Does Sweden’s counterterrorism strategy correspond with the EU?

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Abstract

In this thesis, the norms used in Sweden’s counterterrorism strategy will be compared to the norms that are used in the European Union’s counterterrorism strategy. Sweden has been criticized by scholars and parties of the parliament for not implementing laws that are strict enough so that Sweden can sentence those who have travelled and joined terrorist groups like ISIS. The EU sets out strategies and directives as guidelines that its member states should adopt. The aim of this research is to see if Sweden’s is regressive in relation to the EU, or if Sweden’s way of handling counterterrorism is in line with the directives and strategies that EU set out for its member states.

To be able to study this, content analysis is used to analyze material from Sweden and the EU that focus on how the work of counterterrorism should be done. With the use of norm theory, the central norms in the material is recognized, and the norms which Sweden uses is compared with the ones used within the EU. The comparison shows that there are differences in how the norms are used. Sweden has adopted norms from the EU and changed them to fit in the Swedish context which repeatedly refers to the importance of the norm’s compatibility with human rights.

Keywords: Counterterrorism, terrorism, norm, Sweden, European Union (EU)

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1 Introduction

The Swedish law defines terrorism as a crime that can harm a state with the intention of creating fear among the society, to make a state take action or to destabilize or destroy the fundamental political or social structures in a state (SFS 2003:148). The aim of all counterterrorism activities is to try and prevent terrorist attacks from being carried out. Both the European Union (EU) and the Swedish counterterrorism strategy emphasize the importance of cooperation and collaboration between its member states (Skr. 2014/15:146, 2014 and 2015/0281 (COD), 2017, p. 5). Terrorism is a global problem that requires a coordinated response. The EU and its member states need to work together to combat terrorism.

On the 7th of April in 2017, Sweden was hit by a terrorist attack on Drottninggatan in Stockholm. Five people were killed, and 15 people were injured (Gustafsson and Ranstorp, 2017, p. 15). This is only one of the many terrorist attacks that has affected Europe in the past years. ISIS has pointed out that European countries are targets for their violent attacks. The terrorist attack in Brussels in 2014 and the attack in Paris in 2015, were partly carried out by people who have returned from Syria where they had been trained (Gustafsson and Ranstorp, 2017, pp. 14-15). Since 2012, approximately 300 people traveled from Sweden to join ISIS in Syria (Gustafsson and Ranstorp, 2017, pp. 13-14), and the events in Syria have led to the largest humanitarian crisis in the world today. The report from Gustafsson and Ranstorp is based on statistics from the Swedish Security Service who recognizes that there is a risk that some of the people that return after fighting with ISIS will pose a threat or commit terrorist attacks in Sweden or another country (Gustafsson and Ranstorp, 2017, p. 15). Incidents involving Swedish citizens who have travelled abroad to fight with terrorist groups are not new. Since the 1970’s people have travelled from Sweden to join different terrorist groups. From 1970 to 1990, most of the terrorist activism was based on financial and logistic support (Gustafsson and Ranstorp, 2017, p. 23). There have been Swedish citizens who have been arrested for suspected involvement in the terrorist attacks in Paris in 2015 and in Brussels in 2016 (Gustafsson and Ranstorp, 2017, p. 30).
Since the beginning of 2019, the fight against ISIS seems to be over and hundreds of people have surrendered (Said, 2019). The foreign fighters who joined ISIS want to come back home, but many of the foreign governments refuse to take them back (The Guardian, 2019). The Swedish prime minister has stated that Sweden will not help those who has made the choice to join ISIS (Fock and Blomgren, 2019). There is however a difference regarding how European countries handle the return of ISIS participants. The British government revoked the citizenship of a women who left Britain as a teenager to join ISIS (Addley, 2019). Denmark is another country that has changed their laws on how they handle ISIS returners. The Danish government has decided that parents that have had kids during their time with ISIS, will not be able to pass on their citizenship to their children (Olsson, 2019). These two examples are controversial measures that has been taken to handle ISIS-returners.

How to handle returning ISIS participants, is a complex problem that differ among European countries. Since the beginning of 2019, there has been a debate among the Swedish political parties on how to handle ISIS-returners and how to strengthen the Swedish counterterrorism work. Sweden has been criticized by parties in its own parliament as well as from experts in the field for not acting and implementing strategies that are tough enough for combating terrorism. Among the critical voices is the Swedish terror expert, Ranstorp. He gives example of how the counterterrorism work in Denmark where the collaboration between the social authorities and the police is well developed and he argues that this is one of the main aspects that helps Denmark prevent terrorism. Ranstorp also points to the fact that Denmark has made it legal to revoke the citizenship for those with dual citizenship, who have committed a serious crime (Ranstorp, 2019). Another critical voice is Herlin-Karnell, who points to the fact that Sweden has not implemented directives given by the EU regarding participation with terrorist groups, or that Sweden was too late in criminalizing terrorist travels. This will make it difficult for Sweden to prosecute those who have travelled to join ISIS (Herlin-Karnell, 2019).

Previous research partly focuses on counterterrorism strategies impact on civil rights and liberties and how these are restricted in the counterterrorism strategies presented by influential states such as the UK and France (O’Brien, 2016, p. 368, p. 380). One example that is given is that the UK may intrude on individuals’ rights to privacy when they allowed public surveillance as a preventive measure in their counterterrorism work. This can be seen as going against article 8 in the European Convention on Human Rights (Fenwick. D, 2011, p. 187). This is one aspect that connects counterterrorism to a
broader societal concern which is important to study, since what is supposed to protect the society from terrorism, can intrude on every people’s rights and freedom.

The study of counterterrorism strategies relates well to political science and global politics as first of all, both the Swedish and the EU counterterrorism strategy states that terrorism is a global problem. The return of foreign fighters from Iraq and Syria, and the spread of terrorism on the internet is something that affect all states and to be able to combat terrorism, there needs to be collaboration, exchange of information and a common set of rules for the counterterrorism work to be efficient (2015/0281 (COD), 2017, p. 4-5). Secondly, the EU emphasis that there is a need for political action within the EU member states to change and evolve its laws so that it fit with the demands that the EU set out (2015/0281 (COD), 2017, p. 5). As is argued for in the counterterrorism strategies as well as in previous research, the global political arena needs to have a coherent view on how to combat terrorism (Bures, 2006, p. 72,) and it is therefore important to conduct further research that study this common set of rules and to see if they are similar to each other, which they are supposed to be. Since Sweden has been criticized for not creating rules that are tough enough, Sweden makes an interesting case. Sweden’s work in the area of counterterrorism relies on the Swedish counterterrorism strategy, and since Sweden should follow directives from the EU, the Swedish counterterrorism strategy in relation to the EU's counterterrorism strategy is worth analyzing. By placing Sweden in relation to the EU makes this study a part of the international politics and political science.

1.1 Purpose and research question

Sweden has been criticized for its counterterrorism strategy, and compared to other European countries, Sweden has not implemented as strict laws and regulations regarding foreign fighters that return to their home country. Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to see if Sweden’s is regressive in relation to the EU, or if Sweden’s way of handling counterterrorism is in line with the directives and strategies that EU set out for its member states. One way to study states strategies and behavior is to study states way of using norms. Studying norms can help to look inside social institutions and how new patterns of politics are created (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1989, p. 891). I have chosen to study the norms in these strategies to see the differences between Sweden and the EU. This leads
to my research question: What are the difference between the norms that are used in the Swedish counterterrorism strategy in relation to the norms used in the EU’s counterterrorism strategy?

The following chapter outlines what previous research that has been conducted and chapter three will present the analytical framework that shows what norm theory is. The data and the method of content analysis that will be used in this thesis is described in chapter four. The data is analyzed in chapter five. Finally, chapter six summarizes and discusses the result of the analysis in relation to previous research and presents the concluding remarks.

I have limited the scope of this thesis to only look into the case of Sweden in comparison to the EU, partly because Sweden is not mentioned or analyzed that much in previous research. As is mentioned in the introduction, Sweden has been criticized for not having implemented laws against terrorism fast enough. This makes Sweden an interesting case to study, to go into depth in their counterterrorism strategy and see its compatibility with what the EU sets out as proper actions for its member states.

I am fully aware that there are many different extremist groups in Sweden and within the EU such as left-wing extremist groups and right-wing “white supremacy” movements (Skr. 2014/15:146, 2015, p. 4). However, this thesis will only focus on terror related crimes and organizations associated to ISIS. I have chosen this limitation because of recent events where the Swedish parties have debated regarding that the Swedish counterterrorism strategy must change and tougher laws regarding terrorism must be implemented. In these debates, they mainly focus on the foreign fighters returning from Syria and Iraq as a result of the fall of ISIS. The material from the EU mainly focus on terrorism related to Al-Qaeda and ISIS. The Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism from the Council of Europe sets out how member states should work to prevent terrorism. Even if this can be seen as an important document, I have chosen not to make it a part of my thesis in order to avoid it moving in the direction of becoming too legal.
2 Literature review

The study of norms and their importance has been studied in many different areas. This chapter shows what previous research that has been done in the area of norms in counterterrorism. This chapter will be divided into three categories; *Is there a limit for counterterrorism actions? Norms in counterterrorism* and *Counterterrorism norms within the EU*. The first section will discuss in general how states approach terrorist offences and their counterterrorism strategies. The second section discusses norms in counterterrorism and will be of greater length than the other two sections since it covers the broader area of norms in counterterrorism. The third and last section discusses counterterrorism and the EU, and how norms are used in the EU’s counterterrorism strategies and policies.

2.1 Is there a limit for counterterrorism actions?

There are many different measures that states take as a part of their strategy towards terrorism. Dragu discusses the restriction of civil liberties and individual freedoms as a preventive strategy against terrorism and how effective these measures actually are. Measures such as restrictions of free speech and support of terrorist groups are measures that states has implemented as a counterterrorism strategy. Dragu poses the question to weather a policy that restricts rights and liberties affect the likelihood of terrorism. He studies it by using a two-period model which focuses on the interaction between security agencies and terrorist organization, where the first-period determines the second period of interaction. His analysis comes to the conclusion that if liberal societies stay true to their values and do not limit individuals’ rights and liberties, they can reduce the likelihood of terrorist attacks in the future (Dragu, 2016, p. 224).

O’Brien agrees with Dragu and uses the UK as an example in his discussions. O’Brien argues that a disorder emerges when states undermine human rights and stated ethical norms (O’Brien, 2016, p. 367-368). He mainly focuses on the UK, France and Germany and their normative rhetoric because they are seen as having distinct
approaches to counterterrorism (O’Brien, 2016, p. 368). O’Brien also points to the rights in the ECHR, that states the right of liberty and security, the right of fair trial and the rights against torture (O’Brien, 2016, p. 369). O’Brien means that there is no clear pattern between the countries counterterrorism strategies, but there is a messiness since their policies and actions contradict. They say they are going to respect human rights, at the same time as ratify laws that violate human rights for Muslims, both guilty and innocent ones (O’Brien, 2016, p. 380). Wolfendal also discusses the possibility of innocent people being targets of counterterrorism strategies when preventive measures become an important tool in counterterrorism (Wolfendale, 2007, p. 85).

Helen Fenwick comes to a similar conclusion as O’Brien by pointing to the shift the UK has created from reactive measures to preventive measures that the UK has implemented as a part of their counterterrorism strategy. This entails that people become suspects and possibly detained without trial which can be found to be a violation of human rights (Fenwick, 2008, p. 260). She means that the definition of what terrorism entails is broadened, in order to be able to convict people of being involved in terrorist actions. By broadening the definition, human rights are more at risk of being denied. She also points to that the Muslim society is more at risk of being seen as suspects, because of the Islamist terror organizations that pose a great threat to the UK (Fenwick, 2008, p. 267-268).

The articles above focus on the UK and ECHR and puts international rights as the central aspect that needs to be taken into account. Henschke and Legrand differ from the articles above. They also study the strategies of counterterrorism in connection to human rights and civil liberties (Henschke and Legrand 2017, p. 544). However, they take a different approach by using an applied ethics approach to engage with the moral justifications of counterterrorism strategies and policies. They then look at the actual reasons and justifications that is used to justify actions (Henschke and Legrand, 2017, pp. 547- 548). Their intention with the article is to draw attention to the important role that values have in justifications and statements from politicians regarding counterterrorism (Henschke and Legrand, 2017, p. 552). They come to the conclusion that citizens want their society to be safe, at the same time as they want to keep the core values that creates their society. And if counterterrorism strategies violate the core values and human rights, the terrorists have achieved their goal (Henschke and Legrand, 2017, p. 557).

Technology plays an important role when combating terrorism which Helen Fenwick also acknowledges, but she discusses the concept of internet surveillance, which can include tracing individual persons internet trail to trace suspect individuals.
points to the UK Terrorist Act 2000 and that these kinds of measures that is used in counterterrorism strategies can be seen as intruding on individual’s privacy and civil liberties when looking at its compatibility with the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) (Fenwick. H, 2011, p. 108-109). Daniel Fenwick discusses individuals right to privacy under article 8 in ECHR in relation to British legislation regarding public surveillance. He uses statements from The Council of Europe that has made clear that surveillance of an intimate setting is permitted (Fenwick. D, 2011, p. 187). Daniel Fenwick uses statements from the council of Europe that have stated that with respect for people’s private life, surveillance should only be used when there is a threat to the public safety (Fenwick. D, 2011, p. 188).

Many of the scholars above engage in a normative analysis when studying how counterterrorism strategies and statements are compatible with human rights. Many of the scholars focus on the UK, as well as France and Germany which gives a narrow picture of European states’ counterterrorism strategies.

2.2 Norms in counterterrorism

In the study of norms in counterterrorism, the security norm is one that is often discussed. Fisk and Ramos study norm diffusion and they theorize that the spread of the security norm where preventive self-defense is a common tool, is driven by realist impulses. They focus on the US that portrays themselves as a norm entrepreneur and the diffusion of an immoral norm (Fisk and Ramos, p. 164). They use media reports from 2001 to study if the US actually is a norm entrepreneur of the preventive self-defense norms. To be able to study this, they compare their results with cases from Russia, India, Germany and China where they also rely on media reports (Fisk and Ramos, p. 168, p. 171). Fisk and Ramos come to the conclusion that the US can be seen as a norm entrepreneur for the norm of preventive self-defense, but also that if this norm is taken for granted and not questioned, it changes the functioning of international relations, since it is a violation of the just war principles (Fisk and Ramos, p. 182).

Jose does a similar research as Fisk and Ramos but focuses on the emerging norm of targeted killings. Jose uses Finnemore and Sikkinks concept of the norm life cycle, to study targeted killings as a new norm that emerges. Jose argue that the norm life cycle is a static model where the content of the model gets fixed. She argues for an
improvement of their model by arguing that there is a fluidity in norms life cycle (Jose, 2017, p. 45). Jose uses statements from Obama and others that worked close to him to shows how the United States (US) justified their targeted killings before the killing of bin Laden and the targeted killing of bin Laden (Jose, 2017, p. 51). However, she comes to the conclusion that targeted killing has not yet emerged as a norm since there are still uncertainties in the international community regarding what is appropriate behavior within the potential targeted killing norm (Jose, 2017, p. 57). She argues that the norm of targeted killing might be emerging when studying reactions to targeted killings done by the US, but she continues to argue that a norms life cycle is fluid, which indicates that the progress of a norm also can regress (Jose, 2017, p. 58).

The possibility that a norm can regress is what Kutz studies in his research. Kutz discusses the concept of “norm death” as he calls it which refers to how the presence of a norm weakens and then becomes invisible (Kutz, 2014, p. 430). Kutz shows how the norm of anti-torture and anti-assassination has shifted into being invisible in times of emergency by pointing to 9/11. He argues that the norms that was based on prohibition has shifted and become norms of permission (Kutz, 2014, pp. 438-439). Kutz uses the term of utilitarian fear to describe the shift in norms where the state weighs the lives of many versus the lives of a few when deciding what appropriate measures that needs to be taken to uphold security in the society. Even if the actions taken is not within that state’s territory (Kutz, 2014, p. 440).

One aspect that many scholars focus on is that norms in counterterrorism open for the possibility to violate human rights and discrimination. This aspect is discussed by both Burgess and Dunne. Burgess discusses counterterrorism strategies that are implemented in Uganda and Chad to give example of two African countries and their work against terrorism. He points out that many African countries have not fully implemented human rights and democracy norms and counterterrorism strategies is used as a way to suppress human rights (Burgess, 2016, p. 316). Burgess argues that there has been a resistance from Kenya for example in implementing counterterrorism norms because it violates human rights. They argued that counterterrorism laws weaken civil liberties and democracy and they needed to take into account the Muslim communities in the countries that could be affected of these laws (Burgess, 2016, p. 317). Whereas Burgess focuses on countries unwillingness to implement counterterrorism strategies because it opens for the opportunity to suppress human rights, Dunne discusses the disempowerment of the human rights regime and how those who have been the norm
entrepreneurs of human rights, now are the ones who violate the same rights (Dunne, 2007, p. 270). Dunne uses the example of the US and the UK to demonstrate how liberal states has challenged the human rights norms with their counterterrorism strategies. He studies the debate in the US that focus on the use of torture. He points to the 1984 UN convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment that clearly states that any type of torture is prohibited (Dunne, 2007, p. 276). Dunne points to that the UK differ from the US in that they have not openly allowed torture. However, the British government has allowed for terror suspects to be sent to countries that have a reputation of torturing such people. The British government have pushed for interventions in the name of human rights but are breaking human rights law through their anti-terror strategies (Dunne, 2007, p. 280).

Both Burgess and Dunne conclude that counterterrorism opens for the opportunity to suppress human rights, since it is done for the greater good. Burgess points to that the motivation in Chad to implement counterterrorism norms has been utilitarian motivation, that it would stabilize the region and strengthen the president’s regime. The similarities between both Uganda and Chad is that the implementation of counterterrorism strategies has not helped the implementation of human rights norms in these countries. Contrary, counterterrorism allows for more violence against oppositions and regime critics (Burgess, 2016, p. 323). Whereas Dunne argues that there has been a shift in norms where there is a possibility to deviate from human rights in the name of counterterrorism. The architects of the human rights regime have made that possible (Dunne, 2007, p. 284).

Another aspect which is central in the research on norms in counterterrorism are states unwillingness to try and understand the terrorist enemy. Parker argues that current counterterrorism strategies are counterproductive and the measures that states take should be guided by human rights norms (Parker, 2012, p. 5). Parker argues that instead of trying to understand the terrorist enemy in some way, what usually happens is that states dehumanize of the enemy (Parker, 2012, pp. 6-7). He argues that to be able to produce an effective counterterrorism strategy, it is important to understand that terrorists are driven by the same impulses as everyone else (Parker, 2012, p. 8). Parker uses statements from the Bush administration as well as statements from people who have joined terrorist organizations. The statements from the Bush administrations show how they dehumanize the enemy. From that he concludes that those measures only make it worse, since one aspect that makes people turn to terrorist organizations is exclusion and
discrimination from the state. Parker argues that by turning to human rights norms when combatting terrorism, states won’t play into the hands of the terrorist (Parker, 2012, pp. 18-19). Makinda comes to a similar conclusion in his research. He argues that as the same way as our society is built on norms, so is terrorism. He argues that to be able to combat terrorism in an effective way, states need to understand what norms and values terrorism is built upon (Makinda, 2006 pp. 23-24).

### 2.3 Counterterrorism norms and the EU

The counterterrorism strategies of the EU are one of the cases that is studied in this thesis. Therefore, this section will discuss research that focus on counterterrorism and the EU, as well as norms that occur in the counterterrorism strategies of the EU.

Bures studies the EU policies on counterterrorism after 11 September (Bures, 2006, p. 57). He studies the policies that occurred both before and after 11 September and concludes that the decisions that were made at the EU level, have not been completely implemented by the member states. Another issue is that states interpret the frameworks differently, and because the EU is built on its member states, it is important that there is a coherent view and support for it to work (Bures, 2006, p. 72).

Even if a coherent view among the EU member states is important when combating terrorism, Wiener sees the difference between the member states as an advantage. Wiener argue that the EU and its member states have a different approach and strategies towards terrorism compared with the United States. She argues that the EU has an advantage when developing strategies towards terrorism since there are diverse experience between its member states. In this article, Wiener discuss and analyze how we can conceptualize the European understanding of foreign- and security policies that reaches beyond national interests (Wiener, 2008, p. 198). Wiener points to that a normative structure is constructed through the definition of the fundamental and constitutional norms that are stated in the UN Charter as well as in the Treaty of the European Union (Wiener, 2008, p.201). Wiener concludes that the diversity among the EU member states could be of advantage when policies and treaties are made. However, this diversity can become a problem when a terrorist threat emerges and a crisis occurs (Wiener, 2008, pp. 213-214).
Björkdahl studies the impact that small states can have on the global arena, and more specifically, she studies Sweden as a norm entrepreneur in the EU and the UN. She studies how small states adopt norm entrepreneurship as a tool in their foreign policy strategy (Björkdahl, 2013, p. 323). Björkdahl argues that small states restructure their identities when acting as norm entrepreneurs. From a constructivist point of view, norms and identities are constitutive. She emphasizes that national identities are not fixed, rather they are formed by these changing norms. Important in her study is that identity and foreign policy are interrelated (Björkdahl, 2013, p. 324). Björkdahl points out that Sweden as a neutral state has the legacy to act as a norm entrepreneur on the global arena (Björkdahl, 2013, p. 325). Björkdahl concludes that Sweden’s norm entrepreneurship was more successful in the EU than in the UN, where one explanation is that there are more shared core values among the EU member states than it is within the UN (Björkdahl, 2013, p. 334).

2.4 Summary

The previous research that has been done in the area of counterterrorism mainly focus on states counterterrorism actions in relation to society’s core values and human rights. Many of them agree that actions practiced as a part of a state’s counterterrorism work often violate human rights. What is also emphasized is that many states also allow violations of human rights, as long as they succeed to prevent terrorism. What many scholars point to as the proper way to act, is that promoting human rights while combating terrorism should be the aim of all states. Previous research also show that to study norms within counterterrorism allows for the study of how states think that counterterrorism work should be done, which fits well with the purpose of my research since my aim is to study the difference between Sweden and the EU in how they promote norms in counterterrorism.

The previous research on counterterrorism and norms mainly focuses on larger states such as the UK, France or Germany. As Bures emphasizes, member states of the EU interpret the counterterrorism frameworks differently, and because the EU is built from its member states, it is important to adapt a coherent view. My thesis contributes with a thorough study of Sweden’s counterterrorism strategy as well as with an insight into how Sweden interpret and complies with the EU’s counterterrorism framework. By
pointing out where the Swedish strategy does not comply with the EU’s strategies, the study contributes with insights on where the Swedish strategy can be improved. Furthermore, Sweden is not mentioned or studied to such an extent in previous research on counterterrorism and norms, and therefore my study also contributes by filling that gap in the literature. Finally, my thesis also contributes to the research field through the use of norm theory and more specific Winston’s theory of norm clusters which has not been used to study the Swedish counterterrorism strategy before.
3 Theoretical framework

The analytical framework in this thesis focus on norm theory. The first section describes what a norm is with the use of Finnemore and Sikkink’s, and Winston’s understanding of what a norm is. The second section assumes Winston’s understanding of norm diffusion and norm clusters. This analytical framework fits my study since it allows me to study both the understanding of norms and also how norms diffuse, from the EU to Sweden.

3.1 What is a norm?

The basic and common definition of norms is that it is “a standard of appropriate behavior for actors with a given identity” (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998, p. 891). There are different kinds of norms, such as regulative norms which constrain a certain behavior, whereas constitutive norms are seen as creating both new actors and categories of action (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998, p. 891). Norms are distinct from rules since they view what is proper behavior, and we recognize norm-breaking behavior when there is a disapproval towards the action that has been made. When recognizing a norm, our moral justification judge what is a proper action or not. Finnemore and Sikkink point out that norms can be both global and regional, what is seen as proper behavior within one region might not be seen as proper on a global scale (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998, p. 892). Many international norms started as domestic norms and became international because of the work of norm entrepreneurs. However, when it is the other way around, international norms way of working into domestic structures, there can appear difference between states in how they interpret the same norm and there can occur important variations (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998, p. 893). Finnemore and Sikkink points out that by definition there are no bad norms. Those norms that the majority of people would consider to be bad, were once considered good and powerful since groups of people believed that these norms were setting out the appropriate way to behave (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998, p. 892).
Norms can be used to justify actions and describe responsibility and providing solutions to problems. Norms can therefore be understood as constitutive or constraining in their function. Winston argues that because of these two functions, norms consist of three components: problem, value, and behavior (Winston, 2017, p. 640). Social constructivists see norms as constitutive, which indicates that norms create categories of actors and actions, and continuously determine these actors’ identities and interests. Norms create meaning through a collective understanding of who and what things are, and this meaning includes if these things are valued or not. When the value is defined, it defines the problem. The society’s understanding of the value, if it is good or bad, determines the problem. The constraint function of a norm determines the acceptable behavior. Widely held values justify and accept the proper behavior (Winston, 2017, p. 640).

This thesis will assume the common definition of a norm that Finnemore and Sikkink describe and complement it with Winston’s social constructivist understanding of the norms three components: problem, value and behavior.

### 3.2 Norm diffusion and norm clusters

Norm diffusion specifies the process when a norm travels and are taken from their specific context and adopted into a new specific context. (Winston, 2017, p. 645). In this process norms can be seen as either stable or flexible. Either states adopt the norm and its meaning as it is, which makes the norm stable, or states may also try and adapt the meaning of the norm into their understanding, which makes the norm flexible. Those states that adopt the norm and the contents of problem, value and behavior might adjust their own behavior so that it fits with the meaning of the norm. While other states adapt the meaning of the norm. (Winston, 2017 p. 643). While some state will accept norms and groups of norms as they are, others might adopt a portion of the options that are presented within this norm group (Winston, 2017, p. 644).

Winston presents a theoretical framework called norm clusters as a new way to understand norms and states adoption of it. A norm cluster is a collection of problems, values and behaviors that are similar enough to be adopted as a cluster. The norm cluster has both the constitutive and constraint function of norms which means that states are bound to act in an appropriate way, but they are relatively free to determine what the
appropriate behavior indicates within its own context (Winston, 2017, p. 647). Norm clusters have boundaries, it is not all combinations of norms that create a norm cluster. However, norm clusters are formed because of the process of innovation and discourse between actors who are relevant for the creation of the norm cluster (Winston, 2017, p. 647). Winston’s model of norm cluster is a way of understanding how norms works in the real world where the same norm might be adopted, but where a variety of outcomes are presented and accepted (Winston, 2017, p. 647).

A norm cluster then means that the problem and value are the same for all states, in this case terrorism is the problem and all states agree that this is bad, but the appropriate behavior that states undertake is different. The creation of a norm cluster is made possible when states choose to change the outcome. Some states will choose multiple outcomes of a norm cluster, while other states will choose a single outcome. Winston points out that with the theory of norm clusters there is a possibility for states to choose different outcomes that are either stable or flexible, but these different outcomes can all be traced back to the larger problem and value (Winston, 2017, p. 648).

For enabling the creation of a norm cluster, the ability of the norm components; problem, value and behavior, to diffuse separately needs to be accepted by larger community. The result of the diffusion then also needs to be accepted by the community (Winston, 2017, p. 648). Winston points to that often norms are studied one by one, where one problem is connected to one value and one behavior. The concept of norms cluster allows for an understanding that norms interact with each other, and that this interaction allows different understanding of the problem and what value and behavior that is proper. It allows continuity and change and different ways of adopting the norm (Winston, 2017, p. 652). This theory will be used to be able to show what norms that are used and assumed in the Swedish counterterrorism strategy, and furthermore it will be possible to see how these norms are linked to each other with the use and definition of a norm cluster.

The counterterrorism strategies that will be studied in this thesis mainly focus on how they can prevent people from becoming radicalized and what states are allowed to do to prevent terrorist attacks. In the discussion among the Swedish political parties as well as in previous research on counterterrorism, human rights are often mentioned as an aspect that states need to take in careful consideration when creating laws that are supposed to prevent terrorism. Human rights are core values within the EU as well as in Sweden, and therefore an aspect that all measures towards terrorism need to
respect (2015/0281 (COD), 2017, p. 2 and Skr. 2014/15:146, 2015, p. 3). A theory that focus on human rights could have been a possible theory to apply in this thesis to be able to investigate how the counterterrorism strategies are compatible with human rights. As is mentioned in the Literature review, human rights can also be seen as norms that set the standards in the international society and something that states violate when combating terrorism. I chose to focus on the concept of norms to keep the relation to political science and not move into a legal focus. Finnemore and Sikkink points out that the study of norms makes it possible to look inside social institutions and see how different elements are renegotiated. With time, these new elements create new patterns of politics (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998, p. 891). The use of norm theory allows me to study these patterns of politics that has been created within counterterrorism and to see the difference between Sweden and the EU.

Norms set the standards in the international society (Winston, 2017, p. 640) and are therefore a suitable theory to use when studying the differences between Sweden and the EU regarding their different view on counterterrorism. Within their counterterrorism strategies, they set out standards of what they think is appropriate behavior. There are many ways to study norms, for example Finnemore and Sikkink gives an example of studying the life cycle of norms, from the norm emergency to the internalization of the norm (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998, p. 895). However, I have chosen to use Winston’s norm theory of norm clusters as I am studying which norms that are prominent within the Swedish and EU counterterrorism strategies. I find that the theory of norm clusters fits well with my aim and research question since many of the norms that are mentioned are similar to each other, and therefore form a norm cluster. Whereas Finnemore and Sikkink’s norm theory of the norm’s life cycle, would have shifted the focus to fewer norms and their evolvement.
4    Methodology

To be able to select which norms that are present in the strategies from Sweden and the EU, this thesis uses the method of content analysis. Firstly, this chapter describes what a content analysis is. Since there are many different ways of doing a content analysis, it is described how the content analysis is practiced in this thesis. The second section describes what data that has been collected and how the selection of this data has been done.

4.1    Content analysis

Content analysis is used to study and analyze written or verbal communication (Elo and Kyngäs, 2008, p. 107). The aim with a content analysis is to produce a concise description of the case that is being studied, and the result of the analysis are concepts and categories describing the case (Elo and Kyngäs, 2008, p. 108). Content analysis can be divided into three steps. It starts with the preparation phase which is the selection of the unit of analysis. This is done by selecting words or themes (Elo and Kyngäs, 2008, p. 109). The selection of themes and words has been done by reading through the material and finding central themes and norms that are used. This is guided by the theoretical framework that has already outlined what a norm is, which is what is searched for in the text. The next step of the analysis is to code the data. This is done by searching for the specific concepts in the text and seeing where and how these concepts are used in the text. The content of the categories is then described through subcategories (Elo and Kyngäs, 2008, p. 110).

4.2    How the content analysis is performed

The analysis is divided into three categories; prevent, protect and respond and prosecute. Both the Swedish counterterrorism strategy as well as the EU’s strategy are divided into the sections of prevent and protect. The third and last section, respond and prosecute, has been chosen because it gathers how both the EU and Sweden argue that their work needs
to be developed. And also, because the question of how to prosecute terrorists who have travelled abroad is a question with no clear answer and is therefore interesting to analyze. Therefore, it will be a section of its own. Hence, the analysis will be divided into the sections of prevent, protect, and respond and prosecute. The first section that analyze the norms that are present in the work of how to prevent terrorism, will be of greater length than the other two, simply because it is given greater space in both the EU’s counterterrorism strategy as well as in the Swedish strategy and therefore there are more material in that area. When doing the content analysis, I have started with reading through the texts and highlighted the main categories that are found. These categories can be seen as the norm clusters. These norm clusters are then the sub-categories within the sections of prevent, protect and respond and prosecute. These sub-categories will vary depending on the section. The first section, Prevent, is divided into: Intruding on the private life of the individual in the name of counterterrorism, Controlling the cyberspace from terrorist propaganda and The state should target possible individuals involved in terrorism. The second section, Protect, is divided into: Every state needs to protect its citizens from terrorism, The duty of states to protect victims of terrorism and Every child’s right to be protected from terrorism. The third and last section, Respond and Prosecute, is divided into: Actions related to terrorism should be criminalized and Individuals who has been involved in terrorism should be punished for their actions.

When finding the norms within each norm cluster, I have used the concept of coding. Within each norm cluster, there are different norms that has been found. The coding has been done by searching for central concepts and words that are used when describing the specific norms that have been found within each norm cluster. Due to that some of the documents that has been used were “locked” and did not give to possibility to search for specific concepts, these texts have been read through carefully to be sure nothing was left out. Each norm cluster form the headline of each sub-category. Within each norm cluster, there are different norms that have been found with the help of coding. These norms are similar to each other, therefore they are within the same norm cluster. The same norm can be found within different norm clusters.

Since the material is in both Swedish and English, there has been some difference regarding what concepts that has been searched for due to the translation of the words. The concepts and terms that has been searched for has been translated into Swedish when coding the material in Swedish. However, I do not believe that this has created problems when coding the material.
4.3 Data collection

The process of selecting the data was done by searching for the main documents that are used and mentioned within the EU as well as in Sweden. I have chosen to look at the Swedish strategy Skr. 2014/15:146 “Prevent, Preempt, Protect- The Swedish counter-terrorism strategy” from 2015, which is the latest one published. I have chosen the strategy that has been translated to English to make the process of coding the material as easy as possible. This strategy summarizes how Sweden should work to prevent, preempt and protect terrorism (Skr. 2014/15:146, 2015). In the following text, it will be referred to as ‘the Swedish strategy’. I have chosen the strategy from the EU 14469/4/05 REV 4 “The European Union Counter-Terrorism Strategy“, which is the one that is referred to on the Swedish parliament’s website, as well as on several different places on the EU’s website. This strategy is from 2005 and will be referred to as ‘the EU strategy’ (14469/4/05 REV 4, 2005).

Since both the Swedish counterterrorism as well as the EU’s strategy is not new, and a lot has happened since these strategies were presented, I have chosen to add material. Partially because more material is needed to be able to go into depth in the analysis, and also to be able to get more recent material that concerns counterterrorism. The additional material that concerns Sweden is a passage from the Swedish government website regarding the changes that Sweden has already made as well as what the Swedish government wants to implement within its counterterrorism work, which was published in the spring of 2019 (Regeringskansliet, 2019). Lastly, I have chosen to add some material from a Swedish parliamentary debate from March in 2019 where all the parliament parties were present and where the counterterrorism measures were discussed. I have chosen to add this to be able to show the most recent thoughts on the Swedish strategy since a lot has happened since 2014. In this debate, 26 speeches were given. Participating parties were: The Left Party, the Green Party, the Social Democrats, the Center Party, the Liberal Party, the Moderate Party, the Christian Democrats and the Sweden Democrats (Riksdagen, 2019).

Additional material relating to the EU has been chosen on the basis of what is often mentioned on the EU’s various websites as important documents that its member states should consider. The EU has released the strategy CM (2018)86-addfinal “Council of Europe Counter-Terrorism Strategy (2018-2022)” which describes desired goals and
developments within their work to combat terrorism from 2018 to 2022. This strategy is addressed to all member states within the EU. This one fits well with the parliamentary debate since it also expresses desires of continuing work within the field of counterterrorism (CM (2018)86-addfinal, 2018). This strategy will be referred to as the ‘EU strategy for 2018-2022’. Directives from the EU are also used to guide member states in their work towards terrorism. Therefore, I have chosen the directive 2015/0281 (COD) “On combating terrorism…”, from 2017 that replaces the Directive from 2002 which is mentioned as a central document for member states. This directive is also addressed to all member states and brings up additional measures that the EU finds important in the counterterrorism work (2015/0281 (COD), 2017). This document will be referred to as ‘the EU Directive’ in the analysis.
5 Analysis

The analysis is done with the use of content analysis and answers the research question; What are the difference between the norms that are used in the Swedish counterterrorism strategy in relation to the norms used in the EUs counterterrorism strategy? This chapter is divided into sections of prevent, protect and respond and prosecute. These has been chosen as those are the central themes in both the EU and the Swedish strategy. Within these sections, norm theory is used to divide the analysis into different norm clusters that have been found and will form each subsection. Each norm cluster contains different norms that can be better understood if they are used and seen together. The definition of a norm contains how actors with a given identity should act. In this case, the actors are states, and more specific, Sweden. The EU comprises member states which includes Sweden.

5.1 Prevent

Preventing terrorism is made on many different levels. The sections in both Sweden’s and EU’s counterterrorism strategies are given greater space since there is extensive work that states need to do to prevent terrorism within their territory. Mainly, the preventive work aims at specific individuals to be able to prevent radicalization.

5.1.1 Intruding on the private life of the individual in the name of counterterrorism

An individual’s private life is an important right mentioned in both the Swedish counterterrorism strategy as well as in the EU’s strategy. However, this right is allowed to be intruded on in the name of counterterrorism. The Swedish strategy mentions the norm of allowing covert coercive measures, which for example includes bugging. When mentioning this norm, they also point to the importance of protecting individual’s privacy (Skr. 2014/15:146, 2015, p. 17). Another norm that also intrudes on the private life of the
individual and which is highlighted as important to carry, is to save and process air passenger data. This is shown as an effective tool to identify and monitor foreign terrorist fighters. However, this needs to be a coherent framework within the EU to protect the personal integrity and privacy (Skr. 2014/15:146, 2015, p. 37). Even though these are norms that intrude on an individual’s private life, these norms are seen as important for Sweden to be able to prevent terrorism.

The EU Directive also uses the norm of allowing intrusion on an individual’s private life. However, the EU Directive uses the norm of allowing intrusion in peoples private lives, to collect information on people who are suspected of being involved in terrorism when investigating or prosecuting such offences. For example, the use of covert surveillance, including electronic surveillance of audio and visual images in public places (2015/0281 (COD), 2017, p.11). This shows a difference between Sweden and the EU, Sweden focuses on intrusions that will mainly infringe on only one person’s private life, whereas the EU Directive allows for intrusion on many more peoples private lives since they allow for audio and visual surveillance in public places. It shows the diffusion of the norm where Sweden has adopted these norms into its own context and pointing to the importance of still protecting people’s private life.

5.1.2 Controlling the cyberspace from terrorist propaganda

The internet has become an easy way for terrorist organizations and groups to spread their message and provide training. The Swedish strategy acknowledge the freedom of expression as a norm that should not be interfered with when controlling cyberspace.

“The Swedish Constitution provides powerful protection for freedom of expression. The opportunities that the internet provides for strengthening democracy must also be safeguarded. Sweden must be equipped to tackle propaganda and anti-democratic messages also when they are spread on the internet or in social media. The Government considers that the best way of tackling propaganda for violent extremism and terrorism is by providing knowledge” (Skr. 2014/15:146, 2015, p. 11)

Sweden’s way of promoting the norm of keeping control in cyberspace of terrorist propaganda differs from how the EU promotes the norm. The EU strategy points to the
importance of keeping control of terrorists on the internet and depriving them of the opportunities that the internet offers to spread and communicate terrorism expertise (14469/4/05 REV 4, 2005, p.13). This is stated in the EU Directive as well, which points to a proper way to act on content related to terrorism on the internet:

“Member States shall take the necessary measures to ensure the prompt removal of online content constituting a public provocation to commit a terrorist offence, as referred to in Article 5, that is hosted in their territory. They shall also endeavor to obtain the removal of such content hosted outside their territory.” (2015/0281 (COD), 2017, p.41)

"Member States may, when removal of the content referred to in paragraph 1 at its source is not feasible, take measures to block access to such content towards the internet users within their territory.” (2015/0281 (COD), 2017, p.41)

The EU strategy for 2018-2022 also mentions prevention of terrorist propaganda and argues that continuing work within this area should be based on the experience of the state and that it must be done in full respect for human rights and the norms relating to freedom of expression. This shows a slight difference between how the norm of controlling cyberspace has been declared before (CM(2018)86-addfinal, 2018, p. 5). In the continuing sections in the EU strategy for 2018-2022, it is stated that awareness on radicalization needs to be raised and they also mention that schools are an important arena for this work (CM(2018)86-addfinal, 2018, p. 6).

The EU Directive allows removal as well as blocking access to content that is related to terrorism. This can be seen as measures that gives the state an opportunity to use its power to prevent its citizens from being exposed or enticed to terrorist propaganda. The EU strategy for 2018-2022 points to the importance of promoting education on terrorist propaganda in schools, which is what Sweden argued in its counterterrorism strategy. Sweden argues that a better way to handle terrorist propaganda is to educate and provide its citizens with knowledge regarding terrorist propaganda on the internet. The diffusion of this norm can be seen as gone from national to international level where the EU now has recognized that education on terrorist propaganda are an important measure to take.
5.1.3 The state should target possible individuals involved in terrorism

To target individuals who might be involved in terrorism or are likely to be, is a norm that the Swedish strategy wish to develop to prevent terrorism. This norm cluster contains various other norms. One aspect that the Swedish strategy takes into account is that the norm of masculinity and violence needs to be taken into account, and work aimed at changing that norm is important.

“Risk factors and driving factors can be influenced and criminality reduced through focused initiatives, for example against youth criminality and recruitment to criminal groups, such as social action groups, and work with those wishing to disengage from such groups. Measures capable of influencing stereotypical norms that link masculinity with violence are also important. Development work, including school-based programs to prevent violence, is being carried out in local authorities in collaboration with different actors in society.” (Skr. 2014/15:146, 2015, p. 11-12)

The Swedish strategy keeps focusing on the different gender norms that exist in society.

” The work must be characterized by a gender equality perspective. In the long term we must work to counteract stereotypical norms that link masculinity with violence. We must also focus attention on the way these norms are manifested in violence that particularly targets women and girls. Terrorism constitutes a significant threat to the rights of women, including through sexual violence. Preventive measures and dialogue are fundamental aspects of this work.” (Skr. 2014/15:146, 2015, p. 34)

The EU strategy starts by pointing to that we must understand why people are drawn into terrorism and encounter those factors (14469/4/05 REV 4, 2005, p. 7). The EU strategy focus in the section of preventive measures, on that inequalities and discrimination needs to be targeted, and promotion of inter-cultural dialogue and long-term integration needs to be implemented. The EU strategy acknowledge that this is one aspect that makes it easier for individuals to become radicalized (14469/4/05 REV 4, 2005, p. 9). This shows
a difference between the EU strategy and the Swedish strategy, where the Swedish strategy includes the importance of noticing gender norms that exist in society when working with preventive measures in counterterrorism. Something that the EU strategy does not take into account. The diffusion of these norms shows how Sweden adopts a gender perspective, which also indicates Sweden’s interest in creating a society that takes the gender perspective into account. However, the EU strategy acknowledges that discrimination and inequalities are factors that can be a part of why individuals become radicalized. Sweden does only mention the norm of anti-discrimination in the context that border controls needs to be within the rule of law as well as non-discriminatory (Skr. 2014/15:146, 2015, p. 22). And when pointing to that “By promoting democracy, equality, tolerance and participation, we can counteract intolerance, discrimination and exclusion.” (Skr. 2014/15:146, 2015, p. 6). This also show a difference in how Sweden does not take into account that discrimination can be a part of why individuals become radicalized.

5.2 Protect

Innocent people have fallen victims for terrorism both inside and outside of the territory of EU’s member states. The EU strategy mentions that member states have the primary responsibility to improve the protective measures that needs to be developed (14469/4/05 REV 4, 2005, p.10). And not only do people need to be protected if they have fallen victims of terrorism, but people also need to be protected on places that can be seen as possible targets of terrorism.

5.2.1 Every state needs to protect its citizens from terrorism

The EU strategy argued that the norm of intruding on people’s private life when combating terrorism was a preventive measure. Sweden allows the use of surveillance to protect people from possible attacks. For people to feel safe and not to worry about being in public and crowded places, “In this context, measures to ensure safety may include providing adequate surveillance of public assemblies” (Skr. 2014/15:146, 2015, p. 25). The Swedish strategy also emphasizes the norm for protecting the freedom of religion
and argue that the proper action is to ensure the safety of those who want to practice their religion and the safety of religious places (Skr. 2014/15:146, 2015, p. 25).

Another norm that the Swedish strategy emphasizes is the importance of protecting the Swedish citizenship. The strategy points out that there are investigations connected to when people apply for citizenship to check if there are any security-obstacles for granting the individual citizenship, and it mentions that no further initiatives are needed. In the Swedish parliamentary debate the importance of the Swedish citizenship is discussed and both the Moderate party as well as the Swedish Democrats argue for the norm of protecting the Swedish citizenship should be done by opening for the opportunity to revoke the citizenship of people who have been prosecuted for a terrorist offence, and that has a dual citizenship. Both parties point to that this is already allowed in many European countries, and therefore, Sweden should do the same (Riksdagen, 2019).

The section of protect is not given that much space in the EU strategy, but what is mentioned as an aspect that is of importance to protect people from terrorism is the exchange of passenger data. The EU strategy argue that this is importance to develop to be in control of which people that come into the Europe (14469/4/05 REV 4, 2005, p.10). Sweden wants to control passenger data and use it as a preventive measure, whereas the EU uses it as a way to protect people. This shows a difference in how Sweden correspond to the guidelines set out by the EU.

5.2.2 The duty of states to protect victims of terrorism

The EU Directive dedicates a section regarding how states should act to provide assistance and help to those who has become victims of terrorism. The section of protection brings up the protection of the victims of terrorism which point to “The support services shall have the ability to provide assistance and support to victims of terrorism in accordance with their specific needs. The services shall be confidential, free of charge and easily accessible to all victims of terrorism” (2015/0281 (COD), 2017, p. 45). To assist the victims of terrorism is also mentioned in the EU counterterrorism strategy, as an important aspect in the work of responding to a terrorist attack, is to assist and compensate those who has become victims of the terrorist attack (14469/4/05 REV 4, 2005, p. 16). The strategy for 2018-2022 also contains a section that focus on the protection of victims of terrorism. This document adds to the protection of victims and assistance to them should be given an international dimension. Since attacks aimed at
nationals can happen outside of states territory (CM(2018)86-addfinal, 2018, p. 11). The only time the term victims is mentioned in the Swedish strategy is when it acknowledges that often the victims of terrorism is civilians and that in the past years, religious minorities has been the targets (Skr. 2014/15:146, 2015, p. 4).

This is one of the clearest differences between the EU’s and the Swedish counterterrorism strategy and can be seen as a flaw in the Swedish counterterrorism strategy. Both the EU strategy, the EU Directive and the EU strategy for 2018-2022 mentions the protection of victims of terrorist, something that the Swedish strategy has not implemented in its strategy.

5.2.3 Every child’s right to be protected from terrorism

The return of foreign fighters is a difficult problem that states needs to handle. The EU Strategy for 2018-2022 brings up the roles of women and children. The gender norm is given space in the strategy since many of those who return are women and children. The norm of protecting children is stated since children are considered as victims. Even if the women who voluntarily travelled is not seen as victims that needs protection, there needs to be working methods that gives guidance on how to handle returning women and children (CM(2018)86-addfinal, 2018, p. 11).

The child perspective has been brought up now that the problem regarding children that has been raised in a terror organization, possibly is returning to their home countries. The norm of protecting every child that has a Swedish citizenship is on the agenda but how to do this is not given a clear answer. The left party argue that Sweden should help those kids who still are in Syria to return to Sweden where the Social services is an important actor who needs to assist these children. There is an agreement between the political parties, that every child is considered a victim who has the right to be helped by the Swedish authorities (Riksdagen, 2019).

The norms that focus on that every state should protect those children that has been taken by their parents to join the terrorist organization is a current discussion. It has become a problem now that children are left in camps in Syria, in some cases without any parents present. Since this is not a part of either of the EU’s or Sweden’s counterterrorism strategy, there is no plan regarding what the proper way for states to act is.
5.3 Respond and Prosecute

How to respond to a terrorist attack and how to possibly prosecute those who has been involved in terrorism is still an ongoing discussion in Sweden. And how to prosecute individuals is a challenge that many states face when foreign fighters return to their home countries.

5.3.1 Actions related to terrorism should be criminalized

The EU Directive points to the norm for criminalizing travel with the purpose to commit terrorist offence. It also points to the norm of criminalizing the participation in the activities of a terrorist group (2015/0281 (COD), 2017, p.8).

“Each Member States shall take the necessary measures to ensure that travelling to a country other than that Member State for the purpose of committing, or contributing to the commission of, a terrorist offence as referred to in Article 3, for the purpose of the participation in the activities of a terrorist group with knowledge of the fact that such participation will contribute to the criminal activities of such a group as referred to in Article 4, or for the purpose of the providing or receiving of training for terrorism as referred to in Articles 7 and 8 is punishable as a criminal offence when committed intentionally.” (2015/0281 (COD), 2017, p.30)

Sweden agrees with the norm regarding that terrorist travels should be a criminal act, and since the Swedish counterterrorism strategy was implemented in 2014, Sweden has made this a criminal offence. The Swedish counterterrorism strategy states the importance of following international norms like this;

“It is essential that Sweden complies with its undertakings under criminal law to preempt and counter terrorism. Resolution 2178 of the UN Security Council (2014), which is binding under international law, requires that travelling or attempting to travel abroad with the purpose of perpetrating, planning, preparing or participating in terrorist acts or providing or
Sweden has made it a criminal offence to travel to another country with the purpose of preparing or committing a terrorist act. This includes if the travel is to a country where the individual has a citizenship. However, it does not apply to Swedish citizens travelling to Sweden (Regeringskansliet, 2019). The Swedish strategy does not emphasize the norm of criminalizing an individual’s participation in a terrorist organization, this is however a current discussion in Sweden. The Government has proposed a new law that will criminalize the participation and collaboration with a terrorist organization, which includes those individuals who support and promote the organization. The Government also proposes that it should be possible to prosecute those who recruit people to a terrorist organization (Regeringskansliet, 2019).

This shows the process of norm diffusion where Sweden has adopted the international norm of making it a crime to travel for the purpose of preparing or committing a terrorist act. The norm of criminalizing the participation with terrorist organizations has not yet been implemented in Sweden but it is up for discussion. The diffusion of the norm is an ongoing process, but where the norm needs to be adopted to the Swedish standards and laws.

5.3.2 Individuals who has been involved in terrorism should be punished for their actions

Article 18 in the EU Directive argues what sanctions that are appropriate to use for legal persons, where they list the norm that it is proper to exclude the person from public benefits and aid as well as “temporary or permanent disqualification from the practice of commercial activities” (2015/0281 (COD), 2017, p.37). To implement sanctions towards specific individuals is shortly discussed in the Swedish strategy. However, Sweden is discussing this issue carefully since they point to that it needs to be compatible with human rights:

“The use of sanctions against individuals must be compatible with very high requirements regarding the rule of law. The inquiry must carefully take into account protection of fundamental rights and freedoms. This concerns,
among other things, provisions on the right to property and other rights that involve aspects concerning the rule of law, e.g. Article 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights.” (Skr. 2014/15:146, 2015, p. 39)

Even though the EU Directive encourages states to use sanctions towards specific individuals, Sweden takes this into account but points to the importance that it needs to be compatible with the European Convention. The diffusion of the norm into the Swedish context is somewhat hesitant, and once again, Sweden points to the importance that every action needs to be compatible with human rights.

How to be able to prosecute those who has travelled abroad to join ISIS is not easy. This is discussed in the Swedish parliamentary debate and every party that took part in the debate agreed on the norm that every person who has been involved in terrorism should be punished for their actions. One proposition is that it should be an international tribunal established that is aimed at terrorist offences. The Left party argue that to be able to prosecute those has travelled abroad to fight with the terrorist organizations, the Swedish police should be sent to those areas to gather evidence material. The Liberal party points to that there needs to be a collaboration between the EU’s member states to gather material that can be used in the prosecution (Riksdagen, 2019). The Strategy for 2018-2022 also mentions that every terrorist should be prosecuted for their crimes, but also points out to that gathering evidence for trials is a complicated task. The Strategy from 2018-2022 point to the norm of the proper way to tackle this problem is for member states to collaborate to gather evidence that can assist in the prosecution of terrorist (CM(2018)86-addfinal, 2018, p. 7).

Both the EU and Sweden agree on the norm that every terrorist should be prosecuted for their criminal actions. However, this is not an easy task, and since this is brought up only in the Swedish parliamentary debate from 2019 and the EU Strategy for 2018-2022, there is no clear plan on how to solve this problem, it is an ongoing process.

5.4 Conclusion

The research question posed in the beginning of this thesis was: What are the difference between the norms that are used in the Swedish counterterrorism strategy in relation to the norms used in the EU’s counterterrorism strategy? As is shown in the analysis above,
there is a difference in how Sweden and the EU use norms in their counterterrorism strategies. The norm theory that focuses on norm diffusion shows how Sweden in most cases has adopted norms from the EU counterterrorism strategy, but the norm is slightly changed to fit the Swedish context. In many cases Sweden emphasize, the importance of human rights and how every norm that is argued as the proper measure to take, needs to be compatible with human rights. Another difference between Sweden and the EU, is that Sweden emphasis the importance of a gender perspective. The Swedish strategy acknowledges the norm of masculinity and violence and work that aims at preventing terrorism needs to take this into consideration. Another difference between the counterterrorism strategies, is that Sweden does not take into consideration the protection of victims of terrorism in its strategy. The protection of victims is mentioned in all the material from the EU but overlooked in the Swedish counterterrorism strategy.

Another interesting difference and development that was discovered is within the norm cluster of controlling cyberspaces. Sweden do not think that the proper way to act is to block and remove terrorist related content, since that intrudes on the right to freedom of expression. Instead, Sweden argues that the proper action is to educate people on the subject. In the EU strategy, removal of terrorist related content is the proper way to act to prevent terrorism. However, in the Strategy that aims at continuing work in 2018-2022, education in schools regarding terrorism on the internet is suggested as a norm. This shows a possible diffusion of the norm from Sweden to the EU.
6 Discussion and summary

Sweden has been criticized for not implementing laws that criminalized terrorist travels soon enough. This has led to that those people who travelled to join ISIS cannot be punished for their travel. Other critics point to the fact that Sweden has not yet criminalized individuals’ participation with terrorist organizations, which many other European countries have done. To criminalize participation with terror organizations is something the EU argue all its member states should do. Since Sweden has been criticized for its work in the area of counterterrorism, it is worth analyzing this in more detail and see how well Sweden correspond with the standards the EU has set out for its member states and where they differ in their counterterrorism strategies.

To investigate this, I chose to use content analysis and norm theory to be able to understand which differences there are between Sweden and the EU in the area of counterterrorism. Scholars who discuss counterterrorism and norms argue that states often undermine human rights and core values in their counterterrorism work. What many of them conclude is that those who are seen as norm entrepreneurs of human rights, are those who accept violation of these rights when combating terrorism. Another aspect that is studied by scholars is that the rise of “bad” norms might emerge within the work of counterterrorism since many states who are seen as norm entrepreneurs on the international arena, accept these “bad” norms when combating terrorism.

What is shown in the analysis above is that Sweden constantly take human rights into consideration in their counterterrorism strategy. Sweden is concerned about the freedom of expression and that the right to privacy might be undermined with some of the norms that the EU strategy and the EU Directive allows. Terrorists goal is to undermine core values that a society is built upon. The scholars that are presented in the Literature review agree that if states keep promoting human rights while combating terrorism, they will not let the terrorist achieve their goal. The Swedish strategy is in line with how previous research argue that counterterrorism work should be done. As was mentioned in the introduction, Sweden has been criticized for not implementing laws that are tough enough, for example, it can be though for Sweden to be able to sentence those who has travelled to join terrorist groups. Those who are critical might be right about that.
Besides the flaws that have been pointed out by political parties and experts in the area, this study contributes to the field of global politics with insights on where the Swedish counterterrorism strategy can be improved. For example, the strategy does not contain any section that focuses on the victims of terrorism. However, within global politics, Sweden can be seen as setting an example of how work within counterterrorism can be compatible with human rights.

The conclusion of the analysis shows how there are differences between Sweden and the EU. I find that the analysis could have become deeper if I had narrowed my focus to one area within counterterrorism. However, by starting to investigate the broader field, continuing research can be narrower. An ongoing discussion among member states of the EU is how they should take care of children of those who travelled to join ISIS and brought their families with them. Or how to take care of those children who were born during their parent’s time with the terrorist organization. As mentioned in the introduction, Denmark has made the choice that those parent that have had kids during their time with ISIS, will not be able to pass their citizenship on to their children. It would be interesting for further research and compare how different countries within the EU tackle this problem.

The method of content analysis can be made in many different ways and the selection of central themes and concepts is done by reading through the text. Even though the texts have been carefully read, it is possible that I have missed something that someone else would have found as central themes and concepts in the text. And since one of the main documents where “locked” it was not possible to do the coding in this document, which also made it difficult to do the content analysis in the same way in all documents. Another difficulty with content analysis is that it is not flexible. It does not give much space for the researchers own reflections in the analysis. A text analysis might have allowed for a deeper analysis of the material.

This thesis has provided an example of the diffusion of norms within counterterrorism from an international level to a national level. It has also provided a deeper analysis of Sweden’s work within counterterrorism and the differences that exist between Sweden and the EU. But also, that these differences, which Sweden partly has been criticized for, are in line with how existing research on counterterrorism argue that work in counterterrorism should be carried out. Collaboration between states is needed to be able to combat terrorism. Even though it seems like ISIS has been defeated, the fight against terrorism is never over.


