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RESEARCH ARTICLE



Willingness to defend and foreign policy in Sweden and Finland from the early Cold War period to the 2010s

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Introduction

The way a state acts in its foreign policy can be connected to the capabilities or other forms of strength that a government has at its disposal to implement a particular form of foreign policy. One such capability or source of strength, especially in countries relying on conscription-based defence, is the citizens within the country. When in use, conscription enables the mass recruitment of manpower for military purposes and can also have different societal functions related to socialization, national identity, and societal values. It is also a politically significant institution that highlights the importance of citizens in national security policy.¹ However, conscription and the idea of relations between citizens and defence in general raise more pivotal questions about the formation of such capability, also at the level of perceptions and opinions. In many Western countries, the need for a mass army has declined since the end of the Cold War, and it remains to be seen if the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 changes the situation. For some countries, citizen-related questions of capability continue to remain in a more fundamental position, and this article provides one view on the foreign policy history of such countries.

We take as a premise that if the citizens of the state are a defence-related capability in the exercise of foreign policy, their role would be present in political decision-making and in the language utilized to describe the national principles of foreign policy. In this article, we will offer an argument which, in particular in a small state's foreign policy discourses and in references made by political elites to citizens' willingness to defend the country, can be interpreted as a message supporting the country's foreign and defence policy in different historical circumstances, thus utilizing a form of discourse to amplify the message the defence capability is trying to convey with regard to foreign policy. As such, we place foreign policies in domestic historical contexts and explore ideas towards a key supporting element in foreign policy, thus approaching foreign policy from the perspective of domestic political discourse. Our argument on the possibilities of a small state pursuing such foreign policy relates to our research design in which we focus on two small

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states in the Northern European context and provide a view on a changing historical and defence-related context.

In this article, we study how citizens and their opinion were utilized as a resource that supported the exercise of foreign and defence policy in the Swedish and Finnish context from the early Cold War period until the 2010s. Our premise is that in those countries citizens constituted a form of capability because (i) they were constitutionally obligated to defend their country and (ii) their supportive opinion could be used in political argumentation to strengthen foreign and defence policies. Based on our empirical analysis of political documents, we illustrate how public perceptions regarding defence and especially people's willingness to defend were utilized in foreign policy-related discourses in Sweden and Finland to emphasize the credibility of national defence and non-aligned foreign policies.

The period of the early Cold War until the 2010s is an era in which Sweden and Finland remained at peace, utilized neutral or non-aligned foreign policies and emphasized credible national defence. In both countries, the people's attitude towards defence has been and continues to be expressed through the use of a particular conceptualization indicating people's willingness to defend the country (*försvarsvilja* in Swedish and *maanpuolustustahto* in Finnish). In the Finnish case, in particular, willingness to defend the country is understood as a form of public opinion that constitutes one fundamental basis of foreign and defence policy.

As our primary sources, we analysed political debates that have taken place in national legislatures from the early 1950s until the end of the 2010s. National legislatures, i.e. parliaments, are the very institutions that are expected to scrutinize the executive branch and echo the voice of the electorate in a democratic system. We identified the source material by searching for digitized documents and debates featuring references to willingness to defend. We then conducted a qualitative analysis of sources to identify topics associated with foreign and defence policy, such as comments on why it is important to maintain defence-related attitudes for certain reasons of foreign policy. Documents utilized in this paper can be seen as key documents of defence and foreign policy since they include defence decisions in the Swedish context and the government's foreign and defence policy reports in the Finnish context, as well as verbatim reports of parliamentary debates.

We employed critical and contextual reading of sources produced and/or handled by the Swedish and Finnish legislatures, the *Riksdag* in Sweden and *eduskunta* in Finland.² We emphasized contextualization in our analysis to place discourses in their political and contemporary contexts and to analyse why politicians invoked particular ideas and arguments. We followed the lines of language-oriented study of political history, where context-situated analysis of political debates and language has proven to be a relevant way to study and reflect contemporary political thought and to shed light in particular on the meanings attached to concepts and how concepts have been used in the context of ongoing discourses.³ Legislatures, in general, may not traditionally be at the centre of foreign policy decision-making. However, the documents legislatures often produce, i.e. verbatim reports of debates, memoranda and other documents, do offer a forum to explore how political elites view and thus reflect foreign policy and its foundations in different historical contexts. The public political debate held in legislatures should also be considered important in terms of legitimizing policies. It has the function of informing,

and indeed even socializing the public to support policies adopted by the political elites. It has been suggested that, as a whole, national legislatures act as nexuses of the political thought of contemporaries – and as forums in which particular concepts such as willingness to defend can be utilized.⁴

With the analysis of two culturally closely linked countries, we can explore similarities and differences between the two national contexts. Our analysis sheds light on the otherwise overlooked side of the foreign policy of two Nordic countries that have tried to stand aside from the great power confrontation during the time of the initially polarized and subsequently changing security environment of the Baltic Sea.

Willingness to defend, public opinion and foreign policy

A small state faces a fundamental theoretical and practical problem: it does not enjoy military or other capabilities similar to those of larger states and therefore it needs to find other measures to support its position in international relations.⁵ Therefore, identifying potential sources of strength may lead to efforts to utilize such sources to support defence and foreign policy.

In their foreign policy, Sweden and Finland were committed to neutrality or to being acknowledged as neutral during the Cold War and they moved into the realm of military non-alignment during the post-Cold War years. The effort to strengthen defence policy focused on maintaining sizable armed forces with some national differences. We acknowledge the fact that conscription is often selective and does not apply to every citizen, not even to every adult citizen, and thus it does not constitute a straightforward relationship between a citizen and the state. However, in terms of preparing for defence in Sweden and Finland, conscription as an institution that applies to specific groups within society has been in a pivotal position in both countries. Conscription helps to connect citizens to defence as a theoretical idea, but it is often also a result of practical necessity and has also symbolic significance; in addition, it can be linked to the constitutional setting of the country in question.⁶ From the point of view of the state's political leadership, its foreign policy would benefit from knowing that the people would also feel attached to defence in terms of their opinion and thus support the means to organize defence, which would then constitute a mental, or rather opinion-based or even attitude-based source of support for foreign policy. This theme relates to the role of public opinion or deeper attitudes towards foreign policy. Outside the typical context of the electoral cycle in a democratic system, willingness to defend can be utilized as both an analytical and descriptive concept to understand this theme, and it has conceptual importance in both national contexts explored in this article. For instance, in Finland, the high state of willingness to defend is listed as a key cornerstone of national defence. The phenomenon has importance also in the Swedish context where the idea of psychological defence has formed a part of defence policy since the Second World War.⁷

From the perspective of political history, issues related to public opinion and its impact provide relevant insights for understanding policy-related contemporary debates as well as issues perceived by contemporaries as important during debates that involved ideas on linkages between foreign and defence policies.

The role of public opinion has been utilized to explain foreign policy decision-making and its history in multiple studies that have focused either explicitly on the impact of

public opinion on foreign policy or have discussed the impact of public opinion as part of a wider approach. The theme has been present, especially in the study of international relations, and the connections between defence policy and public opinion have also long been a part of a study of history. There are available both empirical studies about the role of public opinion in decision-making and attempts to explore public opinion-related cultural or identity-related factors behind state behaviour.⁸ The scholarly attention given to the role of public opinion in foreign policy involves also Swedish and Finnish cases in a certain respect, but there is room for new studies concerned with the topic.⁹

Willingness to defend can be interpreted as a form of public opinion, i.e. the public opinion towards a particular aspect of defence. At the same time, it can connect to deeper ideas in society and the role of the people in particular. The idea and even aim that the people, or the citizens, would express willingness to defend is both culture-bound and a more universal phenomenon and at least partly explained by a sense of national identity in specific national contexts.¹⁰ Furthermore, in Finland, there have been long-term traditions of linking claims of resource thinking and willingness to defend together, underlying the interest to supplement material defence capability with more opinion-based measures.¹¹ As an idea, a sense of willingness to defend among the people can be explained in terms of the attachment of individuals to particular value orientations as has taken place in Finland.¹² Values interact with core societal institutions and constitute something worth defending or even promoting abroad. Thus, the value-related and even moral aspects of a country's foreign policy can have particular legitimizing power in politics.¹³

We assume that an analysis of political debates enables the study of how contemporaries have expressed, conceptualized and even shaped the core values in decision-making. Political debates particularly on parliamentary forums reflect and also shape the sentiments, values and ideas of the broader electorate and can act as a nexus of different discourses taking place in society, especially when that debate takes place in the national legislature. This further underlines the need to pay more attention to the discursive process that shapes decision-making, also in the field of foreign and defence policies.¹⁴

The exercise of foreign policy tends to be an executive-oriented matter, especially in Sweden and Finland where it has been parliament's role to provide consensus alongside scrutiny. Especially in Finland the mere opportunity for parliament and its Foreign Affairs Committee to actually engage with and control foreign policy issues was difficult to achieve until the 1980s.¹⁵ However, parliamentary debates that contain comments on foreign policy issues bring out aspects and arguments that are considered important to raise in the context of defence or foreign policy, especially when the budget is concerned. Analysing how contemporaries used concepts and arguments when debating issues also brings out the cultural characteristics of foreign and defence politics, especially if more than one country is included in the analysis.¹⁶ References to public opinion can be utilized as elements in political debate in which competing values, ideas, and conceptions are debated.¹⁷ In the parliamentary political debate on defence speakers of the political elites reflect public attitudes, for example, as a source of legitimacy,¹⁸ and from the point of view of willingness to defend, collective opinion or attitudes matter.

In both Sweden and Finland, the people have been a traditional part of debates on defence and conscription has been in place for over a century. For this research, the Cold War period offers a useful starting point for the exploration of the stance of the

population on defence, as both countries sought to cultivate their statuses as neutral countries.¹⁹ Historian Johanna Rainio-Niemi has shown how the need to strengthen democratic society was part of the effort of small European non-aligned countries during the Cold War to signal a Western-oriented posture to the United States, signifying a break from the past, and the willingness to defend played a role in the process.²⁰ But to what extent and how it transformed since the 1970s remains a mystery.

The results of such historical exploration should be useful. Indeed, in the study of the Nordic countries' foreign policy behaviour, domestic society and foreign policy can be treated as being inextricably linked.²¹ As Agius and Devine argue, norms, values and history have provided insights into the foreign and security policies of neutral states.²² In the Nordic context in particular, during the studied period, the state of society, especially its key values, has been traditionally seen by many contemporaries in both Sweden and Finland as vital for the country's success, including policies to underline security as a society-wide effort.²³

Empirical case: Sweden. Does foreign policy require solidarity or technology?

The Swedish history of utilizing willingness to defend in parliamentary discourse demonstrates how cross-party consensus on defence policy has been considered a source of strength for foreign policy decision-making. The Swedish context was relevant to the Finnish context because Finland adapted ideas from the Swedish model to conceptualize and measure people's willingness to defend their country in the early 1960s. Historian Johanna Rainio-Niemi has shown that the Finnish foreign policy of neutrality in the early Cold War period led to an interest in people's attitudes and their relationship to defence, and this was influenced by two issues: (i) the state of the domestic public opinion and political decision-making regarding defence and (ii) Swiss and Swedish examples of how these two countries started to draw attention to psychological defence and thus to people's attitudes faced with the prospect of total war against the entire society.²⁴ Sweden thus served as a model for the Finnish early phase, although in both countries the subsequent developments diverged somewhat.

Sweden embarked on the Cold War with long traditions of neutral foreign policy and an existing consensus about the importance of defence.²⁵ In Sweden, opinion surveys conducted by a state institution have been utilized to study the public's attitudes to various issues to detect possible differences in opinion between the state's possible view and public perceptions. For instance, the study of popular attitudes towards defence, e.g. willingness to defend, is carried out by a state agency²⁶ to illustrate public opinion on specific foreign and defence policy-related themes. In the 1990s context, such research methodology was considered to facilitate the understanding of a wide range of aspects from solidarity and trust between individuals, within society and its institutions to security policy and changing perceptions of threats.²⁷

The tradition of studying such attitudes and thus of the state of public opinion already began in Sweden during the Second World War.²⁸ In 1996 in Sweden, the former director of the state body tasked with leading efforts related to psychological defence, Björn Körlof, defined willingness to defend, *försvarsvilja*, by underlining the individual support for and participation in total defence, *totalförsvar*. In addition to the concept of

försvarsvilja, as a related concept, the attitude to resist or resistance spirit (*motståndssanda*) refers to both group attitude and the ability to resist using weapons in unity. In this definition, willingness to defend acts as one element of *motståndssanda* together with the physical and mental strength to resist regardless of possible harsh conditions. Here the threat that needs to be countered represents a threat not only against the military elements of society but also against society as a whole in the form of occupation and even collapse. Such conceptualizations echoed the Cold War era thinking of total defence and the role of a military threat, which retained its significance for decades. Indeed, a 1953 memorandum by the Committee of Inquiry into psychological defence (*Kommittén för utredning om det psykologiska försvaret*) explored the foundations of psychological defence and had similarly asserted that for a country's defence to have a prospect of success during a time of total war, the society needed to stand together in its willingness to defend. This was the case also in the exercise of foreign policy, in which psychological defence had its own important role.²⁹ Particular concepts to refer to and measure the attitudes towards defence were defined by Kurt Törnqvist in 1975 as context-bound and thus requiring separate conceptualization in different situations.³⁰

The attention given to the people's attitudes has been and in fact, in the 21st century context, continues to be considered as part of Swedish psychological defence. In this thinking, willingness to defend and willingness to resist is created in peacetime as is the mental preparedness should crises emerge. A sense of solidarity and loyalty towards the country are seen to arise from more deep-seated cultural values such as democracy. A sense of trust towards political leadership has been important and related to the social, political and economic development of a country.³¹

According to our analysis of parliamentary documents, the connections between foreign policy and willingness to defend have not been in a salient role but have existed when attention has focused on defence policy that supports Swedish foreign policy, thus echoing the sentiment of the 1953 report. During the Cold War, the Second World War was used in Sweden and Finland as a reminder of what could happen in the event of an armed crisis. Sweden, staying neutral in wartime, did built up its defence and embarked on efforts to strengthen psychological defence as part of the total defence concept.³² The military conscription system required a major role for citizens in the defence of their country, but the extent to which economic resources should be targeted at material capability instead of human soldiers varied. According to Gunnar Åselius, the Swedish debate on how to arrange defence has traditionally featured two competing schools of thought. The first of these emphasized the conscription-based concept of people's defence, while the second focused on achieving a technologically competitive level when compared to the Soviet Union as a most likely adversary. Here the underlying strategic idea was to play on the effect of deterrence that the armed forces and their capabilities and functions might invoke and these two schools of thought simply approached the question from different perspectives. During and after the Cold War, the relative strengths of these schools of thought varied in politics.³³ Nevertheless, the role of defence as reflecting a source of deterrence was a lasting theme in Sweden, and it would also have significance in the Finnish context as well.

The analysis of debates held in the Swedish national legislature reveals a persistent consensus over the role of citizens behind foreign policy, and this applied especially to willingness to defend. In our analysis, a consistent feature of discourse in the Cold War

period was how willingness to defend can be maintained and what insights measurements afford about this form of public attitude. From the 1950s onwards, Swedish political discourse was divided roughly between centre-right and social democratic lines of opinion. The main difference focused on how to perceive and use national resources to create a defence as useful as possible. Social democratic political thought consistently focused on the theme of how to create solidarity within the population, to create a sentiment that would maintain and perhaps even strengthen the willingness to defend. On the other hand, the centre-right was in general more focused on the material side, how to maintain a technologically competitive edge against the potential adversary that the Soviet Union represented. Willingness to defend citizens was considered equally important in the political thinking of both left and right, but the means to achieve it differed. Since 1948, the theme was consistently present in defence decisions that frequently directed the development of the Swedish defence forces and thus reflected Swedish thinking also abroad. A cross-party opinion was that willingness to defend, its high level and its articulation were in a supportive role for foreign policy orientation, especially as a peacetime deterrent. If people in general and the political leadership had the willingness to defend and if the political parties maintained consensus over defence, the defence policy was more likely to become credible and thus support the Swedish desire to remain independent and neutral: this formed the basis of Swedish foreign security policy in its aim to avoid confrontation between the Eastern and Western blocs. Throughout the Cold War, the discourses on willingness to defend were related particularly to conscripts and voluntary military activities, illustrating the emphasis on citizens either being obliged to participate in service or, for those who had already completed their mandatory service only, continuing their training voluntarily. Willingness to defend was simply important to defence and enabled the manifestation of citizens' support for defence, according to an idea from the 1940s.³⁴ Nevertheless, the opinions of the people or Swedes, in general, were also considered significant due to the total nature of the defence effort. The level of willingness to defend could either be directly elicited by surveys (especially between the 1960s and 1980s) or by approaching the topic more indirectly.³⁵

Indeed, the state effort to organize information operations under total defence involved the need to link together defence policy, willingness to defend and foreign policy.³⁶ Furthermore, the connection was able to work both ways: democratic unity of the people could, at least in discourse, lead to more respect for foreign policy, which would then support the willingness to defend, thus underlying its role also outside the immediate foreign policy context.³⁷ Furthermore, international tensions or risks of increasing international tensions in areas adjacent to Sweden were utilized as points of reference to underline what might be at stake.³⁸ Defence-related information played a significant role, and the threat of foreign propaganda was seen as potentially undermining Swedish willingness to defend. Therefore, especially in the 1980s, the dissemination of defence information was seen as a vital peacetime instrument to strengthen the deterrence the Swedish defence could, through its people, portray to the outside world.³⁹

The Swedish tradition during the Cold War to specifically emphasize citizens' willingness to defend the nation brings out how conscription is perceived as credible only if conscripts express willingness and readiness to fulfil their duties in case of an armed attack and that the population espouse that cause. In foreign

policy, it was useful to speak about the strong will expressed by the Swedes, because it created credibility and the deterrent of national defence by raising the threshold for armed aggression. When the Cold War ended, any prospect of an armed attack on Swedish soil gradually became increasingly remote during the 1990s. The concept of total defence (*totalförsvar*) remained on the political agenda, but the development of the civilian part of defence (*civildförsvar*) occasionally gained political attention more than the military side of the defence. In foreign policy, the need to speak about citizens' willingness to defend the nation decreased as invasion started to appear somewhat unrealistic, thus showing its decreasing significance as a resource for the exercise of foreign policy. Indeed, conceptually the significance of deterring foreign aggression, the meaning attached to the concept of willingness to defend, gave way to other forms of conceptualization to address the preparedness of society for a crisis, but the core meaning of the concept did not disappear. Indeed, in the *riksdag*, references to citizens' willingness to defend and engagement in defence were made occasionally, but such references were used as a tool to encourage the allocation of resources, for example, to voluntary organizations to support the civil defence.⁴⁰

Political emphasis on the development of civil defence was one side of a process that changed the role of conscription in Swedish defence. During the Cold War conscription had been a major part of defence policy but that was no longer the case. Sweden suspended the conscription system in 2010 and adopted a voluntary recruitment system, partly based on the interpretation of how citizens would perceive the change.⁴¹ In the 1990s the Minister of Defence Thage Peterson (Social Democratic Party, s) argued that citizens' resistance to military conscription and the large military budget had to be heard and respected since otherwise their willingness to defend would decrease.⁴² His successor, Björn von Sydow, (s) pointed out that invasion was no longer the threat scenario of Swedish defence, but they strove for an operational defence with international capability.⁴³ Citizens' willingness to defend was connected with the public acceptance of military defence instead of using public opinion to support the credibility of national defence. In the *riksdag* there were only very rare cases when citizens' willingness to defend was considered a fundamental component of the credibility of Swedish defence in the eyes of foreign countries, indicating that such a form of discourse could again be utilized in a broader sense if perceptions of threat were to change.⁴⁴ More commonly, the deterrent effect of citizens' attitudes to national defence was omitted from political speeches in the 1990s and the 2000s. The concept of credibility was connected to issues other than mental and material capabilities to repel an armed attack in Sweden, such as the workable preconditions for participation and performance in international operations and having clarity regarding obligations and rights in voluntary service.⁴⁵

The war in Crimea in 2014 changed the Swedish political rhetoric on threat scenarios and brought back fears of an armed attack.⁴⁶ Eventually, the Swedish government decided in 2017 to re-activate conscription from 2018 onwards. Simultaneously, political demands to strengthen the military side of the total defence and people's defence-related positive attitudes, for example by supporting psychological defence, once again gained more prominence. Support for the home guard was strong in the *riksdag* and it was presented as a workable method to strengthen people's willingness to defend.⁴⁷ This brought back the instrumental value of people's attitudes to foreign policy. In the final

years of the 2010s, citizens' willingness to defend was again presented by the Swedish government as the basis for a credible defence.⁴⁸

Empirical case: Finland: creating consensus and measuring support

The Second World War led to a situation in which Finland maintained its independence albeit with a loss of territory to the Soviet Union. It was also a powerful experience of how a small nation could fight against a superior opponent. After a mostly successful defence against the Soviet offensive in 1944 and the signing of an armistice in the autumn of 1944, the Finnish defence had been in a weakened state since 1945, and the public mood was low. In 1948 Finland and the Soviet Union signed the Agreement of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance in which Finland accepted that it was required to protect its territory if Germany or any other third party were to be interested in using Finnish territory for an attack against the Soviet Union. At the core of Finnish foreign policy was both the interest to achieve a neutral status and at the same time to honour the importance of Finnish-Soviet relations, meaning the partial loss of freedom in foreign policy. After the war, the relations between the armed forces and society had suffered from an erosion of trust and growing political dissent. The signing of the Treaty helped, together with other initiatives, to redefine the role of the armed forces in society and increase the sense of public trust.⁴⁹

Since the 1960s, more information regarding the state of opinion was increasingly available, a fact that would have a major impact in political decision-making. This information was collected by a state agency that conducted a survey, often annually, measuring public opinion on a range of issues, including willingness to defend.⁵⁰ Its founding history related to the sense of willingness to defend. In the early 1960s, the state launched an attempt to learn from the Swiss and Swedish models and strengthen national defence. Unlike in Sweden, in the Finnish political context and above all among the critical political left, the idea of psychological defence was a more sensitive subject that reflected the lack of cross-party consensus on the importance of defence in general. Nevertheless, in the 1960s a state body to explore public opinion and indeed attitudes towards defence was established, with a particular focus on willingness to defend that was associated with patriotic values and trust in the state institutions and political system.⁵¹

As we know from the work of historian Johanna Rainio-Niemi, the value aspect had also importance in terms of foreign policy orientation. Furthermore, as Rainio-Niemi has shown, in 1975 that same state body was reformed, as a result of communist criticism, so as to remove its top-down model of educating people as to what the country's defence would need in exchange for a more politically sensitive emphasis on individual choice. The state's actions to strengthen willingness to defend were focused on the dissemination of information on foreign and defence policy, and conceptually willingness to defend was associated especially with trust in key political values and the political system, which was portrayed as supporting the Finnish foreign policy orientation. Measuring public opinion represented a somewhat new thing and results were utilized in political debates. Especially in the 1960s the role of public opinion behind security policy (linking foreign and defence policies together) was evident, and debates on foreign and defence policy often featured notions on the state of public opinion.⁵² Values provided the foundations

for the willingness to defend, which if in good shape, could – according to representatives of the usually right-leaning parliamentary parties – support neutral foreign policy.⁵³

During the Cold War, the Finnish parliament acknowledged and emphasized the credibility of Finnish defence and this form of credibility provided an important element of foreign policy that should be supported by most of society in general. The officials in the Ministry of Defence were able to attach willingness to defend to the credibility of defence, and in their discourse were able to warn about the unwanted image the lack of investments in defence could produce abroad about Finnish defence capabilities and willingness to defend, and thus weaken the key element of Finnish foreign policy.⁵⁴

Nevertheless, politicians rarely cast doubts on the Finnish willingness to defend, although the political left was often ready to question the relevance of military defence as a supportive element of neutral foreign policy, especially during the 1960s and 1970s. It was no wonder that the Finnish foreign policy was usually portrayed as relying on a willingness for peace instead of a willingness to defend.⁵⁵

The Finns' sacrifices during the Second World War served as irrefutable proof of their willingness to defend in times of crisis. In fact, in 1983 NATO's Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, General Bernard W. Rogers, publicly questioned the Finnish readiness to defend against Soviet aggression, resulting in a backlash not only among the Finnish political elites but also among foreign observers. The Finnish press broadly argued that it was imperative to show that the Finnish defence capability was able to support the country's foreign policy orientation, and in this readiness to defend the country mattered. Also, the Finnish Defence Forces' representative publicly underlined the willingness to defend. However, the foreign policy leadership experienced difficulties in the matter, as the President of the Republic, Mauno Koivisto, who was the leader of Finnish foreign policy, seemingly wanted to downplay the need to emphasize the willingness to defend in order to avoid potential Soviet foreign policy related reprimands. Nevertheless, the discussions in the foreign press illustrated the trust in Finnish defence, which was a good sign for the Finnish emphasis on the willingness to defend having a role.⁵⁶ Indeed, unlike the Swedish defence capability, which relied on extensive domestic arms production and had at least a relatively good reputation as an efficient military deterrent, Finland faced more challenges in this area.

In the late 1980s, the scholar Tomas Ries, while studying Finnish foreign and defence policy, argued that in the Finnish case, the international audience often seemed to perceive the Finnish defence capability as rather weak, although, in reality, the situation was much better. Ries concluded that Finnish defence capability, based on the WWII showing of national will to fight, together with its careful and determined strengthening of armed forces, its defence strategy based on sustained combat and area-based defence and carefully orchestrated foreign policy all made Finland more than capable of defending its territory against a foreign aggressor – this reflected the improvements made during the Cold War period.⁵⁷ However, from the point of view of defence as a supportive element of foreign policy, foreign countries needed to be aware of the ability of the Finnish defence to fight against an aggressor for it to have a deterrent effect. Conceptually the idea of defence being credible was similar to that in Sweden, albeit with less emphasis on public discourses emphasizing the abilities of the Finnish defence due to domestic political constraints and the importance of simultaneously maintaining good relations with the Soviet Union.

During the decade following the end of the Cold War changes in Finnish defence policy were more discreet than in many other European countries. Political leeway increased when Finland withdrew from the Agreement of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance and those articles of the Paris Peace Treaty that restricted Finnish defence capability. Finnish foreign policy was built on the principle of non-alignment and in defence policy, conscription continued to enjoy wide political support across party lines.⁵⁸ In Sweden, the instrumental value of citizens' willingness to defend as a message in foreign policy decreased during the 1990s and 2000s. At the same time, in Finland, the role of defence-related attitudes perhaps even increased. Public opinion continued to have a significant supportive meaning for foreign and defence policy since the credibility of non-alignment and national defence appeared effective only if the Finnish people were willing to participate in defence in case of an armed attack and thus display a suitable attitude. The credibility of the defence capability continued to be of great importance in Finland after the Cold War and this capability included material and mental aspects. From the point of view of independent defence being credible, while previous constraints such as the critical stance of the Soviets towards Finnish military alignment with the West were diminishing, the conscription system was at the core of the defence. As was the case with the rest of society, conscripts were still needed to show a willingness to defend. What was new compared to the Cold War period, however, was the prominent position of willingness to defend in the Finnish foreign policy doctrine while Finland joined the European Union and NATO's Partnership for Peace programme, a form of cooperation to strengthen relationships, in the 1990s.

From 1997 until the 2010s governmental Security and Defence Policy Reports were published once during a term of government. These highlighted the strong willingness of the Finnish people to defend the country and the nation.⁵⁹ Such references to public attitudes relied on opinion polls conducted by a permanent parliamentary committee called the Advisory Board for Defence Information. According to these surveys, in the period from the 1980s to the late 2010s more than 70% and occasionally over 80% of respondents thought that the Finnish people had to defend the country in case of an armed attack. In 2018–2020 the number was slightly lower, but still over 70%.⁶⁰ In the Finnish Parliament, *eduskunta*, MPs across party lines continuously stressed the importance of the strong will of the people to defend as a source of credibility of the Finnish system and the geographical location of Finland next to a superpower demanded unity among the Finnish people. In the 1990s and 2000s governments articulated how the strong willingness to defend expressed by the Finns was a message that prevented any possible attacks on Finland and thus acted as a deterrent.⁶¹ In a clearly different way compared to the 1980s, in the 2010s President Sauli Niinistö was a high-profile advocate of citizens' willingness to defend Finland and he repeatedly mentioned the topic in his public speeches and reinforced the notion of high willingness to defend as a message to any potential observer, foreign powers included.⁶² In a conceptual sense, the meanings attached to the concept of willingness to defend have remained mostly the same from the Cold War to the present day, but its role in public discourse has increased. The Russian Federation's annexation of Crimea and the conflict in Eastern Ukraine have served to remind people how relevant it is to assert the factors that make defence credible, and here attitudes towards defence are perceived to be extremely relevant. Broadly speaking, what characterizes the Finnish context is the dynamic nature of the willingness to defend: it

reflects the people's ideas, beliefs and values as a whole associated with defence, it can be engaged with public policies at least to some extent and it can be referred to in politics.⁶³

Conclusion

The role of national legislatures may not have a major role in defining foreign policy in terms of functions and powers between different branches, but the themes the members of parliament or representatives of the government in the legislature are raising reflect contemporary political thought. Based on our analysis, we argue that in both national cases, the public perceptions towards defence have been utilized in foreign policy-related discourses – the Swedish and Finnish cases show in particular that willingness to defend played a significant role in foreign policy from the early Cold War period until the 2020s. In both national cases, the people's attitudes were focused on the idea of willingness to defend and frequently invoked in key defence policy documents, with Finland even starting to emphasize the theme after the end of the Cold War. In parliamentary discourse members of parliament also frequently associated successful foreign policy with fundamental principles of defence, including the defence-related attitudes of the public.

In both countries, the foreign policy needed to have a defence in place to be perceived as credible. Public opinion thus supported foreign policy both directly and indirectly by constituting a part of deterrence towards a possible aggressor. Potential rifts in a national consensus on defence or lack of faith abroad in the willingness to defend were regarded as seriously weakening the defence's ability to support credible defence: this was evident in both Swedish and Finnish cases. The institutionalization of state-led efforts to explore the public's opinion and attitudes, and the longevity of such measures, further illustrates the significance given to this element of defence capability.

Discourses about associating foreign policy with defence-related attitudes reflected, for their part, cultural characteristics of foreign policy that the politicians were upholding. Parliamentary discourses also demonstrated the importance of public opinion in Swedish and Finnish political contexts. Here both states with a neutral or non-aligned foreign policy relied on conscription and thus fundamentally on the perception of a mass army. It is important to emphasize that besides structures, there was also the defence-related will of the people. Referring to the willingness to defend seems to be interpreted and believed to amplify the message the defence capability conveys.

Notes

1. Tarabar and Hall, "Explaining the Worldwide Decline"; Cohen, *Citizens and Soldiers*; Hadar and Häkkinen, "Conscription and Willingness to Defend"; Maass, *Small States in World*, 139–204.
2. In the references section 'Valtiopäivät' features the sources utilized until 1996, and 'Eduskunta' from 1997 onwards.
3. E.g. Häkkinen, *From Counterrevolution to Consolidation?*, 35; Ihalainen, *The Springs of Democracy*, 37–9.
4. Wiesner et al., *Debates, Rhetoric and Political*; Ihalainen and Palonen, "Parliamentary Sources in the Comparative"; Skinner, *Visions of Politics*; Ihalainen, *The Springs of Democracy*, 37–9; Müller, "On Conceptual History"; Ihalainen and Matikainen, "The British Parliament".
5. See Baker Fox, "The Power of Small States," 40–53.
6. Mjøset and van Holden, "Killing for the State"; Häkkinen "Velvollisuus puolustaa omaa maata".

7. Häkkinen et al., "Maanpuolustustahtto ilmiönä, käsitteenä"; Rossbach, *Fighting Propaganda*.
8. E.g. Shapiro, "Public Opinion and American Democracy"; Shapiro and Page, "Foreign Policy and the Rational Public"; Knecht and Weatherford, "Public Opinion and Foreign Policy"; Leeper and Slothuus, "Political Parties, Motivated Reasoning"; Holsti, *Public Opinion and American*; Chan and Safran, "Public Opinion as a Constraint"; Lai and Reiter, "Rally 'Round the Union Jack?"; Davis, "Swords into Ploughshares"; Paterson, "Presidential Foreign Policy, Public Opinion, and Congress"; Mommsen, "Public Opinion and Foreign Policy in Wilhelmian Germany"; Rosati et al., "A New Perspective on the Foreign Policy Views"; Laulich, "Public Opinion and Foreign Policy Decisions"; Foster, "The Politicians, Public Opinion and the Press"; Towle, *Going to War*; Wright, "Public Opinion and Conscription in France"; Lebow, *A Cultural Theory*; Bloom, *Personal Identity, National Identity and International Relations*.
9. Sellström, *Sweden and National Liberation in Southern Africa*; Berndtsson et al., "Swedish and British Public Opinion of The Armed Forces After a Decade Of War"; Sundelius, *The Committed Neutral*; Möller and Bjereld, "From Nordic Neutrals To Post-Neutral Europeans"; Forsberg and Pesu, "The Role of Public Opinion in Finland's Foreign and Security Policy".
10. Sirén, *State Agent, Identity*; Hadar and Häkkinen, "Conscription and Willingness to Defend".
11. Häkkinen, *Rikkautta, humpuukia ja puolustuskykyä*, 187–90.
12. Myyry, *Käsityksiä maanpuolustustahdosta*.
13. E.g. Kertzer et al., "Moral Support".
14. Ihalainen et al., "Parliament as a Conceptual Nexus"; Lock, "Refining Strategic Culture"; See Palonen, "Speaking pro et contra".
15. Jerneck, Sannerstedt, and Sjölin, "Internationalization and Parliamentary Decision-Making"; Kallenaudio, "Puolueettomuuspolitiikan linjalla kohti Euroopan Unionia," 78–127.
16. Ihalainen and Matikainen, "The British Parliament"; Kaarkoski, "German and British Parliaments".
17. Wiesner et al., *Debates, Rhetoric and Political Action*.
18. Kaarkoski, "Korkea maanpuolustustahtto turvallisuus- ja puolustuspolitiikan," 148–70.
19. For the Swedish case see Petersson, "Sweden and the Scandinavian".
20. Rainio-Niemi, *The Ideological Cold War*.
21. Howlett and Glenn, "Epilogue: Nordic Strategic Culture"; Mouritzen, "The Nordic Model as A Foreign Policy Instrument".
22. Agius and Devine, "'Neutrality: A Really Dead Concept?'," 272; See also Agius, *The Social Construction of Swedish*.
23. Rainio-Niemi, *The Ideological Cold War*; Larsson, "Swedish Total Defence"; Hyvönen and Juntunen, "From "Spiritual Defence" to Robust"; Wither, "Back to The Future?".
24. See note above 20.
25. Eddie, *Swedish Foreign Policy*, 36–8.
26. E.g. MSB 2018.
27. Körlof, "Vad menar vi med försvarsvilja?," 80–5.
28. Rossbach, *Fighting Propaganda*.
29. Kommittén för utredning om det psykologiska försvaret, *Psykologiskt försvar Betänkande*, 9, 17.
30. Törnqvist, *Försvarsvilja och närbesläktade begrepp*.
31. Körlof, "Mental beredskap," 262–4.
32. Rossbach, *Fighting Propaganda*; Bertilsson, "The Swedish Defence Research Establishment".
33. Åselius, "Swedish Strategic Culture".
34. Cars et al., *Svensk försvarspolitik under efterkrigstiden; Vårt framtida försvar*.
35. Åselius, "Swedish Strategic Culture," 29–30; Riksdagen, Första kammarens protokoll 7 mars 1956, 34 (Ewerlög. K.G.); Andra kammarens protokoll 24 November 1959, 10 (Erlander); Andra kammaren protokoll 14 November 1961, 120 (Heckscher, G.); Första kammarens protokoll 26 April 1963, 7 (Kajser); Andra kammarens protokoll 17 maj 1967, 12 (Petersson); Andra kammarens protokoll 13 November 1968, 23 (Bohman); Andra kammarens protokoll 19 januari 1971, 36 (Bohman); Protokoll 9 maj 1974, 58–60 (Gustafsson i Uddevalla); Protokoll 30 januari 1980, 59 (Ullsten O.).

36. Sveriges regering, "Nr. 74 Kungl. Maj:ts proposition," 16–9.
37. Riksdagen, Andra kammarens protokoll 13 November 1968 (Bohman).
38. Riksdagen, Andra kammarens protokoll 19 April 1961 (Hjalmarson).
39. Sveriges regering, "Regeringens proposition 1983/84:166," 8–12.
40. Riksdagen, Protokoll 3 juni 1992 (Vestlund & Carnerö).
41. Kaarkoski and Häkkinen, "The Legitimacy of Conscription in Democracy," 203–5.
42. Riksdagen: Protokoll 11 oktober 1995, 159 (Peterson); Protokoll 6 December 1995, 83 (Peterson).
43. Riksdagen, Protokoll 25 November 1999, 1–3, 13 (Synow & Carnerö).
44. Riksdagen: Protokoll 6 December 1995, 83 (Peterson); Protokoll 25 November 1999, 1–3, 13 (Synow & Carnerö).
45. Riksdagen: Protokoll 29 November 2000, 28 (Carnerö); Protokoll 15 juni 2015.
46. E.g. Riksdagen, Protokoll 15 juni 2015.
47. Riksdagen: Protokoll 12 April 2018, 55, 60–1 (Bäckström & Olsson); Protokoll 2 maj 2018, 56–7 (Bäckström & Schröder); Protokoll 3 April 2019, 53 (Bäckström); Protokoll 18 mars 2020, 114 (Völker).
48. Försvarsdepartement, *Värnkraft – Inriktningen av säkerhetspolitiken*.
49. Pilke, "Vaaran vuosista arvostettuun asemaan," 21–31; Häkkinen, *Rikkautta, humpuukia ja puolustuskykyä*, 105–8, 112–4.
50. E.g. Advisory Board for Defence Information, *Finns' Opinions on Foreign*.
51. Henkisen maanpuolustuksen komitea, *Henkisen maanpuolustuksemme perustekijät*.
52. Rainio-Niemi, *The Ideological Cold War*, 2–3, 145–6; Häkkinen, "Maanpuolustustahdon poliittisuus 1970-luvulta"; Häkkinen, Kaarkoski, and Tilli, "Maanpuolustustahto ilmiönä, käsitteenä".
53. E.g. Valtiopäivät: Valtiopäivät 1967. Pöytäkirjat II, 1563; Valtiopäivät 1970. Pöytäkirjat II, 1696 (Vennamo); Valtiopäivät 1978. Pöytäkirjat 3, 2273–6 (Lattula).
54. Häkkinen, "Maanpuolustustahdon poliittisuus 1970-luvulta"; Puolustusministeriö, *Maanpuolustuksemme tienviitat*; Häkkinen, *Rikkautta, humpuukia ja puolustuskykyä*, 112–4.
55. E.g. Valtiopäivät, Valtiopäivät 1970. Pöytäkirjat II, 1715 (Sundqvist), 1783 (Laine).
56. Häkkinen, "Maanpuolustustahdon poliittisuus 1970-luvulta"; Suomi, *Pysähtyneisyyden vuodet*, 269–74.
57. Ries, *Cold Will*.
58. Pesu, *Koskiveneellä kohti valtavirtaa*, 23–35; Ervasti and Laakso, *Karhun naapurista Naton kainaloon*; Visuri, *Maailman muutos ja Suomi*, 59–130.
59. Valtioneuvosto: *Euroopan turvallisuuskehitys ja Suomen puolustus*, 53; *Suomen turvallisuus- ja puolustuspolitiikka 2001*, *Suomen turvallisuus- ja puolustuspolitiikka 2004*, 97–100; *Suomen turvallisuus- ja puolustuspolitiikka 2009*, 79–105; *Suomen turvallisuus- ja puolustuspolitiikka 2012*, 107; *Valtioneuvoston puolustusselonteko 2017*, 27.
60. Statistics Finland, "Willingness to defend the country".
61. See e.g. Eduskunta: PTK 28/1997, 648 (Saari); PTK 87/2001 (Korkeaoja); PTK 97/2004, 79 (Lindqvist); PTK 6/2009, 4 (Vanhanen); PTK 73/2016 (Kulmala).
62. Tasavallan presidentti, "Tasavallan presidentti Sauli Niinistön puhe 227".
63. Häkkinen et al., "Maanpuolustustahto ilmiönä, käsitteenä ja tutkimuskohteena".

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