO it must feel that its eastern neighbor is a morally virtuous country, and this is one of the ways the Russian propaganda apparatus is endeavoring.

With portraying yourself as a victim and friend, comes depicting an enemy as well. In the sources analyzed the NATO is referred to as “a well-honed, sophisticated American system designed to encircle Russia.” The sources try to portray an image of the US and NATO as being a source of evil, that they are trying to lure Sweden into joining their alliance and portray Russia as a common enemy. By promoting such ideas, Russia does not necessarily try to agitate Sweden into conflict with the West, but into persuading that the West is not necessarily well-intentioned and benevolent in all its actions.

When all this is put together, it is clear that Russia has a certain role expectation of Sweden. First and foremost is the role of being neutral or non-aligned. In all of their arguments against a NATO-membership, there is an underlying message that Swedish neutrality has due to many reasons such as it has actually been to a certain extent respected in times of war, and due to its longevity, that it has grown into a Swedish role that can’t simply be swept aside. Neither Swedish politicians, analysts nor the Swedish public opinion want the country to become a country involved in military conflicts or war, according to the sources.

The mixture between the fact that Sweden does not have a strong military army to threaten anyone, and that Russia does not have an agenda regarding an invasion of Sweden means that Sweden’s role as a non-aligned country can continue. There are much more to the Russian arguments than realist security issues. According to Holsti, role conceptions are based on history, culture, norms and values, needs and interests. Through the studied sources, it can be concluded that Russia is trying to appeal to all these criteria, and are therefore applying to its role as a non-aligned country. Repeating how Sweden has been neutral for over 200 years and how it said “no” to NATO in 1949 is speaking to its history. It is abundantly clear how the sources make norms and values a central part of the argument. Not only is the tradition of neutrality historical, but also upheld by central views and norms within the Swedish society. Even though why this is is not explained extensively, only that Sweden have had this policy for nearly 200 years. It is political suicide to pursue military aligned politics due to norms and how

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111 Harnisch, p. 99.
being neutral is the same as being Swedish, an appeal to identity. Sweden needs Russia, not only because of financial claims but also as a security provider as mentioned by *SputnikNews*. Last but not least, there are financial and security interests that have been made abundantly clear by all three sources.

**Conclusion**

The ongoing transformation of a 200-year-old policy that Sweden is witnessing will of course be controversial. It is to these traditions and norms that the Russian state-owned media apparatus is pleading to in its attempt to change the public opinions’ minds. This appeal can best be understood through analyzing with tools used in foreign policy analysis such as altercasting and external role expectations. As mentioned in the theory section, a state cannot act entirely on its own, it must have approval of another state. The recognition of other states molds the role performance of a state, meaning what a state actually does. By using role expectations on the media that are used by the Russian propaganda apparatus, we can see three specific categories that have shaped the messages that Russia want to convey to Sweden.

The first category analyzed was the appeal to Swedish tradition and history. Through analyzing articles that dealt with this part of Swedish norms, it is clear that Russian media apply numerous techniques to justify why this policy was beneficial for Sweden and its vicinity. Being neutral is the same as being Swedish.

The second category looked at was fear that Swedes have against the Russians and how this is not based on anything. The unfair treatment that Russia is experiencing at the hand of the Swedish media is presenting subliminal problems in the form of a growing russophobia that shapes Swedish politics.

Through studying the victimization of Russia by NATO, the tensions that have risen have been justified, at least according to the sources. This is of course connected to the previous category, the fear that Swedes hold is partly due to the hostilities that have erupted, and if these hostilities actually are a form of defending itself from an immoral organization, then the Swedes should not be afraid of the Russians but NATO. In fact, one of the reasons that Sweden is doing so well is its economic ties and trade with Russia, if we were to believe the sources.

It is clear that these sources are not only as *SputnikNews* said, trying to give their side of the story, but conveying messages to countries in their vicinity not to join NATO. Through
appealing to Swedish traditions and history, to fears based on untruths and through justifying their own actions in the international security arena, Russia attempts to influence the Swedish NATO-membership debate into what it previously was, against a formal attachment to a military alliance.
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Appendix

Figure 3. Rysskräck på Gotland går över gränsen. Taken from http://se.sputniknews.com/karikatyrer/20150521/223943.html

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</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4. Swedish public opinion regarding membership in NATO. Taken from *NATO – för och emot* page 139