



# GLOBAL GOVERNANCE INSTITUTE

## National Backgrounders – European Foreign Policy

### Country Profile

#### *Sweden*

<b>Capital:</b>	Stockholm
<b>Geographical Size:</b>	438 575.8 km <sup>2</sup>
<b>Population:</b>	9 644 864 (2014)
<b>Population as % of total EU population:</b>	1.9% (2014)
<b>GDP:</b>	€ 420.849 billion (2013)
<b>Defense Expenditure:</b>	€ 4.673 million (2013)
<b>Official EU language(s):</b>	Swedish
<b>Political System:</b>	Parliamentary constitutional monarchy
<b>EU member country since:</b>	1 January 1995
<b>Seats in European Parliament:</b>	20
<b>Currency:</b>	Swedish Krona (SEK)
<b>Schengen area member?</b>	Schengen Area member since 25 March 2001
<b>Presidency of the Council:</b>	Twice: in 2001 and 2009

Source: Europa.eu

## GGI National Backgrounders – European Foreign Policy 2015

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Peace & Security Section

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### a. Political System

Sweden is a parliamentary democracy based on four fundamental laws that define the national constitution: the 1810 *Act of Succession*, the 1949 *Freedom of the Press Act*, the 1974 *Instrument of Government*, and the 1991 *Fundamental Law on Freedom of Expression*. Sweden was a pioneer of constitutional freedoms and fundamental rights in the modern world. The country's head of state is a monarch, currently King Carl XVI Gustaf, who does not exercise any political power but represents the country as a whole. General elections are held every four years for the Swedish people to determine the political composition of governance organs at different levels: the Parliament (*Riksdag*), county councils, and municipalities. Allocation of seats is made according to the principle of proportional representation and to a condition where a minimum of four percent of the votes is necessary.<sup>1</sup>

The *Riksdag* has legislative power in Sweden, and appoints the Prime Minister, currently Stefan Löfven (Social democratic Party). The Prime Minister is held accountable by the Parliament. Following the last elections in September 2014, the unicameral Swedish Parliament's seats were allocated between eight political parties: the Social Democratic Party (*Socialdemokraterna*) with 113 members, the Moderate Party (*Moderaterna*) with 84 members, the Sweden Democrats (*Sverigedemokraterna*) with 49 members, the Green Party with 25 members, the Centre Party with 22 members, the Left Party with 21 members, the Liberal Party with 19 members, and the Christian Democrats with 16 members<sup>2</sup>.

The Government, comprised of the Prime Minister and of the Cabinet he forms, exercises executive power in Sweden. It implements the decisions of the *Riksdag* and formulates new laws and amendments. The Social Democrats have held long periods of power in Swedish politics (1932-1976), but since the establishment of the 1974 *Instrument of Government*, they compete with coalitions of non-socialist parties. In 2006, the non-socialist parties formed a four-party center-right coalition government, the Alliance (*Alliansen*), which ruled until September 2014, when a new minority center-left coalition was formed between the Social Democratic Party and the Green Party.<sup>3</sup>

In December 2014, the far right Swedish party, the Sweden Democrats, opposed the center-left coalition's budget (opposition parties may put forward alternative financial plans in Sweden). It suggested a different plan under the *Alliansen* coalition due to the lack of support received by the center-left's proposition. Following this disagreement, a political crisis erupted, and Prime Minister Löfven called for an impromptu election. The election was eventually cancelled as the government managed to settle an agreement. Following this agreement, the Alliance's budget proposition was implemented because it had more support. However, the agreement also established the new rule that opposition parties could not anymore put forward a rival budget in case of the Government's lack of support. In April 2015 the budget was amended by the center-left coalition, which reinstated the traditional Swedish social democratic welfare politics. Since the **December Agreement**, the opposition (*Alliansen*) cannot longer block the center-left coalition's budget proposal. This change could also be an advantage for the *Alliansen*, should they win future elections.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Swedish Institute, *The Swedish System of Government*, Sweden.se, November 2014. Web. Accessed October 1, 2015. <https://sweden.se/society/the-swedish-system-of-government/>

<sup>2</sup> "Members and Parties", *Sveriges Riksdag*, September 2014. Web. Accessed October 12, 2015. <https://www.riksdagen.se/en/Members-and-parties/>

<sup>3</sup> The Swedish Institute, *The Swedish System of Government*, Sweden.se, November 2014. Web. Accessed October 1, 2015. <https://sweden.se/society/the-swedish-system-of-government/>

<sup>4</sup> n.a., "Do you understand how Sweden is being run?", *The Local*, June 8, 2015. Web. Accessed October 12, 2015. <http://www.thelocal.se/20150608/do-you-know-how-swedens-being-run> ; n.a. "That was quick: Stefan Lofven's fall shows the strength of the far-right Sweden Democrats", *The Economist*, December 6, 2014. Web.

## b. Foreign Policy

In 1814, Sweden was following a strict foreign policy of “**non-alignment** in peacetime and **neutrality** in wartime”<sup>5</sup>. Thus, it did not join NATO in 1949, unlike its fellow Scandinavian countries Denmark and Norway with which Sweden usually align (see *Nordic Countries* section below for further information). Stockholm’s foreign policy is however quite ambitious, as illustrate its high level of foreign aid, strong focus on human rights, and generous asylum policy. The current Swedish Foreign Minister Margot Wallström’s “feminist foreign policy” contrasts with former center-right Minister Carl Bildt: she supports with less vigor a common EU foreign policy, and rather argues for an independent Swedish stance on the international scene, mainly through an active role in the United Nations. According to Fägersten’s and Lundell’s *Letter from Stockholm*, the country’s main foreign policy goal is to win a seat in the UN Security Council in 2017-2018. A **shift towards global activism** has already been shown by Sweden’s unilateral recognition of the state of Palestine in October 2014 and by its worsening relations with Saudi Arabia based on Human Rights concerns. It might be emphasized by future increase in the national defense budget in reaction to the aggressive Russian foreign policy (of particular importance, the suspected intrusion of Russian submarines in Swedish waters and the Russian violation of Swedish airspace).<sup>6</sup>

The “**NATO question**”, which has been debated since the Cold War, is gaining traction in Sweden with the re-emergence of a Russian threat. The fact that Sweden has always adapted its defense to NATO standards and significantly contributed to its operations raises the point that the country would benefit from full membership. In addition, joining NATO would limit the risks of conflict between Sweden and Russia.<sup>7</sup> This situation reiterates Herbert Tingsten’s words of 1959: “Sweden can never become neutral in the sense that it would react against demands or violations of neutrality with equal force regardless of whether they came from the East or from the West”<sup>8</sup>. Swedish foreign policy has not changed much since the Cold War: it has strong arguments for neutrality and non-alignment, but also could benefit from a NATO-supported defense. In fact, as brilliantly explained by Previous Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme (1969-1976): “A country’s foreign policy is not immutable. It is influenced by world’s events, by changes of public opinion at home, by the need to take a definite stand on foreign policy issues where previous experiences do not afford sufficient guidance”<sup>9</sup>. Therefore, the NATO debate remains open. Overall, the Swedish foreign policy appears to be **complex** and **multi-dimensional**, as it is influenced by national economic and political interests and by the population’s necessary continuous unity, which explains Sweden’s “long period of peace and neutrality, and its exceptionally calm internal political development”<sup>10</sup>.

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Accessed October 12, 2015. <http://www.economist.com/news/europe/21635518-stefan-lofvens-fall-shows-strength-far-right-sweden-democrats-was-quick>

<sup>5</sup> The Swedish Institute, *The Swedish System of Government*, Sweden.se, November 2014. Web. Accessed October 1, 2015. <https://sweden.se/society/the-swedish-system-of-government/>

<sup>6</sup> Fägersten, B. and Lundell, J. “Letter from Stockholm”, *Judy Dempsey’s Strategic Europe*, Carnegie Europe, march 13, 2015. Accessed October 12, 2015. <http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/?fa=59356>

<sup>7</sup> Dempsey, J. “Judy Asks: Should Finland and Sweden Join NATO?”, *Judy Dempsey’s Strategic Europe*, Carnegie Europe, May 21, 2014. Web. Accessed October 12, 2015.

<http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/?fa=55657>

<sup>8</sup> Tingsten, H. “Issues in Swedish Foreign Policy”, *Foreign Affairs*, Issue 27, No. 3, April 1959. Web. Accessed October 12, 2015. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/sweden/1959-04-01/issues-swedish-foreign-policy>

<sup>9</sup> Hetmanchuk, N. “Swedish Foreign Policy: Neutrality VS. Security”, Master’s Thesis, Suffolk University, Boston, 2012, p. 20. Web. Accessed October 12, 2015.

[http://pol.illinoisstate.edu/downloads/conferences/2012/2AHetmanchuk\\_Swedish.pdf](http://pol.illinoisstate.edu/downloads/conferences/2012/2AHetmanchuk_Swedish.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Tingsten, H. “Issues in Swedish Foreign Policy”, *Foreign Affairs*, Issue 27, No. 3, April 1959. Web. Accessed October 12, 2015. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/sweden/1959-04-01/issues-swedish-foreign-policy>

### *European Union (EU)*

Sweden joined the EU in 1995 but stayed out of the Eurozone, as a result of national referendums. Together with the other Nordic countries (Finland, Denmark and Norway), Sweden notably participated in the “Nordicization of the EU” and the “Europeanization of key elements of the Nordic model” after the Cold War, especially concerning internationalist solidarism (see *Strategic Culture* section for more information)<sup>11</sup>.

Despite its geographic proximity to Finland, the two countries initially competed with each other in terms of foreign policy, especially regarding the **EU Northern Dimension (ND)** initiated by Denmark. Sweden promoted the **EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR)**, adopted in 2009 under the Council’s Swedish presidency and under the non-socialist Swedish government. It aims at promoting cooperation between the EU Baltic states (Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Germany) in the fields of environment, transports and energy, and culture. The EUSBSR did not have the success originally expected (i.e. the creation of a BSR pillar in the ND), but focused exclusively on an intra-regional dimension separated from the ND framework. The absence of convergence between Finland and Sweden’s promotion of regional interests, explained by their different national identities and strategies, was detrimental to the Nordic influence on EU affairs. Sweden is indeed more independent and reluctant to multilateral cooperation.<sup>12</sup> However the competition recently diminished, since the **Final Report on Deepened Defense Cooperation between Finland and Sweden** was published in 2015, further discussed below.

The statement made in 2011 by former Foreign Minister Carl Bildt that “European foreign policy is our foreign policy” however seems outdated, in consideration of Margot Wallström’s independent and international approach to Sweden’s role in foreign affairs. The new Foreign Minister, former Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General, initiated a shift in Swedish foreign affairs towards a **stronger international role**. Nonetheless, it appears that Sweden will likely continue to be active in EU foreign policy, especially regarding its stance on Russia. Indeed, the country recently started discussing reinvestment in military and defense.<sup>13</sup>

### *Nordic Countries*

Sweden is part of the Nordic countries and thus participates in the **Nordic Council** and the **Nordic Council of Ministers**, regrouping representatives from Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and the autonomous territories of Greenland, the Faroe Islands and Åland. The Nordic Cooperation is a key source of soft power, and thus is a useful tool to address some of the country’s interests. During the Swedish presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers in 2014, the country promoted emphasis on the Nordic labor market, sustainable utilization of natural resources, and 200 years of peace between the Nordic countries.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Browning, C. S. “Branding Nordicity: Models, Identity and the Decline of Exceptionalism”, *Cooperation and Conflict: Journal of the Nordic International Studies Association*, Vol. 42, No. 1, March 2007, p. 44. <http://cac.sagepub.com/content/42/1/27.full.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> Gebhard, C., “Soft Competition: Finland, Sweden and the Northern Dimension of the European Union”, *Scandinavian Political Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 4, p. 365-390, 2013. Web. Accessed June 8, 2015. [http://www.research.ed.ac.uk/portal/files/15342483/Gebhard\\_2013\\_Soft\\_Competition\\_FINAL\\_AUTHOR\\_VERSION.pdf](http://www.research.ed.ac.uk/portal/files/15342483/Gebhard_2013_Soft_Competition_FINAL_AUTHOR_VERSION.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> Fägersten, B. and Lundell, J. “Letter from Stockholm”, *Judy Dempsey’s Strategic Europe*, Carnegie Europe, march 13, 2015. Accessed October 12, 2015. <http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/?fa=59356>

<sup>14</sup> n.a. “Programme for the Swedish Presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers 2014”, *Norden*, 2014. Web. Accessed October 12, 2015. <http://www.norden.org/en/nordic-council/nordic-policies-1/programme-for-the-presidency/previous-programmes-for-the-presidency/swedish-presidency-of-the-nordic-council-2014>

Sweden's presidency is putting forward stronger **defense cooperation** between Nordic Countries through NORDEFECO (see *NORDEFECO* section below), which presents considerable advantages in terms of strategic location and military capabilities in the context of West-East tensions.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, the Nordic countries appear to be strongly interdependent, especially in the field of security.

### c. Peace & Security Policy

In addition to a more independent and international foreign policy promoted by Foreign Affairs Minister Margot Wallström, the Swedish Defense Minister Peter Hultqvist advertised new strategic priorities on defense in the five years to come, in order to counter the growing **Russian threat** and its aggressive foreign policy in the region. The defense budget is likely to be increased by 11% (6,2 billion kronor, or € 670 million), cutting the budget reduction dating back to the end of the Cold War (the defense budget was of 2,6% of GDP in 1990 and of 1,2% of GDP in 2013). The objective is to secure the Baltic Sea Region, through military presence on land and in sea, as a necessary response to Russian behavior. In addition, the government suggested increased cooperation with NATO and active input to UN peacekeeping operations.<sup>16</sup>

This shift in Swedish defense policy questions the “**non-alignment**” position of the country, especially the current non-membership of NATO. Wallström's intentions of “taking New York as a political arena”<sup>17</sup> and of winning a seat in the 2017-2018 UN Security Council indicated a potential increase in UN contributions. In the UN Leaders' Summit on Peacekeeping of September 2015, Sweden confirmed its will to extend contribution to peacekeeping operations.

#### *European Union (EU)*

As an EU member, Sweden participates in the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). It was one of the most resolute proponents of a strong Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) during its original design, especially regarding the civilian aspect. However, as previously mentioned, Sweden is shifting away from common European foreign and security policy, and growing closer to NATO and Nordic cooperation on the defense agenda. Nonetheless, it appears clearly that Sweden will yet not disappear from the CFSP/CSDP, as the EU has proven to be influential in the Ukraine crisis (an important matter for Sweden).<sup>18</sup> The country notably participated to EUFOR ALTHEA in Bosnia and EUTM in Uganda. In addition, Sweden committed in January 2014 to provide for 3,43% of the ATHENA mechanism budget (financing of EU military and defense operations that are not financed through EU budget), which is above the majority of EU member states' contribution.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Hvenmark Nilsson, C. “Sweden's Evolving Relationship with NATO and its Consequences for the Baltic Sea Region”, *Center for Strategic & International Studies*, October 7, 2015. Web. Accessed October 8, 2015. <http://csis.org/publication/swedens-evolving-relationship-nato-and-its-consequences-baltic-sea-region>

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*; Duxbury, C. “Sweden Plans to Increase Military Spending”, *The Wall Street Journal*, March 12, 2015. Web. Accessed October 13, 2015. <http://www.wsj.com/articles/sweden-plans-to-increase-military-spending-1426198507>

<sup>17</sup> Fägersten, B. and Lundell, J. “Letter from Stockholm”, *Judy Dempsey's Strategic Europe*, Carnegie Europe, March 13, 2015. Accessed October 12, 2015. <http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/?fa=59356>

<sup>18</sup> Jonsson, O. “How Sweden views the CSDP” in Fiott, D. (ed.) “The Common Security and Defence Policy: National Perspectives”, *Egmont Institute*, No. 79, May 2015. Web. Accessed June 22, 2015. <http://www.egmontinstitute.be/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/ep79.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> Council of the European Union, *Financing of military operations: the ATHENA mechanism*, January 2014. Web. Accessed October 13, 2015. [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/139880.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/139880.pdf)

After the Action Plan for Deepened Defense Cooperation between Finland and Sweden concluded in May 2014, the Final Report on Deepened Defense Cooperation between Finland and Sweden was published in January 2015. The agreement aims to achieve “increased operational effect through combined use of resources, increase interoperability, and a closer dialogue on common challenges”<sup>20</sup>, as both countries finally realized that bilateral defense cooperation will add value to their national armed forces in the short and long terms. Strengthening their bilateral defense capabilities is a top priority in the current security context. The establishments of secure communications, air surveillance cooperation, and options for joint actions are among the short-term objectives. Nevertheless, the two countries still present some discrepancies, as their respective public opinions do not show the same trends regarding potential NATO membership (Finns seems more reluctant), despite the necessity of Swedish-Finnish “synchronized accession process”.<sup>21</sup>

#### *Nordic Defence Cooperation (NORDEFECO)*

As part of the Nordic countries, Sweden participates in the Nordic Defence Cooperation (**NORDEFECO**), which focuses on political and military collaboration within its Policy Steering Committee. This structure implements cooperation activities, which are put into action by existing chains of command (e.g. the UN). It was established in 2009, merging together pre-existing common defense structures. The main objective of the organization is to strengthen the participating nations’ (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden) national defense, explore collaborations, and facilitate efficient common solutions.<sup>22</sup>

Sweden held the chairmanship of NORDEFECO in 2015, and took this opportunity to push for an unprecedented level of practical interstate cooperation, in reaction to the Ukraine crisis and Russian regional threat. For instance, the country promoted the idea of a **Nordic-Baltic Battle Group** (NBBG) modeled on the EU’s Nordic Battle Group comprising forces from Sweden, Finland, Norway, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.<sup>23</sup>

#### *North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)*

Swedish NATO membership is a heavily discussed issue at the moment, given the changing security situation in Europe and Sweden’s direct proximity to Russia, which threatened the country on many occasions (e.g. violation of airspace, announcement of retaliatory measures in case of Swedish NATO membership). Sweden is currently a partner of the Organization, and cooperates with NATO members on a variety of issues, including active support to operations (e.g. in Libya, Afghanistan and Kosovo).

Since Sweden joined the **Partnership for Peace** (PfP) program in 1994, the country built a strong relationship with the Alliance as one of the most strategic and committed countries. Notably, it has been playing an active role in the **NATO Response Force** (NRF), and has

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<sup>20</sup> Ministry of Defence of Finland and Ministry of Defence of Sweden, *Joint Statement Regarding Deepened Defence Cooperation Between Finland and Sweden*, Helsinki, May 22, 2015. Web. Accessed October 13, 2015. <http://www.regeringen.se/globalassets/regeringen/dokument/forsvarsdepartementet/2015-05-22-joint-statement--signed.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> Hvenmark Nilsson, C. “Sweden’s Evolving Relationship with NATO and its Consequences for the Baltic Sea Region”, *Center for Strategic & International Studies*, October 7, 2015. Web. Accessed October 8, 2015. <http://csis.org/publication/swedens-evolving-relationship-nato-and-its-consequences-baltic-sea-region>

<sup>22</sup> “About NORDEFECO”, *Nordic Defence Cooperation*. Web. Accessed June 9, 2015. <http://www.nordefco.org/The-basics-about-NORDEFECO>

<sup>23</sup> O’Dwyer, G. “Sweden Proposes Aggressive Nordic Defense”, *Defense News*, February 10, 2015. Web. Accessed October 13, 2015. <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/policy-budget/warfare/2015/02/10/sweden-nordic-cooperation-russia-nordefco-cooperation-nbg--sreide-battlegroup/22865811/>

been recognized as an “Enhanced Opportunity Partner” of the Organization, following its signing of the Host Nation Support Memorandum of Understanding at the Wales Summit in September 2014. In the past, Sweden greatly contributed to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, and to the Kosovo Force (KFOR). For these reasons, and in addition to the new strategic priorities established by Defense Minister Peter Hultqvist, Sweden’s policy of neutrality is qualified as “outdated” and “obsolete,” in light of the Swedish armed forces’ alignment with NATO standards.<sup>24</sup>

In fact, there is a clear **shift in Swedish sentiment** regarding NATO membership, as a recent poll showed that 41 percent of Swedes were in favor and 39 percent against it (in comparison, only 29 percent were in favor in 2013). The topic is however still sensitive, because any change would greatly impact the region. In that sense, any Swedish move should be coordinated with **Finland**. Swedish and Finnish security could be endangered by Russia, which made clear that any of the two states’ full membership would engender retaliatory measures, including the risk of a “third world war”<sup>25</sup>. This Russian strategy to “divide and intimidate its neighbors” led Sweden and Finland to unite more, as reflected in the previous sections. In addition, Swedish political parties disagree on the issue, Social Democrats being more protective of the non-alignment policy, and opposition parties fully supporting NATO membership.

#### *United Nations (UN)*

Sweden is among the founding members of the UN (created in 1945), boasting its own Dag Hammarskjöld as the emblematic, second Secretary-General. The country has always been a contributor to UN peacekeeping operations, from UNTSO and UNMOGIP beginning in the late 1940s, to MINUSMA, UNMISS and UNMIL in the 2010s. Currently 213 Swedish contingent troops are deployed for MINUSMA in Mali, 14 for UNMISS in South Sudan, and another 14 for UNMIL in Liberia<sup>26</sup>. In total, 261 Swedish nationals are involved in UN Peacekeeping operations<sup>27</sup>. Even though Sweden was previously seen as moving away from UN operations (preferring NATO and EU led missions)<sup>28</sup>, this trend is likely to reverse in the following years, given the current government’s rhetoric and the country’s candidacy for a non-permanent seat in the UN Security Council of 2017-2018<sup>29</sup>.

Recently, the UN Association of Sweden (UNA-Sweden) supported the creation of a “UN Parliamentary Assembly” (UNPA), a campaign coordinated by Petter Ölmunger since 2012.

<sup>24</sup> Hvenmark Nilsson, C. “Sweden’s Evolving Relationship with NATO and its Consequences for the Baltic Sea Region”, *Center for Strategic & International Studies*, October 7, 2015. Web. Accessed October 8, 2015.

<http://csis.org/publication/swedens-evolving-relationship-nato-and-its-consequences-baltic-sea-region> ; n.a. “NATO’s relations with Sweden”, *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, November 18, 2014. Web. Accessed October 15, 2015. [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_52535.htm#](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_52535.htm#)

<sup>25</sup> Hvenmark Nilsson, C. “Sweden’s Evolving Relationship with NATO and its Consequences for the Baltic Sea Region”, *Center for Strategic & International Studies*, October 7, 2015. Web. Accessed October 8, 2015.

<http://csis.org/publication/swedens-evolving-relationship-nato-and-its-consequences-baltic-sea-region>

<sup>26</sup> “UN Mission’s Summary detailed by Country”, *United Nations Peacekeeping*, September 30, 2015. Web. Accessed October 13, 2015. [http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/contributors/2015/sep15\\_3.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/contributors/2015/sep15_3.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> “Troop and police contributors”, *United Nations Peacekeeping*. Web. Accessed June 16, 2015. <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/resources/statistics/contributors.shtml>

<sup>28</sup> Heldt, B. “Peacekeeping Contributor Profile: Sweden”, *Providing for Peacekeeping*, September 2012. Web. Accessed October 19, 2015. <http://www.providingforpeacekeeping.org/2014/04/03/contributor-profile-sweden/>

<sup>29</sup> Fägersten, B. and Lundell, J. “Letter from Stockholm”, *Judy Dempsey’s Strategic Europe*, Carnegie Europe, march 13, 2015. Accessed October 12, 2015. <http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/?fa=59356> ; n.a. “Sweden pushes for seat at top table of power”, *The Local*, September 26, 2015. Web. Accessed October 19, 2015. <http://www.thelocal.se/20150926/sweden-pushes-for-seat-at-top-table-of-power>

Thirty-eight Swedish Members of the Parliament (10% of total) currently endorse this proposal.<sup>30</sup>

### *Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)*

Sweden joined the OSCE at its creation in 1973 under the name of the *Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe*. It is an active member in the Organization. Notably, the Vice-President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and Swede Kent Harstedt led multiple missions to observe elections in Ukraine. In 2014, Sweden contributed to 3,3% of the Organization's unified budget with € 4.759.468. The Folke Bernadotte Academy of Sweden also made generous contributions. In the same year, 12 Swedish nationals worked for the OSCE.<sup>31</sup> The country is as well known for its pioneer role on gender-related issues in the Organization<sup>32</sup>.

### *Council of Europe (CoE)*

Sweden is one of the founding members of the Council of Europe, created in 1949. In 2015, it contributed €6.877.409 (1,64 % of total budget) to the CoE's budget. Swede Thomas Hammarberg notably was elected Human Rights Commissioner for the period 2006-2012.<sup>33</sup>

### *Strategic Culture*

As part of the Nordic countries, Sweden strongly shared with its neighbors (Finland, Denmark, and Norway) the desire to establish a **Nordic model** based on the exceptional character of their approach to economic and international affairs. The Nordic ideas of peaceful societies and bridge-builder states, international solidarism, and egalitarian social democracy are however becoming less clear according to Christopher S. Browning (University of Warwick). In his article *Branding Nordicity: Models, Identity and the Decline of Exceptionalism*, he explains that the Nordic countries clearly lost interest in a pan-Nordic epistemic community as the European Union adopted many Nordic norms after the Cold War. The Nordic model thus appears outdated, and slowly replaced by a Baltic model that surpassed its past mentor and that is better accepted due to their more neo-liberal conception of capitalism.<sup>34</sup> However, the previously obsolete Nordic bridging role between the West and Russia could resume in view of the recent events, depending on the Baltic States' activism and on NATO developments.

With regard to Sweden, the country contributed to the Nordic **peace-driven approach** to international affairs in a similar way than Finland, as both countries adopted an anti-militarist stance but preserved significant defensive capabilities and defense industries as deterrent means for neutrality. Recently, both increased their support for the UN, because of their shared attention to the primacy of international law in world politics. Finland and Sweden

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<sup>30</sup> n.a. "United Nations Association of Sweden supports a UN Parliamentary Assembly", *Campaign for a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly*, June 15, 2015. Web. Accessed October 19, 2015.

<http://en.unpacampaign.org/news/764.php>

<sup>31</sup> The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), *Annual Report 2014*, July 2015. Web. Accessed September 1, 2015. <http://www.osce.org/secretariat/169971?download=true>

<sup>32</sup> "Gender equality in the military enhances security for all, say participants of joint OSCE Forum for Security Co-Operation-Permanent Council meeting", Press Release, *The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)*, Vienna, October 7, 2015. Accessed October 20, 2015. <http://www.osce.org/fsc/190691>

<sup>33</sup> "Sweden", *The Council of Europe*, 2015. Web. Accessed October 20, 2015.

<http://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/sweden>

<sup>34</sup> Browning, C. S. "Branding Nordicity: Models, Identity and the Decline of Exceptionalism", *Cooperation and Conflict: Journal of the Nordic International Studies Association*, Vol. 42, No. 1, March 2007, p. 44. Accessed October 20, 2015. <http://cac.sagepub.com/content/42/1/27.full.pdf>

also notably contributed to civilian crisis management and policing operations in the framework of the nascent CSDP (formerly ESDP) in order to balance the then developing military dimension that they are today facing with great concern. Again, both countries are linked by their EU membership and full involvement in the CFSP (in contrast to Denmark), which they use to informally promote Nordic values in the European and International spheres. Sweden differentiated itself from the other Nordic countries in its **internationalist solidarism**, which the country emphasized towards the Third World. As a result, it strongly criticized the US involvement in Vietnam and granted refuge to American military deserters. Indeed, **neutrality** is interpreted by Sweden as a right and duty to be vocal on international and moral issues<sup>35</sup>.

In his article *Swedish Strategic Culture after 1945*, Gunnar Åselius explains that Sweden developed its military force during the Cold War (which was eventually dismantled in the 2000s). This allowed the national armed forces to be quite autonomous and significant, compared to many other Western countries at that time. It was also the first country in the world to ban Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs), which illustrated its growing interest in the academic training of officers, the adoption of an official military doctrine, and advanced thinking about warfare. This move however demanded modernization of the Swedish army, which is currently still in progress<sup>36</sup>. Today, there seems to be a divide between the importance of international operations and national defense, reflected in the multifaceted governmental projects in foreign and security policies.

#### d. Economic Policy

##### *European Union (EU)*

As mentioned in the *Political System* section, the Swedish 2015 budget was an important issue back in September 2014, and it was the opposition's proposal that was eventually adopted. Nonetheless, the center-left coalition's 2016 budget should be adopted in late 2015 by the *Riksdag* without complication, thanks to the December Agreement.

In its 2015 country report on Sweden, the European Commission noted GDP and employment growth founded on increasing domestic demand in the country (robust consumption and growing construction sector), supported by low interest rates, growing disposable incomes and expansionary fiscal policy. The Commission however indicates that growth could be further expanded by stronger external demand. The country thus should boost its exports. The country's **high investment in research and development** is said to be high compared to peer countries, which could boost the long-term competitiveness of Sweden. Sweden has proven to quickly recover from employment crisis levels, but still presents an eight percent unemployment rate due to the growing labor force. The European Commission also identified several macroeconomic and structural issues in the country, including: a high level of household indebtedness (about 160% of disposable income on average in 2013), increasing house prices, high unemployment of low-skilled young people and non-EU nationals, and weakening of school education. Finally, the report points out the Swedish fiscal stability, which could however be impacted by the ageing population.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32-40.

<sup>36</sup> Åselius, G. "Swedish Strategic Culture after 1945", *Cooperation and Conflict: Journal of the Nordic International Studies Association*, Vol. 40, No. 1, March 2005, p. 25-44. Accessed October 20, 2015. <http://cac.sagepub.com/content/40/1/25.short>

<sup>37</sup> European Commission, "Country report Sweden 2015 Including an In-Depth Review on the prevention and correction of macroeconomic imbalances", *Commission Staff Working Document*, Brussels, February 26, 2015. Web. Accessed October 22, 2015. [http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/csr2015/cr2015\\_sweden\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/csr2015/cr2015_sweden_en.pdf)

The resilient character of Sweden's economy in comparison to other EU countries is also confirmed by the OECD 2015 Economic Survey of Sweden, which underlines the benefits of the previous **fiscal expansion** put in place through tax cuts. This report notes the important role of education and well-being for economic growth in Sweden, but points out the lack of productivity growth (due to labor market rigidities). Similarly to the European Commission's report, the OECD survey overview indicates the necessary better integration of disadvantaged groups and improvement of skills.<sup>38</sup>

The 2016 budget suggested by Swedish Finance Minister Magdalena Andersson emphasizes investment in jobs, education and climate action, as well as budget deficit reduction. Sweden plans to reduce unemployment by means of **infrastructure** adaptation, **skills improvement**, and **gender equality**. Furthermore, the Government aims at boosting education through staff reforms (salaries, training, quantity,...) and intends to have a leading role in **climate change and energy**, notably by investing in renewable energies within developing countries. The center-left coalition made clear that it would focus on increased welfare and security, as well as on improved asylum policy.<sup>39</sup> Sweden expects its economy to improve in 2016, due to the better international situation and to the reforms it will implement. These reforms are fully funded on the basis of revenue increases and expenditure cuts (**fiscal contraction**). Revenue increase should be made for instance through gradual reduction of earned income tax credit and raised energy taxes, and expenditure cuts should take place notably by changing upward adjustment of assistance allowance. The total budget for 2016 is expected to amount to SEK 933.9 billion (€ 99.1 billion).<sup>40</sup> Overall, in view of the critiques and recommendations made by the European Commission and the OECD, Sweden's response for 2016 seems appropriate.

### *Economic Diplomacy & Foreign Trade*

Foreign trade is not sufficiently developed in Sweden, as noted in the previous section. Exports and imports had reached pre-crisis levels in 2011, but have been overall decreasing since then. Sweden is however oriented toward foreign trade, especially of timber, hydropower, and iron ore. Sweden's main partners are Germany, the US, and Norway. Furthermore, while the country had always managed to have an overall slightly positive net trade balance, the later has been negative in the last year. The country recorded a trade deficit for two consecutive terms in 2015 (SEK 3.6 billion, € 382 million in August 2015).<sup>41</sup>

Recently, Sweden's economic diplomatic ties with France made a priority, following the visit of Harlem Désir (French Secretary of State for European Affairs) to Stockholm in September 2015 regarding potential opportunities for French firms on the Swedish market, in the field of energy transition. Economic cooperation was also recently discussed with Poland, with regard to economic, scientific, technological and investment cooperation, following consultation in Stockholm in April 2015<sup>42</sup>. Finally, in its Budget Bill for 2016, Sweden mentioned the

<sup>38</sup> Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), *OECD Economic Surveys: Sweden 2015*, OECD Publishing, Paris, March 2015. Web. Accessed October 22, 2015.

<http://www.oecd.org/eco/surveys/Sweden-2015-overview.pdf>

<sup>39</sup> "The Budget Bill for 2016 – Investing in Sweden's future", *Government Offices of Sweden*, September 21, 2015. Web. Accessed October 22, 2015. <http://www.government.se/press-releases/2015/09/the-budget-bill-for-2016--investing-in-swedens-future/>

<sup>40</sup> "The 2016 Budget in five minutes", *Government Offices of Sweden*, September 21, 2015. Web. Accessed October 22, 2015. <http://www.government.se/articles/2015/09/the-2016-budget-in-five-minutes/>

<sup>41</sup> "Sweden: Economic Indicators", *Trading Economics*, October 22, 2015. Web. Accessed October 22, 2015. <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/sweden/indicators>

<sup>42</sup> n.a. "Suède – Diplomatie économique – Rencontre de Harlem Désir avec les entreprises françaises impliquées dans la transition énergétique (17 septembre 2015)", *France Diplomatie*, September 2015. Web. Accessed October 22, 2015. <http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy/economic-diplomacy-foreign->

changing security environment and the necessary increase in defense spending and in development cooperation<sup>43</sup>.

e. Other Diplomatic Priorities

The “**feminist**” **foreign policy** adopted by Minister Margot Wallström emphasizes democracy and human rights, on the basis of the “four Rs” of gender roles: reality check, rights, representation, and resources. Her focus is on gender equality in international relations and global sustainability through the rule of law, which are absolute conditions for peace and stability. Her strong personality has cut with previous Foreign Ministers, as Wallström made clear that human rights respect will go beyond Sweden’s diplomatic relations (notably toward Israel and Saudi Arabia). She made clear during an interview for France 24 in May 2015 that “values come at a cost” that she is willing to pay. Despite having been characterized as an “undiplomatic diplomat”, Wallström argues that she is listening and respecting international colleagues while applying the values that Sweden and the EU stand for. She believes her approach is very modern, at the time of global violent extremism.

During the latter interview, Wallström has qualified the sexual abuses scandal over French UN Peacekeepers as “disgusting”, and necessarily needing accountability in order to not undermine the credibility of the UN. Regarding the flow of asylum seekers arriving in Europe, Sweden being one of the most generous receivers with Germany, the Foreign Minister explained that she is supporting the even sharing of responsibilities in the EU. Issues of lacking legal ways to seek refuge, illegal smuggling, and a necessary relocation agreement were mentioned, as well as addressing root causes of conflicts. In respect of her statement that Sweden will recognize a Palestinian state, Wallström comments that she will continue **taking side for peace**, and that she has the support of the Swedish national Parliament with this particular regard. She describes Sweden’s relationship with Russia as “difficult”, and confirms that the country is very worried about the situation in Ukraine and about Russian threatening behavior. She explains that “**we have to stand united in the European Union**” about this, which indicates a pro-CFSP stance from her part.<sup>44</sup>

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[http://www.mfa.gov.pl/en/news/stockholm\\_talks\\_on\\_polish\\_swedish\\_economic\\_cooperation](http://www.mfa.gov.pl/en/news/stockholm_talks_on_polish_swedish_economic_cooperation)

<sup>43</sup> “The Budget Bill for 2016 – Investing in Sweden’s future”, *Government Offices of Sweden*, September 21, 2015. Web. Accessed October 22, 2015. <http://www.government.se/press-releases/2015/09/the-budget-bill-for-2016--investing-in-swedens-future/>

<sup>44</sup> Karlsson, M. “Swedish FM: ‘Diplomacy today is about courage and patience’”, *The Interview*, France 24, May 5, 2015. Web. Accessed October 22, 2015. <http://www.france24.com/en/20150501-interview-margot-wallstrom-swedish-foreign-minister-human-rights-car-whistleblower-israel>

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