Avoiding geopolitical self-destruction in the 21st century

How pragmatic idealism accounts for Sweden's neutrality in regards to its actions following the 2014 Russian annexation of Crimea

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Abstract

This thesis intended to examine how the actions of Sweden, following the 2014 Russian annexation of Crimea, fit within the international relations theoretical perspective of pragmatic idealism, focusing on the actions of Sweden's foreign policy that impacted its neutrality policy. This thesis is built upon the pragmatic idealism theoretical perspective of international relations, and attempted to address how this perspective accounted for, or failed to account for the actions of Sweden in the face of the escalating Russian threat. The analysis herein is grounded in case study methodology. First, the thesis examined how Sweden-Russia relations evolved in the wake of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Second, the thesis examined how Sweden-NATO relations changed after the 2014-15 annexation of Crimea by Russia. In both cases, the paper analysed how the evolution of these relationships affected Sweden's neutrality, and how the evolution was consistent or not consistent with the “pragmatic” and “idealistic” dimensions of the theoretical perspective of pragmatic idealism. The culmination of this paper drew an inference of the applicability of the perspective of pragmatic idealism to Sweden's application of neutrality to international relations. It concluded that Sweden's neutrality both prior to and following the invasion, as well as its subsequent actions, were in line with the theoretical perspective of pragmatic idealism.

Key words: Sweden, neutrality, pragmatic idealism, Russia, NATO, Ukraine, Crimea, realism, liberalism, security, international solidarity

Word count: 13935
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Chapter 1. INTRODUCTION

1. Research problem

Sweden is a small state, the foreign policy philosophy of which, as well as its international relations (IR) strategy within the arguably unipolar world, has always been grounded in neutrality in the modern era (Hetmanchuk & Laffey, 2013:6). In a unipolar world there is one dominant state, a position currently taken by the United States of America (USA), and several other states contending for the dominant status, including Russia (Kurecic, 2017:280). In this battle, states have a number of strategies for international engagement including “bandwagoning, balancing, integration, neutrality, non-interference, protection by larger states, and cooperation between themselves” (Kurecic, 2017:280). Bandwagoning is the practice of maintaining a positive relationship with the dominant power to enjoy protection that would otherwise be absent (Haine, 2015:992). Some small states comparable to Sweden, like Denmark and Norway, have selected the strategy of bandwagoning by making alliances with U.S. through the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) (Kurecic, 2017:283). Despite the effectiveness of bandwagoning, in general and for states such as Denmark and Norway specifically, Sweden has opted towards a foreign policy that is defined by neutrality (Hetmanchuk and Laffey, 2013:6).

Neutrality is, in the words of Heywood (2015), characterized as a “legal condition through which a state declares non-involvement in a conflict or war and indicates its intention to refrain from supporting or aiding either side” (Heywood, 2015:144). For Simpson (2018), states can be neutral in three ways: ad hoc, de jure, and de facto. Ad hoc refers to the act in which states choose neutrality at the commencement of war, while other states engage in the war (Simpson, 2018:124). De jure neutrality can be defined as the adoption of neutrality through international law (Simpson, 2018:124) The final form of neutrality, de facto, is the act of adhering to policies of neutrality without officially subscribing to the pertinent international laws (Simpson, 2018:124) The type of neutrality practised by Sweden is de facto neutrality; and because of this, the international community broadly accepts the state as a neutral country (Simpson, 2018:124).
For Czarny (2018), “neutralita actually amounts to making on-going efforts to uphold national sovereignty without making any concessions in return for 'protection' within the framework of a political or military alliance” (Czarny, 2018:4). Similarly to the way neutrality's forms are outlined above, Czarny labels a “neutrality in the armed conflict” a legal neutrality, “permanent neutrality” a legal and political neutrality, and a “policy of neutrality” as political neutrality (Czarny, 2018:5-11).

When states choose to practice neutrality, they commit to four guiding principles, namely “non participation in wars involving others, not starting any wars, defending neutrality, and abstaining from any policies or actions that might lead to war” (Simpson, 2018:125). Their implementation leads to the protection of neutral states during violent conflict as the countries engaged in combat are prohibited, at least in principle and/or legally, from violating or attacking the territory of neutral states. Adhering to these principles protects neutral states during a war because the countries engaged in combat are prohibited from violating the territory of neutral states or attacking them. This protection extends to de facto countries; therefore, Sweden's neutrality protects it from an attack by belligerents in conflicts that do not involve Sweden (Simpson, 2018:125).

Sweden's practice of neutrality can be traced back to 1812 when Sweden ceded its Finnish territory to Russia (Eliasson, 2004:4). The foundation of Sweden's neutrality is to “maintain an armed deterrent as specified under the Hague Convention, refuse military alliances, and avoid binding foreign policy cooperation that could jeopardize Sweden's ability to remain neutral during conflict or war” (Jesse, 2006: 16). Since the implementation of the neutrality stance, Sweden has always refrained from any political action or commitments that may threaten the international recognition of Swedish neutrality (Eliasson, 2004:4).

Russia's opportunist behaviour was illuminated starkly in Crimea in 2014 (Malyarenko & Wolff, 2018:193). Russia’s President, Vladimir Putin, claimed the invasion of Crimea was a reaction to perceived "illegitimate actions by the West, including NATO enlargement towards the borders of Russia" (Sauer, 2017:82). The incursion into Ukraine was a major transgression of the rules of engagement in IR,
challenging the global political order by attempting to redraw the map of Europe (Sauer, 2017:82). NATO’s expansion into former Soviet satellites and its overtures to Ukraine were seen by Russia as an act of geopolitical aggression, provoking what Russia felt was a pre-emption of NATO in the form of aggressive actions to strengthen its sphere of influence on its Eastern-European border (Sauer, 2017:86).

Sweden’s neutrality has remained unchallenged for the large part since it was adopted in the 1800s, and throughout the Cold War it remained neutral as far as the US and Russia, in line with the pragmatic idealism theoretical perspective first coined by Costas Melakopides in his 1998 book Pragmatic Idealism. For instance, Sweden turned down calls to join NATO because it considered this move to be incompatible with its neutrality policy (Eliasson, 2004:4). Most small states in Europe, including the Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia that both neighbour Sweden and Russia, are members of NATO in an attempt to benefit from protection by the US and other NATO members (most especially from Russia) (Urbelis, 2015:69). Being outside of NATO, Sweden is outside this umbrella, leaving the state more vulnerable to the risk of attack by, say, Russia.

An exception to a relatively steadfast neutrality though, emerged early in the twenty-first century. Beginning in the mid-2000s and in the context of the Baltic States’ ascension to NATO, Sweden broadened its concept of neutrality to include a more regional Nordic-Baltic security angle (Czarny 2008, 185-186). Thus, it is important to note that Russia’s actions in 2014 occurred after Swedish leadership had already begun to embrace wider views of neutrality that warmly embraced the idea of solidarity. For Czarny (2008), he saw Sweden as moving “from neutrality to international solidarity”.

After Crimea, Russia’s neighbouring states became even more conscious of their increased vulnerability in proximity to Russia (Larabee et al., 2017:3). Even since 2013, Russian violations into their airspace have increased (Larabee et al., 2017:3). And while an invasion by Russia into the neighbouring NATO states is unlikely under the threat of retaliation by NATO, an attack on non-NATO member states considered to be cozying up to NATO is a far likelier scenario, one that
happened both with Georgia and Ukraine under Putin’s watch (Shlapak and Johnson, 2016). As a NATO-friendly non-NATO state close to Russia, Sweden is vulnerable. Furthermore, Russia's actions before and after Crimea do not take attacking Sweden off the table. In just one example, Russia conducted simulations of attacks against Swedish military targets in 2013 (Kragh and Åsberg, 2017:27).

In another sign of aggression in 2014, two Russian fighter jets violated Swedish airspace over the Baltic Sea, causing Sweden to scramble its fighter jets to respond to the violation (Kragh and Åsberg, 2017:27), and even recently there was an airspace violation in early 2019 (AP, 2019). In this state of vulnerability, just over the past few years Sweden has both expanded and added military exercises, increased military spending, and has permanently stationed more military forces on Gotland—a strategic island in the Baltic Sea—and even upgraded its capabilities there in just the past few months (Reuters, 2019).

Additionally, for the first time in over forty years, Sweden has reintroduced military conscription and in 2018 sent out leaflets telling its citizens what to do if war comes. Such pre-emptive measures and responses from Sweden diverge from its philosophy of neutrality, with the invasion of Ukraine by Russia only reigniting Sweden's interest in closer collaboration with NATO. While Sweden has yet to join NATO, it appears to have somewhat eschewed its traditional neutrality for a closer, mutually beneficial relationship with NATO, signing in 2014 an agreement with NATO to act as a host nation, allowing for much closer cooperation, mutual access to military assets, and the stationing of NATO forces on Swedish soil. Now in 2019, the effects of this agreement can clearly be seen as Sweden is a significant part of NATO defence planning (Larabee et al., 2017:11). These actions suggest that Sweden has discarded neutrality and departed from pragmatic idealism.

Swedish neutrality in international conflicts was originally a pragmatic take on idealism; hence it has been considered to fit within the pragmatic idealism theory of IR. The pragmatic idealism perspective predicts that neutral states will not participate in policies that may lead to war (Simpson, 2018:125). Pragmatic idealism often stands for neutrality, yet the actions of Sweden suggest that the state is propelling itself towards the strategy of bandwagoning. The realism perspective is more forgiving of
bandwagoning, and considers it as a product of the anarchic nature of international politics (Simpson, 2018:123). Due to this, a problem necessitating research exists in the change of stance regarding Sweden's participation in international politics.

1.2 Research area and purpose

A large majority of the studies of Swedish IR has assumed that Sweden is an empirical example of neutrality in the post-Cold War era (Hetmanchuk & Laffey, 2013; Eliasson, 2004: Jesse, 2006: Kořan, 2006; Zakopalová, 2011). With the background of the recent developments in Ukraine, the thesis of this paper focuses on how Swedish neutrality has evolved in recent years. This study will focus on how Sweden's recent actions related to Sweden-Russia relations and Sweden-NATO relations fit within the theoretical perspective of pragmatic idealism. If they do not, this thesis will explore what other theoretical perspectives could best explain Sweden’s actions – which undoubtedly seem to test the limits of the pragmatic idealism approach. The study will also determine what the changes in Swedish neutrality mean for pragmatic idealism philosophy as well as the strategy of neutrality in IR for small states such as Sweden in a seemingly crumbling unipolar world. Attempting to address how pragmatic idealism accounts or fails to account for the actions of Sweden in the face of the escalating Russian threat, and the issues posed by asking these questions, will be the focus of this entire paper.

1.3 Premise

Neutrality and pragmatic idealism have a direct relationship. In Sweden, this relationship is even more significant because Sweden adopted neutrality initially as a pragmatic policy (Dalsjö, 2014:179). Prior to 1812, Sweden was largely engaged in conflict across Europe, and at its peak, controlled a vast expanse of land. Sweden’s leading role in the Thirty Years War (1618-1648)—perhaps the largest international conflict before Napoleon—was significant, as it helped determine the political and religious balance of power in Europe at the time. But it was from 1810-1812 that King Karl XIV Johan changed Sweden’s foreign policy stance from one of military engagement to a policy of neutrality (Dalsjö, 2014:181). Although officially neutral in
both of the World Wars, Sweden’s neutrality was stretched on many occasions, yet still it came out largely unscathed in each.

Sweden's neutrality was founded on small state realism, and it aimed to keep itself out of the Napoleonic Wars, World Wars, and eventually the Cold War through a passive foreign policy with little regard for good or evil (Dalsjö, 2014:179). Sweden made a realpolitik decision, one strategically calculated to preserve its sovereignty and independence through neutrality as opposed to looking for alliances (Agius, 2006:61). Sweden seemed preoccupied with self-preservation, which from the realist stance on neutrality avoids questions of morality. Viewed from that perspective, such a position is incompatible with pragmatic idealism, which champions moral notions such as "social justice, human rights, caring, sharing, [and] ecological sensitivity" (Melakopides, 2012:74).

The reality was more complex, and a case could be made that in the early 1940s till the end of his life, Swedish diplomat Count Folke Bernadotte acted as a representative of Sweden through the lens of pragmatic idealism; helping bring prisoners of war home, attempting to mediate a peace deal between Heinrich Himmler and the leaders of England and the US, as well as being the first United Nations mediator when he successfully achieved a truce between Israeli and Arab forces in 1948 before his assassination the same year. Additionally, Dag Hammarskjöld, also considered one of the most famous Swedish diplomats and UN Secretary Generals, helped Sweden shift in its thinking and adopt an active foreign policy that infused Sweden's neutrality with a robust sense of morality, transforming the foundation of Sweden's neutrality from small state realism to small state idealism (Dalsjö, 2014:179-180). This represented the birth of true pragmatic idealism as an IR theoretical foundation for Sweden’s foreign policy and international affairs.

The focus of neutrality in the evolution of pragmatic idealism as a theoretical approach to IR in Sweden points to the conclusion that the end of Swedish neutrality, or the loss of morality from the practice of neutrality, means the end of the applicability of the pragmatic idealism approach to Sweden’s way of acting on the world stage. Due to the nature of Swedish neutrality and its pragmatic idealism approach, a departure from neutrality would signal a retreat from pragmatic idealism.
and back to small state realism. This thesis will build on this view to test whether the Swedish response to the perceived Russian threat is consistent with pragmatic idealism as a theory of IR.

1.4 Thesis structure

The thesis’s paper will be structured in five parts. In the first part, the literature on the theoretical approaches to the study of neutrality will be reviewed. The thesis will then, in parts three and four, move on to lay out the theoretical framework and present the methodology that is to be applied in the analysis of the data as well as the operationalization of the study. The fifth part will conduct an extensive analysis of the selected case using the methodology laid out. Finally, the sixth part as a conclusion will provide a summary of the study as well as the research implications of the findings.

Chapter 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical approaches to the study of neutrality

While the idea of neutrality may seem basic, what is and is not considered neutrality can be affected by the ideological lens through which neutrality is being analysed (Devine, 2006:115-116). Research studies on the strategy of neutrality in IR attempt to situate neutrality within one of three mainstream theoretical perspectives. The first perspective is Realism, which considers neutrality as a strategy for self-preservation. The second perspective is Liberalism, which believes that the decision by states to adopt neutrality as a strategy is based on domestic factors and international normative considerations. The final perspective is Pragmatic Idealism, which believes that neutrality is a practical strategy for IR that is moved by ethical considerations.

2.1.1 Neutrality and realism

Realism has dominated the study of world politics and is one of the most employed paradigms when studying neutrality in IR (Morris & White, 2011:104). Realism was the central theoretical tradition during the Cold War, most easily explaining how states related to each other in the eyes of policymakers during the
Cold War (Walt, 1985; Walt, 1998:31). During the Cold War, realism helped IR scholars to understand issues like war, alliances, and cooperation because it focused on state competition and balance of power that were central issues in the American-Soviet rivalry (Walt, 1998:31). Realism as an IR theoretical perspective focuses on "great power politics and state's pursuit of power" (Morris & White, 2011:104). According to realists, the international system is anarchic, with states being the primary actors in this system, and they are ready to do anything that they can to achieve their interests; self-interest, then, and not morality, is the driving factor (Jesse, 2006:13). In this anarchic system, the primary interest for the state is security, and security comes before all other interests (Jesse, 2006:13). Therefore, realists consider any action to be justified as long as it increases the security of the state.

A realist considers neutrality as a way for the state to protect its self-interest in terms of security. According to Jesse (2006), "if remaining neutral during a conflict is the only way to protect the state, then the state adopts a policy of neutrality" (14). The neutral states reason that if “the Great Powers prove unable to collaborate on the basis of justice, then neutrality remains an emergency exit for small states" (Hopper, 1945:448). This realist view of neutrality is based on the assumption that neutral states employ rational calculation to conclude that their non-participation in wars will guarantee their survival, or at least be the most beneficial choice (Morris & White, 2011:105). Therefore, realists view neutrality as an IR survival tactic, one with little place for morality in IR since "moral considerations of right and wrong do not apply in this anarchic, self-help state of nature" (Jesse, 2006:13)

2.1.2 Neutrality and liberalism

The liberal approach was developed as an alternative to the realist take on IR (Morris & White, 2011:105). In contrast to the realist theoretical perspective that looks at the state of nature and the international state system as anarchic, the IR theoretical perspective of liberalism considers the individuals in the state of nature as sovereign, having “an absolute right to decide matters for themselves, subject only to the natural and moral rights of others” (Jesse, 2006:14). They also see economic ties between nations as preventing war, since war disrupts the mutual prosperity that comes from trade (Walt, 1998:32). For liberals, the international order is one of
independent states making their own choices but constrained by moral rules (Jesse, 2006:14).

Liberals differ with the realists on their beliefs about neutrality. While realists consider neutrality as a choice born out of self-interest, liberals believe that states "choose neutrality based on domestic factors or international normative considerations" (Jesse, 2006:14). In addition, while realists believe that states only choose neutrality if it increases their survival, liberals believe that states choose neutrality as an option as opposed to a necessity (Jesse, 2006:14). According to Jesse (2006), liberals believe that neutral states participate in efforts that "create collective security with or without directly influencing the neutral states own security" (14-15). Liberals argue that neutral states may abandon their neutrality if they are enticed by the economic benefits that come from the integration into transnational organizations like the European Union (EU).

Liberals also assume that neutrality is no longer a viable strategy in IR because the security concerns that existed during the Cold War no longer exist and that “the end of bipolarity was widely seen to have removed the basis or rationale for the existence of neutrality” (Agius, 2007:377). Security concerns have given way, they say, to economic and globalization concerns (Morris & White, 2011:105). For instance, Sweden was faced with the dilemma that joining the European Economic Community (EEC) would be incompatible with neutrality. It had to negotiate a deal with the EEC that would separate the political dimension of their deal from the economic dimension (Waite, 1974:335). This adds to the idea that states are moving away from neutrality and security concerns, to those of integration and economics (Morris & White, 2011:105). Still, liberalism fails to explain why some states “cling to their policies of neutrality if it appears to jeopardize the incentives that liberals claim international integration and organization offers” (Morris & White, 2011:105).

2.1.3 Neutrality and pragmatic idealism

Pragmatic idealism is a theoretical approach to IR that is also expressed as practical idealism (Nossal, 2007) or realistic idealism (Tabensky, 2007). The central tenet of pragmatic idealism is that it discards the extremes of liberal idealism and realpolitik realism while retaining what it considers to be applicable and valid from
both the realist and idealist perspectives (Melakopides, 2012:73). According to Tabensky, realists are pessimistic about man, whom they see as inherently extremely self-interested, while idealists are overly optimistic about man, overemphasising redemption. In contrast, pragmatic idealists call for "pragmatic decision making, but only if informed by a proper understanding of the robust, as opposed to merely peripheral, role of the normative ends of human rational living" (2007:100-109). For Nossal, “practical idealists are practical in the sense that they understand and accept the essentially nasty conditions of world” (2007:267).

Realistic idealism acknowledges that realism gives the scholars of IR a sense of who we realistically are, but also appreciates that the values and ideals that idealism accounts for are “inseparable from international relations” and should play a significant role in the international arena (Tabensky: 2007:109). Therefore, realistic idealism appreciates that “the quest for international order ought ultimately to be a moral quest that flows from a proper understanding of human living” (Tabensky: 2007:109). In this sense, the idealist dimension of pragmatic idealism appreciates that there are duties of states shaped by universal values that go beyond their borders, so pragmatic idealists feel it is important and beneficial for states to remain loyal and committed to these duties and values (Melakopides, 1998:5). These include respect for universal human rights, moderation, communication, and cooperation in international affairs, making the philosophy a champion for "an authentic commitment to international law, multilateralism, the principles and values of the UN Charter, moderation, solidarity with countries in need, and the emphasis on diplomatic solutions to international problems" (Melakopides, 1998:5; Melakopides, 2012:74).

While pragmatic idealism is grounded in values, "it appreciates the complexity of the real world—a world of hard choices and painful trade-offs" and shapes values towards the national interests of the country in the context of broader interests, especially justice in terms of satisfaction of global or human needs, doing so in a way that avoids the cynicism associated with realism and the impracticability associated with idealism (Baker 2007:18-19; Melakopides, 1998:5). Pragmatic idealists understand that the real world of politics is characterized by "the ways of statecraft" which have raw power, are brutal, cruel and unrelentingly ugly but hold onto values despite this (Nossal, 2007:267-268). This means that while pragmatic idealists stand
by their ideals, they understand their practical limitations, expressing neither “romantic naïveté nor groundless utopianism” (Melakopides, 1998:5).

Overall, there are two requirements for pragmatic idealism according to Melakopides (1998): first, pragmatic idealism must have morality (a set of human values like justice that go beyond the borders of the country), and second, pragmatic idealism has to be practical by appreciating the complexities of the real political world to avoid the naiveté of idealism (Melakopides, 1998:5). Pragmatic idealism sees neutrality as a virtue and is marked with a sense of goodness and moral superiority, one in which neutrality is not a means to an end as suggested by realists, but an end in and of itself (Dalsjö, 2014:180). Nor is it based on an absolute optimism in man held by idealists, but, rather, on practical values (Baker, 2007:18). The implications of pragmatic idealism are allowing for neutrality to be flexible, yet constrained at the same time, preventing the practice of neutrality for state interests without morality (Jesse, 2006:13). This is why the pragmatic approach to IR leans more to the side of idealism than to the side of realism, which minimizes morality.

2.1.4 Neutrality and Sweden

As an example that has already been mentioned, Sweden faced a paradox in 1972 when it was negotiating to join the "Free Trade Area" of the EEC (Waite, 1974:335). On one hand, participation in the EEC, which was a political-economic alliance, would have been a violation of the ideal of neutrality (Waite, 1974:335). On the other hand, turning away from the deal was not practical because it was not aligned with the interests of the country and would harm its economy (Waite, 1974:335). Therefore, Sweden decided to take neither of the two extreme options, and instead settled for a deal that would separate the political and economic dimensions of the Common Market (Waite, 1974:335). As such, Sweden would be free to practice active neutrality, which Waite refers to as Machiavellian pragmatism (1974:335). For a later example, even when the Cold War ended and Sweden joined the EU in 1995, it refrained from joining NATO in much the same way it had approached its 1972 dilemma.

According to Waite (1974), Sweden’s neutrality is flexible because it changes to meet new demands (335). For Agius (2006), the flexibility of Sweden’s neutrality
helps the country to keep its neutrality open to the interpretation by the government as is practical (2006:62). At the same time, Sweden’s neutrality is flexible in that Sweden is considered to act as “moral conscience on international political issues” for the United Nations (Agius, 2006:115). Therefore, the best theoretical perspective to explain Swedish neutrality is pragmatic idealism.

Without taking into account pragmatic idealism, a number of authors contend that Sweden has departed from neutrality. Writing before Russian invasions of either Georgia (2008) or Crimea (2014), Fatma F. Tepe (2007) felt this departure was enough to make the title of one of her articles “Swedish Neutrality and its Abandonment.” In her view, “[w]hen the EU enlargement process became mature enough to maintain peace and to eliminate war and conflict possibilities in the vicinity of Sweden, the neutrality policy became obsolete” (199).

Writing only a few months after the Russian invasion and annexation of Crimea, The Economist (2014) opened a piece titled “What price neutrality?” with the line: “Sweden and Finland stopped being neutral years ago. They both participate in NATO exercises, commit troops to its rapid-reaction force, took part in peacekeeping operations in Bosnia and Kosovo, joined the fight in Afghanistan and, in the case of Sweden, even got involved in the 2011 air war in Libya.” One former Swedish Ambassador to NATO, writing in a NATO publication, flat-out states that, though Sweden is “still militarily non-aligned…[it] is no longer aiming for neutrality in the case of a conflict, as was the case during the cold war” (Malmqvist, 2018). Berger (2015) calls Swedish neutrality a “great paradox” and writes that it is full of “inherent moral ambiguity” and “deep contradictions” (2015:21). I would however claim that these views form a all too straight forward view of neutrality – one that is unable to accommodate the ideas of pragmatic idealism, as will be seen.

2.2 Methodological approaches to the study of neutrality

Methodologically, there is a range of possible approaches to presenting discussions of neutrality. One approach compares the neutrality of different states to each other. While technically the comparative approach involves several specific case studies, a second approach can be termed the case study perspective in that it takes one state’s neutrality as case study without comparing it to other states’ neutrality. A
third possible approach utilizes discourse analysis as a prism through which to analyse the language, conventions, and conceptualization of neutrality. The scholars using this approach collect a variety of texts and communications relating to neutrality, and critically analyse their use in defining and creating the idea and practice of neutrality.

2.2.1 Comparative approach to the research on neutrality in international relations

The comparative approach to the research of neutrality is interested in comparing the neutral strategies of the state of interest against other neutral states with a neutral stance in foreign policy and IR (i.e., several case studies are compared to each other). Comparative studies on neutrality usually focus on two or more states with different types of neutrality, which may be evident in the decision making structures, national identity, and citizens’ role conceptions of the state (Eliasson, 2004:4).

In “Traditions, Identity and Security: the Legacy of Neutrality in Finnish and Swedish Security Policies in Light of European Integration” Johan Eliasson examines the role of neutrality in Europe in light of regional integration through a comparative research approach (2004). This comparative research focuses on two small neutral states that are members of the EU, namely Sweden and Finland (Eliasson, 2004:3). Eliasson first examines the history of the development, the decision-making processes, and the security-political identity of Finnish neutrality and then applies the same measures to Swedish neutrality in order to compare the two different neutral states (2004). Here, the comparative approach was used to compare two neutral countries and draw out patterns about their application of neutrality in their foreign policy and IR, thus linking theory to evidence.

In the same way, Neal Jesse (2006) explores Irish neutral foreign policy in comparison to Switzerland, Finland, Austria, and Sweden in "Choosing to Go It Alone: Irish Neutrality in Theoretical and Comparative Perspective.” The comparative approach as applied by Jesse (2006) involves applying the same measures across the states being studied to reveal unique characteristics of the neutral states that are the focus of the study. Jesse (2006) uses the comparative approach to investigate Irish neutrality in comparison with those of Switzerland, Finland, Austria, and Sweden by
applying the realist and liberal theories and his findings show that liberal theories are better suited to explain Swedish neutrality (Jesse, 2006:23). The comparative research also shows that Irish neutrality is different from that of the other neutral states because Ireland does not employ any credible defense to its territory; thus it is an unarmed neutral state (Jesse, 2006:15). Another difference evident from the comparative research is that Ireland has not historically been impartial (Jesse, 2006:15).

The advantage of the comparative method as used by Jesse (2006) and Eliasson (2004) is that it helps to link theory to evidence, often across multiple cases. However, this is contingent on the researcher finding adequate data, which is not always the case.

2.2.2 Case study approach to the research on neutrality in international relations

The case study research approach focuses on a specific case demonstrating neutrality in IR and interprets it through one or more theoretical perspectives. In “Swedish Foreign Policy: Neutrality vs. Security,” Natallia Hetmanchuk and Robert Laffey (2013) take a case study approach to the research on neutrality by focusing on two cases specific to Sweden to answer the research question, “To what extent does Sweden follow its principles of foreign policy of freedom from alliances in peace aiming for neutrality in war?” (11). The first case is Swedish involvement in the Russo-Finnish War and the second case is the involvement of Sweden in WWII during Germany’s occupation of Denmark and Norway in April-June, 1940 (Hetmanchuk and Laffey, 2013:11). Hetmanchuk and Laffey (2013) apply four schools of thought to the research on the two cases demonstrating Sweden’s strategy of neutrality in IR.

The four theoretical perspectives are realism, economism, revisionism, and culturalism, with both economism and revisionism being grounded in Marxist theory, and culturalism, which allow researchers to “define social phenomena in cultural terms” (Hetmanchuk & Laffey, 2013). The data available from the two cases studied in the research only fit the realism and economism theoretical perspectives, so the other two were thrown out (Hetmanchuk & Laffey, 2013). The application of these two theories to the cases chosen for the study confirmed the hypothesis that “the
larger the scale of the external threat to Sweden’s political and economic interests, the
more flexible its foreign policy of freedom from alliances in peace aiming for
neutrality in war” (Hetmanchuk and Laffey, 2013:20).

Just like Hetmanchuk and Laffey (2013), Bruce Hopper (1945) utilizes the
case study approach in “Sweden: A Case Study in Neutrality” to investigate neutrality
in Sweden during World War II in an attempt to evaluate the viability of neutrality as
a foreign policy. The choice to pick Sweden as a case study for neutrality was
informed by the scholarly literature at the time, literature that characterized small
states and their associated neutrality in IR to be “withering away” (Hopper, 1945:
435). In the case study, Hopper (1945) examined the background of Sweden’s
neutrality, as well as the changes in the conditions of Swedish neutrality through
various time periods. This analysis led Hopper to conclude that small state neutrality
is contingent on the existing balance of power (1945:447). The case study analysis
also led Hopper to the conclusion that the existence of small states such as Sweden is
essential for the survival of the nation-states political system, because they act as
buffers in the context of the larger states’ struggle for power (1945:448). Thus, this
case study shows that the small states and the associated neutrality in foreign policy
were not “withering away” as predicted by the body of research on neutrality at the
time (Hopper, 1945:449).

The advantage of the case study approach is that it provides the highest
construct validity compared to the other approaches (Bennet, 2002:42). Additionally,
the case study can be used in a variety of interesting ways that benefit the study of a
particular case or cases, as is shown by the historic, interpretive, and empirical
examples presented by Bennet and Elman (2007) in their seminal article titled “Case
Study Methods in the International Relations Subfield”.

2.2.3 Discourse analysis in the research on neutrality in international
relations

Discourse analysis is a common qualitative approach to research within IR to
determine public opinion about neutrality, and shows how this fits within given
theoretical perspectives. For instance, the research paper "Security Politics? Analysis
of Public Discourse on Neutrality in Austria and Ireland" by Dagmar Zakopalová
(2011) examines the public discourse on neutrality in two neutral states. Zakopalová approaches the public discourse on neutrality from the perspective of social constructivism, a theoretical perspective that perceives neutrality in IR as a flexible construct representing a state identity that is shaped by international and domestic social environments (2011: 53). Zakopalová relies on qualitative data for the period from 1990 to 2009 drawn from the Austrian parliamentary debates, foreign policy reports, the Austrian security doctrine of 2001, party programs of the five main political parties, and circa 160 newspaper articles from the Austrian press to examine the public discourse on neutrality in Austria (2011:57). In dealing with Ireland, the qualitative data for Irish public discourse on neutrality comes from parliamentary debates, annual reports from the Ministry of Defence, white papers on defence, and about 170 newspaper articles for the same time period (Zakopalová, 2011:62).

The study concluded that while neutrality has been reconceptualized and narrowed down throughout the past 60 years, it is still perceived as an important principle of national security policy in IR, despite being hard to follow in regards to applying it to contemporary wars. Zakopalová comes to the conclusion that domestic factors more than international factors play a role in defining neutrality in the 21st century. Pro-neutrality rhetoric is more often than not prevalent in relation to public opinion and voter preferences. This is an interesting idea that should be considered when we shift our focus to public opinion in Sweden surrounding neutrality and the actions taken in the context of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Another piece of qualitative research dealing with Ireland is by Devine (2006), titled “The Myth of 'The Myth of Irish Neutrality': Deconstructing Concepts of Irish Neutrality Using International Relations Theories. Here, Devine (2006) takes a harsh looks at a more recent trend that utilizes traditional perspectives to challenge the validity of Irish claims that it even is neutral, arguing instead that new perspectives are necessary (139). Like Zakopalová, she utilizes public discourse, most notably major published pieces in print media and academia in discussing Irish neutrality, questioning the integrity and motives behind much of the discourse she is out to deconstruct and concluding that:

there is a need for a theory and for conceptualisations of neutrality that differ from the hegemonic [i.e., (neo)realist] ones; that is, for a theory that does not take the
neutrals as mere objects of the international power game but as independent subjects, who through their ability to inject interests and values into international politics, are capable, at least to some extent, of affecting the course of developments in the international community (139).

An additional piece of literature discussing Austria is “Austrian Neutrality: Burden of History in the Making or Moral Good Rediscovered?” by Michal Kořan (2006). The methodology of the research is developed from the Vienna School of Critical Discourse Analysis (Kořan, 2006:23). This discourse analysis examines the relationship between scholarly narratives and political discourses on Austrian neutrality (Kořan, 2006:23). Kořan relies on qualitative data from political documents (such as the Neutrality Act, the State Treaty, and the Moscow Memorandum) newspaper articles, and research publications from mainstream scholarship (2006:26-28). In his analyses of the qualitative data collected, Kořan concludes that one limitation of the study of the development of neutrality in Austria is that those involved in the academic, as well as the political discourses were too quick to provide an ”objective account” and explanation of reality, instead of assuming that all knowledge is socially constructed.

The above are just a few examples of the different methodologies and how the research is generally approached. In summary, it is evident that special focus needs to be placed on how we frame neutrality and more importantly, how that neutrality is perceived both domestically and internationally in the applicable context.

Chapter 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The literature on the theoretical perspectives of neutrality broadly examines neutrality in the context of realism, liberalism, and pragmatic idealism. As mentioned earlier, existing literature indicates that the IR theory of pragmatic idealism can be used to explain Swedish neutrality in the context of the Russian attack and subsequent annexation of Crimea (Nossal, 2007; Tabensky, 2007; Melakopides, 1998; Melakopides, 2012; Baker, 2007: Waite, 1974). Therefore, the thesis of this paper is built on the assumption that Sweden’s exercise of neutrality is grounded neither in the extremes of realism nor idealism, opting instead for pragmatic idealism. To this end,
this thesis asks: is Swedish neutrality after Russia’s attack on Ukraine best explained by pragmatic idealism and if so, how?

3.1 Definitions of pragmatic idealism and neutrality

This paper was interested in situating Sweden’s strategy of neutrality in IR within the pragmatic idealist theoretical framework and combines the concepts of pragmatic idealism developed by Nossal (2007), Tabensky (2007), Melakopides (1998), Melakopides (2012), Baker (2007), and Waite (1974) to establish a combined definition of the pragmatic idealism theory of IR as it was applied to the study. Additionally, the paper combined the concepts developed by Simpson (2018), Heywood (2015), and Czarny (2018) to establish a definition of neutrality.

This thesis will rely on the operationalization of neutrality developed by (Hetmanchuk & Laffey, 2013). When determining the degree of Sweden’s neutrality in the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the concepts of positive neutrality and negative neutrality will be utilized. Positive neutrality will refer to the abstention of a country to participate in a conflict by “refraining from sending volunteer troops to one of the belligerent states…or by refusing to allow the belligerents to use the Swedish territory for their military purposes” (Hetmanchuk and Laffey, 2013:13). Negative neutrality will refer to Sweden’s unwillingness or refusal to send its troops to one of the belligerent states or allowing the belligerents to use its territory for military purposes. By using both positive and negative neutrality, the paper will capture the full scope of Sweden’s neutrality.

Chapter 4. METHODOLOGY

Among the three research approaches outlined, the case study method was the best suited to approach the research subject of Swedish neutrality in an attempt to answer the research question. While the qualitative approach through discourse analysis would be excellent for examining the concept of neutrality, this is not what the research is intended to accomplish. On the other hand, the comparative method was undesirable because data on this topic might have been inadequate because the Swedish response to Russia invasion of Ukraine is still a developing situation, despite the numerous military reports and Swedish rhetoric surrounding the invasion. In addition, looking at other countries would have been a distraction from the intention
to focus on Sweden. This left the use of the case study as the most promising approach, allowing for the most powerful focus in line with the research question. The actions making up Sweden’s response in the wake of the Russian invasion of Ukraine exist in the form of events, and the data from these events can be characterized into specific cases, so the case study method was amenable to the form in which data relevant to the research question existed. Another advantage of using the case study method was that it provided the opportunity to realize the highest levels of construct validity by allowing the measurement of the indicators that best represent the theory being measured (Bennet, 2002).

4.1 Case study

The analysis was conducted on cases that were selected to establish the relationship between the level neutrality of Sweden's responses and level of threat of attack by Russia. The meta-case was Sweden's response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, more specifically the cases of Swedish-NATO relations after 2014 and Russo-Swedish relations after 2014. This overarching case was selected because it was the most recent test of Sweden's claim of neutrality.

The case selected was also relevant for the study of pragmatic idealism because the 2014 invasion of Ukraine by Russia was a significant turning point in the post-cold war relationship between the US and Russia. The attack in 2014 represents the most recent time when the balance of power politics between the US and Russia were significantly reinvigorated in modern times since the end of the Cold War in response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, at least until the Russian 2016 U.S. election interference. Using this case allowed for process tracing; a method that focuses on whether the variables in the case move as predicted by the IR theory being utilized (Lamont, 2015:127). The advantage of process tracing is that it allows the researcher to make an inference regarding the hypothesized causal mechanisms (Bennet, 2002:42; Lamont, 2015:115).

The case of Sweden also fits the least-likely case study method, which is interested in cases that pose the most severe test of IR theory. Under this case study approach, the most crucial cases are the cases that are least likely to fit the theory of interest (Bennet, 2002:37). In the proposed research, the essential cases were the cases
least likely to fit the theory of pragmatic idealism because they suggested a shift in neutrality. A change from neutrality to partiality would be revealing of the failure of the theory of pragmatic idealism to explain Swedish neutrality. Therefore, the method of looking at the Swedish response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine was the best method to test the pragmatic idealism theory as it related to the thesis of this paper.

4.2 Thesis model

The central assumption in this paper was that a shift from neutrality to alignment for a neutral state indicated a shift from the pragmatic idealism strategy in IR if the shift was not justified ethically and/or was not practical given the prevailing political reality. The hypotheses presented below, grounded in the ideas formulated in the theoretical framework and the beginning of the methodology, lay out the possible theoretical outcomes of this shift (Halperin and Heath, 2012:141).

Hypothesis 1: Sweden did not violate pragmatic idealism and did not adjust its neutrality

Hypothesis 2: Sweden adjusted its neutrality ethically and practically in ways that kept/enhanced its pragmatic idealism

Hypothesis 3: Sweden adjusted its neutrality ethically in ways that kept/enhanced its pragmatic idealism and stayed unchanged practically

Hypothesis 4: Sweden adjusted its neutrality practically in ways that kept/enhanced its pragmatic idealism and stayed unchanged ethically

Hypothesis 5: Sweden adjusted its neutrality ethically in ways that weakened adherence to pragmatic idealism but stayed the course practically

Hypothesis 6: Sweden adjusted its neutrality ethically in ways that weakened adherence to pragmatic idealism but adjusted practically in ways that enhanced it

Hypothesis 7: Sweden adjusted its neutrality practically in ways that weakened adherence to pragmatic idealism but stayed the course ethically

Hypothesis 8: Sweden adjusted its neutrality practically in ways that weakened adherence to pragmatic idealism but adjusted ethically in ways that enhanced it

Hypothesis 9: Sweden violated its neutrality in ways that were neither ethical nor practical in its adherence to pragmatic idealism, and therefore weakened its pragmatic idealism in both ways

Hypothesis 10: Sweden violated its neutrality in ways that were neither ethical nor practical in its adherence to pragmatic idealism, and destroyed its pragmatic idealism in both ways
4.3 Data selection, collection, and analysis

The data that the paper examined came from various primary and secondary texts for the case study. These sources include statements by government officials, policy documents, official Swedish government press statements, public records, Swedish media reports, and international media reports. The range of the texts selected to provide empirical data for the study was informed by the need to avoid bias (Halperin & Heath 2012:328-329). For instance, relying mainly on the data from Sweden's government or Swedish media might have provided a one-sided account of Sweden's response. In an attempt to minimize the potential biases found in state media, as well as selection bias, international media reports were employed for the research (Halperin & Heath 2012:330).

The primary and secondary texts selected were strictly focused on the topics of Swedish-Russia relations and Swedish-NATO relations prior to, and following, the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The scope of analysis was limited to texts published within a short period of time; from 20 February 2014 to 12 August 2019. The date 20 February 2014 was the day Russia officially occupied the territory of Crimea. During the time period on which this study focused, Sweden carried out several measures in anticipation of a possible attack by Russia, including changes to military organization and how Sweden related with international organizations, significantly focusing on NATO.

The data collected for the paper was qualitative data. The first data presented and collected related to the justification attached to the actions making up the response to Russia, and the Swedish association with NATO. This provided data relevant to the variable of compliance to pragmatic idealism principles. The second kind of data that was collected related to the prevailing political reality that provided the context for Sweden's response to the invasion. This data included incidents of direct threats from Russia on Sweden, as well as any verifiable verbal threats from Russia in the texts collected. This gave legitimacy to Sweden's responses, and allowed me to examine how and why Sweden reacted the way it did, and how it can or cannot be explained through pragmatic idealism.
The texts on the case study made up the empirical data that the paper examined. The analysis of these texts started by reviewing what the Swedish response was to Russia's invasion of Ukraine by focusing on the Swedish-Russia relations and Swedish-NATO relations after the 2014 invasion. The analysis then determined whether Sweden's responses in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine were practical given the prevailing political reality. This tested the pragmatic dimension of pragmatic idealism in the exercise of neutrality by examining if Sweden's actions were justifiably practical under the circumstances.

Furthermore, the analysis determined if Sweden's responses were justified by moral principles that are the ethical foundation of pragmatic idealism. This tested the idealism dimension of pragmatic idealism. The analysis that was conducted within the context of a reference point was established by examining how Sweden has always practiced its neutrality in the modern era in conflicts and IR in general. This is in line with prior research focusing on neutrality, domestic opinion shifts, and the context in which events transpire (Devine, 2006; Kořan, 2006; Zakopalová, 2011). Having determined whether Sweden's response was pragmatic and idealist or not, the analysis attempted to situate Sweden's response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine within the pragmatic idealism theory. If it would fail to do so, it would instead offer a more applicable theoretical perspective to approach how Sweden exercised its neutrality.

4.4 Validity and limitations

The validity of the analysis conducted as well as the reliability of the results are essential to any academic research (Halperin and Heath 2012:328). I have to the best of my ability laid out the reasoning behind picking the aforementioned qualitative data, as well as the methods in doing so. Additionally, for research utilizing case study methodology dealing with qualitative data, appropriate accounts of the coding protocol and conclusions need to be sufficiently explained (Halperin and Heath, 2012:328). The coding protocol has been laid out in section 4.3, and the conclusions to the analysis have been explained in section 5.5.

In regards to Kořans (2006) research concerning Austrian neutrality, there is a lack of what he calls “epistemological realism” - namely that the concepts a researcher is employing in order to explain certain phenomenon have their tangible
counterpart somewhere in reality. What this means essentially, is that different meanings attached to the same phenomenon will result in a different manner of behaviour – something that is sometimes neglected in research centered around neutrality (Kofan, 2006:39). I have to the best of my ability taken into account historical and political factors regarding Swedish actions taken prior to and following the Russian invasion of Ukraine. However, a limitation that is already apparent here is that while case study methodology allows us to investigate how or if Sweden's actions fall in line with pragmatic idealism, further analysis through quantitative research relating to both public and elite opinion would have perhaps allowed for a more thorough investigation.

Chapter 5. ANALYSIS

5.1 Swedish Neutrality: How does Sweden practice its neutrality?

Understanding Sweden's response to the invasion of Ukraine by Russia is contingent on first coming to terms with how Sweden has practised its neutrality since it became a neutral state. Sweden was once a belligerent nation, having fought and lost to Russia and ceding its Finland territory to Russia in 1812 (Eliasson, 2004:4). Since 1814, Sweden has never been part of an alliance involved in military action or been engaged in military action itself (Hetmanchuk & Laffey, 2013:6). That year, Karl Johan “issued a state maxim and Swedish neutrality came into existence” (Agius, 2006:61). The basis for Sweden’s neutrality has always been the ideals to maintain an armed deterrent as specified under the Hague Convention, to refuse military alliances, and to avoid binding foreign policy cooperation that could jeopardize Sweden's ability to remain neutral during conflict or war (Jesse, 2006:16). Today, as stated before, Sweden’s neutrality is de facto (political), and Sweden has failed to issue a formal declaration of neutrality because the country wants to maintain a flexible form of neutrality that would be subject to interpretation by the government from time to time after weighing the current circumstances (Agius, 2006:62).

In part due to the its neutrality, Sweden has enjoyed a long-lasting peace, managing to avoid military involvement in both World War I and World War II, which devastated most of the major powers in continental Europe (Agius, 2006:106). In the post-Second World War period, Swedish neutrality became more idealistic
through the infusion of principles of active internationalism (Agius, 2006:107). This idealistic but practical neutrality involved extending social democratic solidarity and values (through mediation, bridge-building, and peacekeeping) to the international level and taking an isolationist stand when world politics were involved in conflict or political alliance blocs (Agius, 2006:108). Consequently, Sweden has been a renowned arbiter in conflicts because all sides recognize and trust the state’s impartiality. For instance, during the Cold War, Sweden's policy of neutrality helped it to actively build bridges between the East and the West without having to align to one side in the conflict (Agius, 2006:106). Therefore, the 2014 attack on Ukraine took place in this context of long-standing Swedish neutrality and diplomatic leadership.

5.2 Russia’s Invasion of Ukraine and its significance to Sweden

The invasion of Ukraine by Russia in 2014 seemed very much to be the culmination of a calculated Russian expansionist strategy into former Soviet Union territories (Mankoff, 2014:60). On February 24, 2014, Russian troops without any identifying insignia took control of several government buildings in Crimea, including the parliament, and raised the flag of Russia on February 27, 2014 (Wood et al., 2015:15). Unbeknownst to the Ukrainian state and NATO, the insurgents were members of Russian Special Forces and the Naval Infantry, which led to confusion about how to proceed with the insurgency (Galeotti, 2015:159). By the time it dawned on the world that these troops were Russian, Russia had already seized Crimea without a single fatality (Galeotti, 2015:159).

The idea behind the invasion of Ukraine was that post-Soviet states in Eastern Europe and Eurasia are not fully sovereign and that Moscow continues to have special rights in them, exercising those rights often indirectly but directly when Moscow felt direct action was necessary (Mankoff, 2014:66). While Ukraine gained its formal independence in the early 1990s along with many other Soviet republics, Russia has always considered Ukraine especially to be within its sphere of influence (Dunn & Bobick 2014:407). Russia’s interests within its sphere of influence were threatened when Ukraine started leaning closer towards EU and NATO integration, and during the same time period, Russia was unsure if it could maintain control over its warm
water base in Tartus, Syria, which would eventually prompt direct military intervention in Syria.

Closer Ukraine-EU relations had public support as shown by the Euro Maidan protests in 2013 and 2014 that were in support of Ukraine’s trade agreements with the EU and a possibility of integration and closer relationships with the EU as opposed to Russia (Dunn & Bobick 2014:405). However, shortly the Ukrainian protesters ousted the pro-Russian president Viktor Yanukovych, the Russians invaded Crimea under what many see as a ruse of claiming to protect the ethnic Russians in Crimea, quite similar to Georgia (Dunn & Bobick 2014:405). Russia then proceeded to promote a sham referendum where the citizens of Crimea voted to join the Russian Federation (while the vote would likely have passed anyway, significant repression was used in suppressing the non-independence vote). Therefore, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine is seen as being an attempt to thwart a further expansion east from the EU and NATO (Dunn & Bobick 2014:405).

The relevance of the invasion of Ukraine for Sweden is that it created a precedent that shows what would motivate Russia to invade countries in Europe. While Sweden is not a former Soviet nation, the state’s geopolitical status as a Scandinavian country in proximity to Russia makes it a potential target for Russian aggression, similar to other Eastern-European and Scandinavian countries (Holmberg, 2015:238). As a neutral country, Sweden does not have to pick a side in NATO-Russia balance of power politics. However, it would be unwise for Sweden to ignore the threat of Russia when it comes to both its internal affairs as well as its border security from cyber, political, and hybrid warfare in additional to merely traditional military moves. In line with its neutral policy, Sweden has been carrying out a process of demilitarization after the Second World War, but following the war in Georgia 2008 and the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, this process of demilitarization has shifted and even seems to be going through something of a reversal, with a ramping up of military exercises and deployments as well as closer ties to NATO (Holmberg, 2015:235).

5.3 Sweden's response to Russia's Invasion of Ukraine: Sweden-Russia relations
Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2014, Sweden's deputy Prime Minister, Jan Björklund, was quoted by Swedish media as saying; "How many people thought that Russia would go into Crimea? The same argument could hold true for the Baltic states" (The Local, 2014). Implied here is that Russia's expansionist ambitions may put Sweden at risk of being attacked in the same way Ukraine was invaded. Sweden's response to the Ukrainian crisis was conducted in a way that bolstered the credibility of its neutrality, which was essential for Sweden, focusing on being involved talks in an attempt to resolve the Ukrainian crisis and a balancing act of solidarity with Ukraine, a victim of Russian violations of international law, and neutral diplomatic activity with both Russia and Ukraine that took into account those objective violations by Russia, a neutrality that sided with international law but would also stay generally neutral otherwise. Sweden’s advocating for the idea that staying true to international law can thus be seen as a form of neutrality.

On the one side, Sweden's relationship with Russia can be characterized by a tough but respectful attitude within cordial diplomatic relations. Following a meeting between Sergei Lavrov (Russia's Minister for Foreign Affairs) and Margot Wallström (Sweden's Minister for Foreign Affairs) on 21 February 2017, Wallström released a press statement assuring Russia that its policy of "non-participation in military alliances" remained intact (Government Offices of Sweden, 2017). Sweden also indicated that it was in agreement with Russia about the need for both sides of the conflict to fully comply with the Minsk Agreements/Protocol, which established a framework for resolving the Russia-Ukraine conflict (Government Offices of Sweden, 2017). In the press statement, Wallström also noted that “Sweden does not recognize Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol” (Government Offices of Sweden, 2017). Sweden's Minister for Foreign Affairs also made it clear that Sweden took seriously that Russia’s aggression to Ukraine was a “challenge to the European security order and the principles of international law” (Government Offices of Sweden, 2017).

Sweden's status as a neutral country put it at the center of the international response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. One of the suggestions of a report on the situation in Ukraine overseen by former NATO chief Anders Fogh Rasmussen was that a UN force with 20,000 soldiers from non-NATO countries should be sent to
Ukraine (Shalal & Emmott, 2018). The report recommended for Sweden to lead this peacekeeping force due to its neutrality policy (Shalal & Emmott, 2018). Sweden indicated that it was willing to take up the role of leading the peacekeeping troops on the condition that the West and Russia agreed (Shalal & Emmott, 2018). This displayed Sweden’s interest in becoming a partner in the peace process, committing to neutrality by not isolating Russia and remaining aware of the role that Russia could play in resolving the conflict. Sweden has also shown its solidarity with Ukraine in terms of international law. On 26 November 2014, Margot Wallström made the first visit to Ukraine as Sweden's Minister for Foreign Affairs (Government Offices of Sweden, 2014). During this visit, Wallström made clear that Sweden was in full support of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine under international law and openly condemned the violation of international norms by Russia with its annexation of Crimea (Government Offices of Sweden, 2014).

In a UN Security Council Briefing in October, 2018, Ambassador Carl Skau from Sweden delivered an emotional statement against Russia, stating that “Russia’s aggression against Ukraine, in blatant disregard of international law and the European security order, has caused tremendous suffering and must come to an end” (Government Offices of Sweden, 2018). Sweden also supported the sanctions against Russia that were agreed upon by the EU, calling on Russia to respect the Minsk Protocol and vowing its support for Ukraine’s integration into the EU (Government Offices of Sweden, 2014). In another show of solidarity with Ukraine, Sweden’s Minister of Defence together with the Lithuanian Minister of Defence issued a statement in 2016 in support of Ukraine saying that Sweden supported Ukraine and stood by her side, demanding that “the ceasefire must be respected, Russian troops and weaponry must leave Ukrainian territory, and Ukrainian control of its state border must be restored” (Government Offices of Sweden, 2016).

In summation, the exercise of neutrality by Sweden has involved balancing between standing in solidarity with Ukraine and international law and using and leaving open diplomatic channels for engagement with Russia regarding the role that it can play in de-escalating the situation in Ukraine.
5.3.1 Swedish neutrality in the context of Sweden-Russia relations

Shifts in neutrality can be positive if a country abstains from getting involved in a military conflict or allowing belligerents to use its territory for military purposes. They can be negative if the country decides to align with one belligerent or allows the belligerents to use its territory for military purposes. As the data suggests, Sweden’s relationship with Russia has remained diplomatic after Russia invaded Ukraine. While Sweden has openly declared Russia’s actions as a violation of international law, it has also kept the diplomatic channels open. The willingness of Sweden to lead a military mission in Ukraine on the condition that Russia is on-board shows its commitment to impartiality. Sweden has not sent any of its soldiers to Ukraine or Russia, and it has not allowed its territory to be used by either Russia or Ukraine. Therefore, Swedish neutrality after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine could be classified as being positive. At the same time, its growing relationship with NATO signals to Russia that it is prepared to rethink neutrality if Russia continues to pursue aggressive, threatening courses of action.

5.3.2 Pragmatism in the context of Sweden-Russia relations

As this examination has shown, the actions of Sweden in response to the annexation of Crimea were consistent with the pragmatic dimension of pragmatic idealism. Sweden shaped its values within the broader global interests of territorial integrity and, specifically, the sovereignty of Ukraine. Sweden's response was consistently framed within the EU response as a pragmatic calculation that would enable it to speak out against Russia as a deterrent if the same aggression was to be directed towards Sweden. The simple political reality was that Russia was redrawing Europe's map near its borders and there was a possibility that Sweden would suffer the same fate as Ukraine. Therefore, Sweden engaged with Russia on a diplomatic platform, knowing that its military capacity cannot help it fend off such an attack, and the practical approach for Sweden was the promotion of broader global interests that would also serve Sweden's interests for territorial integrity and sovereignty. By defending such principles in general and specifically for Ukraine, it was making it harder for Russia to get away in the future with any similar actions directed at
Sweden. Sweden's pragmatism then, facilitated the flexibility of its neutrality to advance its own interests without necessarily violating its neutrality.

5.3.3 Idealism in the context of Sweden-Russia relations

As discussed, Sweden's response to Russia and Ukraine encompassed the majority of the ideals of pragmatic idealism. First, Sweden was authentically committed to international law as is shown by its emphasis on the need for both parties to adhere to the terms of the Minsk protocol, which provided the roadmap for the resolution of the conflict (Government Offices of Sweden, 2014; Government Offices of Sweden, 2017). Second, Sweden was committed to the principles and values of the UN Charter as shown by its commitment to holding Russia responsible for its role in the UN and appealing on the UN Security Council to intervene in Ukraine (Government Offices of Sweden, 2014; Government Offices of Sweden, 2017; Government Offices of Sweden, 2018). Besides that, Sweden upheld the values of "solidarity with countries in need" in its response that stood with Ukraine and also by providing moral support as well as rallying other countries to do the same (Government Offices of Sweden, 2014; Government Offices of Sweden, 2016). Finally, Sweden showed adherence to the values that place a premium on finding "diplomatic solutions to international problems" in pursuing diplomatic solutions by visiting both sides and engaging with representatives from both sides to drum up support for a ceasefire and a resumption of talks on how to proceed on the Minsk protocol (Government Offices of Sweden, 2014; Government Offices of Sweden, 2017; Shalal & Emmott, 2018).

5.4 Sweden's response to Russia's Invasion of Ukraine: Sweden-NATO relations

The relationship between Sweden and NATO has also evolved after Russia's attack on Ukraine. The relationship between Sweden and NATO has been underway since 1994, when Sweden joined NATO’s Partnership for Peace (PfP). In 1997 it became part of Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (NATO, 2018). Sweden has sent its soldiers to contribute to NATO-led operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1995), Kosovo (1999), Afghanistan (2003-2014), and Libya (April 2011), which shows the close relationship between Sweden and NATO over time (NATO, 2018). Sweden has
now grown to become one of NATO's most active partners in the Baltic region. However, Sweden is not a NATO member, and NATO recognizes and respects Sweden's policy of military non-alignment (NATO, 2018). That notwithstanding, NATO has always considered Sweden as a potential future member and still engages it as a current partner (CSIN, 2015).

The invasion of Ukraine by Russia in 2014 brought Sweden and NATO closer in a relationship that may appear to be a departure of Sweden from its policy of military non-alliance in line with its stance of neutrality. According to General Sverker Göranson, the then Supreme Commander of the Swedish Armed Forces, Sweden's relationship with NATO went beyond crisis management NATO-led operations to geopolitics in and around the Baltic Sea due to Russia's military and political behaviour in the region (2015:44). Göranson stated that the most pressing need for Sweden in 2015 was "creating a robust, agile and mobile force which [could] respond effectively to security challenges at home, in the Baltic area and beyond" (2015:45). Therefore, the invasion of Ukraine by Russia brought a geopolitical dimension to Sweden's defence policy and created an opening and pressure for Sweden to develop a mutually beneficial relationship with NATO.

One of the ways that the relationship between Sweden and NATO has evolved is with the signing of Host Nation agreement between Sweden and NATO, signed on September 4th, 2014 (Daxbury, 2016). It would only come into effect in 2016, and only if ratified by the Swedish parliament (Kunz, 2015:28). Rather than move aggressively to ratify it, Sweden only did so in late May 2016, another gesture of its non-eagerness to do anything to disrupt its neutral persona. Still, to quote The Wall Street Journal: “The move is a sign of how Sweden, long a scrupulously alliance-free nation in Europe's north, has edged closer to NATO as nearby Russia has ramped up its military capability over recent years” (Duxbury, 2016). The goal of this agreement was to ensure that Sweden would provide adequate support for military activities by NATO in Swedish territory (Malmqvist, 2018). According to NATO, the agreement also “allows for logistical support to Allied forces located on, or in transit through, their territory during exercises or in a crisis” (2018). The agreement overall allows NATO to operate more freely in the Swedish territory. When justifying the agreement with NATO to Sweden’s legislators before the vote for ratification, Defence Minister
Peter Hultqvist pointed out that Europe’s security situation was threatened by Russia’s actions in Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014 (Duxbury, 2016). In the end, the timing of the events of the Host Nation agreement suggest that Russia’s political and military activities in Ukraine are the main triggers behind Sweden's decision to seek a closer relationship with NATO.

Another way that the Sweden-NATO relations have evolved in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine is that it has reignited the debate on whether Sweden should join NATO. In 2014, Sweden's deputy Prime Minister was quoted as hinting that Sweden should consider joining NATO when he suggested a "doctrinal shift" in Sweden's defence policy owing to Russia's increasingly unpredictable behaviour in the region (Scrutton & Suoninen, 2014). Jan Björklund posed, "you have to build up your fire brigade to the same dimension as the risk of a fire" (The Local, 2014). Data shows that these views are not isolated to the political class; the support for Sweden joining NATO has become increasingly popular among Swedes overall. According to the 2015 polls, 41% of Swedes were in favour of Sweden Joining NATO while only 39% opposed (Nilsson, 2015). In 2013, only 29% of the Swedes supported Sweden’s possible NATO membership (Nilsson, 2015). Even within the social democratic party that has been historically in favour of preserving Sweden’s neutrality, support for a Sweden-NATO alliance has gained traction (Nilsson, 2015). In 2013, only 20% of the voters from this party supported Sweden joining NATO, but after Russia invaded Ukraine in 2014, this number rose to 30% (Nilsson, 2015).

The shift in public perception about the idea of Sweden joining NATO was associated with “public outrage over Russia’s aggressive behaviour in Ukraine, friction resulting from Russia’s reckless infringement of Swedish airspace, and the deteriorating security situation around the Baltic Sea” (Nilsson, 2015). Before Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, only 45% of the Swedes were concerned about Russia (Sveriges Radio, 2015). However, after Russia invaded Ukraine, 73% of Swedes indicated that they were worried about Russia (Sveriges Radio, 2015). Therefore, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has stirred up the Swedes and increased public support for joining NATO in Sweden.
Finally, the relationship between Sweden and NATO has evolved to involve more participation of Swedish troops in military exercises with NATO forces. In March 2014, 1,400 Swedish troops participated in Operation Cold Response in Norway with 16,000 NATO soldiers (Ford, 2014). Sweden also participated in NATO's exercise BALTOPS in June 2015 (NATO, 2015). The closer relationship established between NATO and Sweden through the signing of the Host Nation agreement in 2015 also created a path for NATO to participate in Sweden's military exercises. In September 2017, Sweden's Operation Aurora was the first event under the Host Nation agreement, and it was the largest Swedish military exercise in over two decades (The Local, 2017). The exercise involved NATO troops and it was considered a demonstration of Sweden’s preparedness against possible Russian aggression (Di Pane, 2017). In October 2018, NATO carried out its largest exercise, dubbed Trident Juncture, which involved over 50,000 troops from all NATO countries as well as some from Sweden and Finland, the only two non-NATO participants in the military exercises (Woody, 2018).

5.4.1 Swedish neutrality in the context of Sweden-NATO relations

Sweden's neutrality was tested in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine with concerns in the political class that Sweden needed a doctrinal shift from neutrality towards joining military alliances with partners such as NATO. Sweden-NATO relations have evolved after the 2014 invasion of Ukraine by Russia in a way that questions the legitimacy of the Swedish claim to neutrality, at least during a conflict. While Sweden has forged a closer relationship with NATO, it remains a partner as opposed to a member of NATO, which can at least signify an attempt to remain impartial in NATO-Russia power politics, though partnering with NATO at all makes this debatable. Still, rather than joining NATO, Sweden has chosen to cooperate with NATO while avoiding formal, institutional hostility towards Russia (Ford, 2014).

Data shows that Sweden has avoided making any binding alliance obligations with NATO and this has helped to still preserve its ability to claim to have credibility with its policy of neutrality even while moving closer to NATO. According to Nilsson (2015), the promise of the policy of neutrality to guarantee national security without a
military alignment is still rooted in Sweden's public consciousness. The prospect of shifting Sweden's doctrine of defence policy was met with opposition from the leadership of Sweden's military who felt that the current neutrality-based policy was the best approach for Sweden.

When defending the agreement with NATO to Sweden's parliament, Sweden's Defence Minister Peter Hultqvist assured the legislators that Sweden's government was committed to remaining outside NATO in order to maintain stability within the Nordic region (Duxbury, 2016). Of course, the only major and, thus, most thorny issue in the credibility of Sweden’s claim to neutrality in the NATO-Russia power politics is the signing of the Host Nation Agreement in 2014. The signing of the agreement would be considered as a positive shift in Sweden's neutrality with regard to NATO because the agreement allows NATO to use Sweden's territory during a conflict. This could be translated as a military alignment with NATO. However, the agreement does not oblige Sweden to provide NATO with any help, and neither does it require NATO to help Sweden in a conflict as long as it remains a non-member. Therefore, the status quo is preserved in the short-term even in the face of the Host Nation Agreement because of the lack of any binding agreements, which can only be brought forth by a commitment of Sweden to join NATO, something that Sweden has promised both Russia and its citizens it will not do. In 2015, Swedish Foreign Minister Margot Wallström warned that “exploring NATO membership would send the wrong signals” (Sveriges Radio, 2015). This means that Sweden abstained from joining NATO because it recognizes that doing so would indicate that it had abandoned its neutrality. Yet only inviting NATO troops to Sweden when NATO and Russia are clearly hostile to each other strains the degree to which Sweden can be considered pragmatically idealist, since such close ties, while falling short of an obligatory alliance, are still an act that Russia would fairly consider hostile and not neutral. Yet, given Russia’s own aggressive actions in the region, Russia has no one to blame but itself for Sweden’s actions; as The Economist (2014) notes, “Russian belligerence only strengthens the case for [Swedish] NATO membership.” While maintaining a degree of neutrality, then, this move weakens the strength of such neutrality, and, yet, does so for entirely practical reasons.
5.4.2 Pragmatism in the context of Sweden-NATO relations

As the data shows, the actions of Sweden were pragmatic because they were the most practical choices given the prevailing political reality. The political reality was that Russia was redrawing Europe's map, and there was a possibility that Sweden would suffer the same fate. Therefore, the practical thing for Sweden to do was to forge closer relationships with viable partners, ones whom Sweden can count on during a conflict. At the same time, the decision to stay out of NATO was a pragmatic decision because it did not force Sweden to directly choose a side in a war which did not involve it, such as a conflict between NATO and Russia.

General Sverker Göranson points out that one of the reasons Sweden had to form closer relationships with partners like NATO was because the practical consequence of Russia's political and military activity in the region means that Sweden "must have the ability to provide and receive military support" (2015:45). In making this justification, Göranson suggests that Sweden-NATO relations are founded on pragmatism; being closer to NATO is the most practical thing that Sweden can do in the face of Russian political and military activity in the Baltic region. The Host Nation agreement also provided a pragmatic workaround to joining NATO. Sweden could enjoy the ability to receive help from NATO in the event of war without having to join NATO formally (Kunz, 2015). The agreement was also pragmatic because "[it] does not confer on NATO any right to operate on or from Swedish territory without Stockholm's formal invitation" (Kunz, 2015:28). Therefore, Sweden set in motion an "insurance policy" as a deterrent against Russia's aggression by forging a closer non-obligatory relationship with NATO.

In the eyes of Czarny (2018), recent moves by Sweden also signal a practical dimension in terms of geography, insofar as “the geography clearly shows that the practical implementation of security guarantees for the Baltic States of the North Atlantic Alliance without the use of Swedish territory would be very troublesome” (193). Sweden’s relationship with NATO is part of a greater pragmatic plan to guarantee its sovereignty without having to abandon its claim to neutrality in a practical sense. In his speech to Sweden’s parliament, Sweden’s Defence Minister Hultqvist noted that “What we are doing is building our capacity and deepening our
relationship with our partners…The host nation agreement is a jigsaw piece in that” puzzle (Duxbury, 2016). Therefore, Sweden's relationship with NATO was a practical calculation meant to reinforce Sweden's capacity for receiving help from other countries in the event of a conflict, but it was not a realist attempt at picking a side in a conflict of power politics between NATO and Russia. This provides evidence that Sweden's exercise of its neutrality in the context of how it related to NATO after the Ukraine crisis was consistent with the “pragmatic” dimension of the theoretical perspective of pragmatic idealism.

5.4.3 Idealism in the context of Sweden-NATO relations

As the data shows, Sweden's response to Russia and Ukraine encompassed the majority of the ideals of pragmatic idealism. First, Sweden practised moderation when relating to NATO by avoiding an escalation through NATO membership. Sweden avoided joining NATO because it believed that the "aim of maintaining stability in the Nordic region wouldn't be well served by a shift in its security stance" (Duxbury, 2016). Second, Sweden shows commitment to the value of solidarity with countries in need by its readiness to stand with Ukraine and also its Nordic neighbours, the latter with support from NATO to maintain Nordic stability. General Sverker Göranson points out that the closer relationship between Sweden and NATO in the Baltic region is part of “transatlantic solidarity” (2015:45). Therefore, the desire to stay true to the ideal of showing solidarity with other countries, especially its Nordic neighbours, is a major factor informing how Sweden practices its neutrality when relating to NATO.

Czarny (2018) also sees another layer of an idealist moral dimension, since “the change of direction in the security doctrine of Sweden towards solidarity, in place of the previous distancing itself from the shared responsibility for the regional and European security, is also of a great moral dimensions,” moving Sweden away from something of a free-rider position where before it was “assumed that other countries, particularly NATO, will come to the rescue in case Swedish security in endangered” (192-193).

Finally, Sweden’s practice of neutrality adheres to the value of cooperation in international affairs through its mutually beneficial partnerships with like-minded allies such as NATO. When justifying the increased cooperation with NATO, General
Göranson also points out that the “core of the Swedish security policy doctrine is the recognition that security today is best built in cooperation” (2015:45). Therefore, Sweden cultivates its relationship with NATO within an environment framed by ideals of moderation, solidarity with countries, and cooperation in international affairs. These three values are part of the idealistic basis of pragmatic idealism, and this provides evidence that Sweden’s exercise of its neutrality in the context of how it related with NATO after the Ukraine crisis was consistent with the “idealism” dimension of the theoretical perspective of pragmatic idealism.

Chapter 6. CONCLUSION

A study of Sweden’s response to Russia’s attack on Ukraine relating to the Swedish-Russia relations reveals that Sweden chose to remain neutral by avoiding the joining of any military alliances that would be involved in the confrontation in Ukraine. Sweden was only willing to be part of a non-NATO military peacekeeping unit if Russia would sign off on it (Shalal & Emmott, 2018). This pragmatic calculation to remain neutral would avoid antagonizing Russia unnecessarily. The analysis of the data also reveals that Sweden framed its response within the ideals of an authentic commitment to international law; moderation; the principles and values of the UN Charter; solidarity with countries in need; and an emphasis on diplomatic, multilateral solutions to international problems. These ideals are some of the ideals that characterize pragmatic idealism (Melakopides, 1998:5; Melakopides, 2012:74). Therefore, Sweden's exercise of and adjustments to neutrality when dealing with Russia and Ukraine in the Russia-Ukraine conflict was consistent with the predictions of pragmatic idealism. This finding provides support for Hypothesis 2, namely that adjustments were made both ethically and practically that kept or enhanced Sweden’s practical reality. By standing with Ukraine against Russian violations, coupled with the Host Nation agreement allowing NATO troops to work within Swedish territory and partner with Swedish forces, while at the same time idealistically still refraining from any binding long-term military alliances with NATO, Sweden managed to balance practical and idealistic ideals in the face of the Russian threat.
Russia's occupation of the region of Crimea in Ukraine through a military offensive was more than an attack on Ukraine. The invasion of Ukraine was part of the Russian expansionist agenda bent on redrawing Europe's map, bringing to fruition Putin’s dream of reversing the events since the fall of the Soviet Union, and thwarting the perceived threat from NATO in what Russia considers as its sphere of influence. Therefore, the conflict in Ukraine over Crimea not only involved Russia and Ukraine, but it also included NATO and its allies by extension. This means that as a neutral country, Sweden has to remain impartial in its relations with Russia, Ukraine, and NATO in this conflict. The central puzzle in this study was that pragmatic idealism predicts that a country loyal to pragmatic idealism would remain neutral in the conflict between the dominant NATO bloc and the contending Russia, yet the actions of the Swedish government aligning itself with the West after Ukraine’s invasion by Russia point to a possible departure from neutrality to partiality or alignment. The most useful cases through which to consider all this were Sweden-Russia relations and Sweden-NATO relations.

With Sweden-Russia relations, Swedish neutrality was enhanced by adjustments because Sweden refused to participate in the Russia-Ukraine confrontation in Crimea except for peacekeeping purposes with a blessing from Russia. Sweden's practice of neutrality in Sweden-Russia relations was a pragmatic calculation that involved balancing between engaging with Russia on a diplomatic platform as well as calling it out for clear violations of international law and norms; it was able to stand for law and peace but also operate in a way that took Russia’s concerns and interests into consideration. Sweden's practice of neutrality in Sweden-Russia relations was also furthering human values such as solidarity with victim countries in need, commitment to international law, and an emphasis on diplomatic solutions to global problems. Therefore, Sweden stood in solidarity with Ukraine without isolating Russia for both pragmatic and idealistic reasons, which shows that Sweden's practice of neutrality was consistent with pragmatic idealism.

In the end, this study concludes that pragmatic idealism allows Sweden to be flexible in its practice of neutrality in international relations. This gives Sweden a wide range of choices when dealing with NATO, Russia, and Ukraine. While the analysis is grounded in case study methodology, thesis word limits notwithstanding,
another interesting approach would have delved into discourse analysis and quantititative data to delve into how elite/international opinions shape neutrality policies as well. Additionally, comparative studies in regards to Sweden and Finland, and say Norway and Denmark, would make for an interesting area of study as well in the context of NATO allegiances and an encroaching Russian Federation.

Herein it has been shown that the flexibility with which Sweden has applied its policy of neutrality in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine is consistent with the theory of pragmatic idealism. Sweden's application of neutrality in international relations has not only been infused with idealistic norms but also remained practical given the increasingly harsh prevailing political realities in Sweden’s neighbourhood. The implications of these findings are that they build support for the position that pragmatic idealism is still relevant for small neutral states such as Sweden.

As a theoretical perspective in international relations, pragmatic idealism explains how these small states can practice flexible neutrality to serve their interests within broader global goals without having to be sucked into power politics or abandon morality. Pragmatic idealism helps these nations to practice neutrality within a set of principles while allowing for flexibility to accommodate the prevailing political realities while still advancing norms that make the world safer, more humane, and more peaceful. Where Czarny (2008) saw a transition from “neutrality” to “international solidarity,” he also titled an entire chapter “The Practical Dimension of International Solidarity”(185-195). A great case indeed, that Sweden’s shifts fall squarely within what has been described in this thesis as pragmatic idealism. By re-framing neutrality in a combination of practical and ideal terms, it is entirely possible to see Sweden’s adjustments to its neutrality not as hypocritical or as abandoning neutrality then, but as sticking to neutrality as much as possible without setting itself up for geopolitical self-destruction.
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