

Goodbye, neutrality:

an analysis of Swedish
military aid to Ukraine



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Introduction

The Kingdom of Sweden is rarely portrayed as one of Ukraine's most important partners. Yet its role is difficult to overestimate. Stockholm has been supporting Ukraine since 2014, providing training and advisors for the multinational military missions.

After the beginning of the Russian full-scale invasion, Sweden has significantly expanded its aid. The training remained an important part, however, Stockholm also started to provide military equipment, lethal weapons and financial support. For Sweden, this was the first transfer of weapons to a neighboring country in the active phase of an armed conflict since the Soviet-Finnish war of 1939.¹

The approximate value of Swedish military assistance, as of September 2024, is 4.2 billion euros.² According to the Kiel Institute, Sweden is the sixth largest military donor of Ukraine.³

The reasons for such an active support include both strategic security calculations as well as ideological aspirations stemming from the Swedish identity as a "moral superpower."

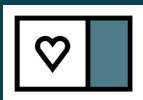
¹ Statement of Government Policy in the Parliamentary Debate on Foreign Affairs Friday 10 June 2022: <https://www.government.se/contentassets/9e7ed2449dc54caa99f326f876a43322/statement-of-foreign-policy-june-2022.pdf>

² Military support to Ukraine: <https://www.government.se/government-policy/swedens-support-to-ukraine/military-support-to-ukraine/#content>

³ Ukraine Support Tracker: <https://www.ifw-kiel.de/topics/war-against-ukraine/ukraine-support-tracker/>

Chapter 1

Why does Sweden support Ukraine?



European security order

Sweden stands for a security order that is based on the principles of international law and the UN Charter.⁴ Violation of these principles, from Stockholm's perspective, might have negative consequences for the Kingdom.⁵ The logic is typical for middle power states: in a world where more powerful states can impose their will on weaker ones, Sweden's influence will be significantly diminished. Thus, Stockholm's foreign policy is largely aimed at creating a favorable environment — a security order based on rules, regulations, and laws.⁶ Given Sweden's geographical location, the main focus of this policy is the European continent.⁷

After the end of the Cold War, Stockholm took an active part in building a new European security architecture based on cooperation, the principle of territorial integrity, renunciation of spheres of influence and the use of violence as a tool of foreign policy.⁸ Although Sweden initially actively cooperated with Russia, hoping for its support for the new security policy, Russian aggression in Ukraine and Georgia changed Sweden's assessments.⁹

By violating borders and claiming a sphere of influence in post-Soviet countries, Moscow has created a risk of deterioration of the European security architecture into a system of spheres of influence between superpowers, in which small and medium-sized states are deprived of the opportunity to choose their own political course. By using violence as a foreign policy tool, Russia increased the risks of legitimizing and spreading armed aggression in the region.¹⁰ These concerns are directly related to Sweden's security.

Firstly, Russia has repeatedly denied Sweden the right to choose its own security policy, threatening consequences if Sweden integrates into NATO. Stockholm is concerned that if European countries and the United States openly or de facto admit Russia's right to create a sphere of influence in the post-Soviet space, Sweden risks falling into Moscow's sphere of special interests next. In this way, active support for the sovereignty of post-Soviet countries, including Ukraine, is Sweden's attempt to assert the right of small and medium-sized states to choose their own future in order to protect the same right for itself.¹¹

⁴ Statement of Government Policy in the Parliamentary Debate on Foreign Affairs 24 February 2021: <https://www.government.se/contentassets/d338be2ed4564ceabfed57540ce47221/statement-of-government-policy.pdf>

⁵ Nationell säkerhetsstrategi: <https://bilkaren.se/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/nationellsakerhetsstrategi.pdf>

⁶ Statement of Government Policy in the Parliamentary Debate on Foreign Affairs 24 February 2021: <https://www.government.se/contentassets/d338be2ed4564ceabfed57540ce47221/statement-of-government-policy.pdf>

⁷ This focus has been maintained in Swedish strategic documents for many years. One example is the Eurocentric emphasis in the National Security Strategy of 2017: <https://bilkaren.se/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/nationellsakerhetsstrategi.pdf>

⁸ Pierre, Jon, ed. The Oxford handbook of Swedish politics. Oxford University Press, 2015.

⁹ Försvaret av Sverige — Starkare försvar för en osäker tid: <https://www.regeringen.se/rattsliga-dokument/departementsserien-och-promemorior/2014/05/ds-201420/#content>

¹⁰ The Swedish Defence Commission's report on security policy: <https://www.regeringen.se/contentassets/de808e940116476d8252160c58b78bb7/sammandrag-pa-engelska-av-allvarstid-ds-202319.pdf>

¹¹ Ibid.

Secondly, Russia's willingness to use violence to redraw Europe's borders worries Stockholm. Sweden believes that if Moscow benefits from its aggressive actions, it will encourage Russia to expand further, potentially threatening Sweden.¹²

The threat of Russia

Russia is one of the main threats in Swedish geopolitical thinking. This perception has deep historical roots. The Kingdom of Sweden and the Tsardom of Muscovy, later the Russian Empire, engaged in numerous armed conflicts for three centuries from the late 14th to the early 19th century. For Sweden, the confrontation culminated in loss of both superpower status and control over Finland, which at the time accounted for a third of the Swedish territory and a quarter of its population.¹³

Sweden relinquished the claim for Finland and declared neutrality to avoid further conflicts. However, distrust between Russia and Sweden did not perish. The very existence of the powerful and aggressive state at its borders made Sweden to account for the potential Russian threat in its strategic calculations. As a result, Russia is often depicted as a "sworn enemy" of Sweden.¹⁴

The nature of Swedish-Soviet relations during the Cold War is illustrative. Despite its formal neutrality, Sweden actively spied on the Soviet Union and held secret talks with the United States about military assistance in the event of Soviet aggression.¹⁵

Relations warmed up after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Sweden provided financial and expert support to Moscow in order to transform Russia into a peaceful liberal democracy.¹⁶ At the same time, Sweden has not abandoned its historical suspicion towards Moscow. To determine the future trajectory of Russia's policy, Stockholm has designed a so-called Baltic test — Russian attitude toward Baltic states will be an indicator of its future foreign policy trajectory.¹⁷ Later, the test was expanded to include relations with all post-Soviet countries.¹⁸

Russia failed the test by invading Georgia. While a number of Western countries ignored the aggression, Sweden not only strongly condemned the invasion, but also made conclusions about the Kremlin's aggressive intentions. These conclusions were confirmed after Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2014, Russian actions in Syria, and numerous provocations

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Barton, H. Arnold. *From Warfare to Welfare State: Sweden's Search for a New Identity*. Scandinavian Studies, vol. 77, no. 3, 2005, pp. 315–26.

¹⁴ Pierre, Jon, ed. *The Oxford handbook of Swedish politics*. Oxford University Press, 2015.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Russia — Country strategy for development cooperation 2002–2004: <https://www.government.se/contentassets/43056929982040b18e2b6749ae64c1b7/country-strategy-russia-2002-2004/>

¹⁷ Bildt, Carl. *The Baltic Litmus Test*. Foreign Affairs, vol. 73, no. 5, 1994, pp. 72–85.

¹⁸ Säkerhet i samverkan: <https://www.regeringen.se/rattsliga-dokument/departementsserien-och-promemorior/2007/12/ds-200746/>

involving air and sea border violations in the Nordic and Baltic regions, as well as hybrid operations in Europe.¹⁹

The growing level of concern about possible Russian aggression can be traced through Swedish strategic documents. In 2005–2007, the government believed that direct armed aggression against Sweden was unlikely in the foreseeable future.²⁰ In 2007 and in 2014, aggression was assessed as unlikely, but not impossible in the long run. Stockholm highlighted the increased likelihood of an armed confrontation in the Baltic region, in which Sweden would be dragged in.²¹ The documents published after the beginning of the Russian full-scale invasion are more pessimistic. According to them, "an armed attack against Sweden cannot be ruled out. Nor can it be ruled out that military means, or further threats of such military means, can be directed against Sweden."²²

Stockholm is convinced that the likelihood of further Russian aggression, and thus the security of the Kingdom, will depend on the outcome of the Russian-Ukrainian war. The Swedish government believes that success in Ukraine could encourage the Kremlin to expand further, potentially to attack Finland or the Baltic states, which would threaten with war the Kingdom itself.²³

Regional security

According to the Swedish government, in case of an armed conflict in the immediate neighborhood of the Kingdom, the country is very likely to be involved in the confrontation, even if Sweden remains neutral.²⁴ This is because Swedish territory would be "of great operational importance to both the aggressor and the defender in any such conflict".²⁵

The island of Gotland, also called an aircraft-carrier-island, is of key importance in this context. Due to its geographical location, the military force based there is able to gain control over the sea and airspace of the Baltic Sea.²⁶ In case of a conflict between a NATO member and Russia, Sweden believes that the United States will insist on deploying its forces on Gotland. At the same time, Moscow may try to preemptively seize the island and deploy air

¹⁹ Försvaret av Sverige — Starkare försvar för en osäker tid: <https://www.regeringen.se/rattsliga-dokument/departementsserien-och-promemorior/2014/05/ds-201420/#content>

²⁰ Pierre, Jon, ed. *The Oxford handbook of Swedish politics*. Oxford University Press, 2015.

²¹ Försvaret av Sverige — Starkare försvar för en osäker tid: <https://www.regeringen.se/rattsliga-dokument/departementsserien-och-promemorior/2014/05/ds-201420>
Säkerhet i samverkan: <https://www.regeringen.se/rattsliga-dokument/departementsserien-och-promemorior/2007/12/ds-200746/>

²² The Swedish Defence Commission's report on security policy: <https://www.regeringen.se/contentassets/de808e940116476d8252160c58b78bb7/sammandrag-pa-engelska-av-allvarstid-ds-202319.pdf>

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ 2022 Militärstrategisk doktrin: <https://www.forsvarsmakten.se/siteassets/2-om-forsvarsmakten/dokument/doktriner/msd-22.pdf>

²⁵ Säkerhet i ny tid: https://www.regeringen.se/contentassets/dc054ef38cde47dabf5aadf63dcab469/sou-2016_57.pdf

²⁶ 2022 Militärstrategisk doktrin: <https://www.forsvarsmakten.se/siteassets/2-om-forsvarsmakten/dokument/doktriner/msd-22.pdf>

defense systems to establish air and sea dominance before an operation against the Baltic states or Finland. Both cases would risk dragging Sweden into the war.²⁷

However, aggression against the Scandinavian or Baltic countries is not the only scenario. Russian aggression against Poland or a clash with NATO forces in the Arctic could also draw the Scandinavian and Baltic countries into a war under Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty.²⁸ In this case, Swedish territory would also become a desirable base in the northern theater of war.

For example, in the event of an escalation in the Arctic region, the North Calotte, which includes Sweden, will become important for controlling sea and air routes.²⁹ As in previous cases, such a conflict would turn the territory of the Kingdom into one of the most desirable operational bases for both Russia and NATO members. In this context, the Swedish government is particularly concerned with the growing tension and militarization of the region, which is taking place against the backdrop of melting glaciers, which opens up access to new trade routes and resources.³⁰

In 2009, recognizing the inseparability of Sweden's security and security of the broader region, Sweden, despite its formal neutrality, joined the EU's common defense system, in accordance with Article 42:7 of the Lisbon Treaty. "Sweden supports the declaration of solidarity issued by the Defense Committee, which includes EU members as well as Norway and Iceland. It is impossible to imagine an armed conflict in our immediate neighborhood that would involve only one country. Sweden will not behave passively if a member state or Nordic country suffers a disaster or attack. We expect these countries to act in the same way if Sweden is affected."³¹

Ukraine plays an important role in these calculations. Russian aggression in Ukraine has weakened Moscow's ability to act in Sweden's neighborhood in the short term. However, Stockholm believes that Russia will continue to be a long-term threat.³² The scale of this threat will depend on the outcome of the Russian-Ukrainian war. If Russia manages to win, the Swedish government believes it could encourage Moscow to continue an aggressive

²⁷ Säkerhet i ny tid: https://www.regeringen.se/contentassets/dc054ef38cde47dabf5aadf63dcab469/sou-2016_57.pdf

²⁸ The North Atlantic Treaty: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm

²⁹ 2022 Militärstrategisk doktrin: <https://www.forsvarsmakten.se/siteassets/2-om-forsvarsmakten/dokument/doktriner/msd-22.pdf>

³⁰ Försvarsberedningens säkerhetspolitiska rapport 2023: <https://www.regeringen.se/contentassets/de808e940116476d8252160c58b78bb7/allvarstid-ds-202319.pdf>

³¹ Försvarsutskottets betänkande 2008/09:FöU10: <https://data.riksdagen.se/fil/90B349AB-0224-41F4-922C-DEBB5D60C5CD>

³² Försvarsberedningens säkerhetspolitiska rapport 2023: <https://www.regeringen.se/contentassets/de808e940116476d8252160c58b78bb7/allvarstid-ds-202319.pdf>

policy.³³ An attack on any of Sweden's neighbors or members of the European Union poses a risk of involving the Kingdom in a confrontation on its territory.³⁴

A Ukrainian victory, on the other hand, could weaken Russian capabilities for years to come, while international resistance to aggression would create a deterrent effect against future invasions. Thus, a Ukrainian victory would ease tensions in the region and reduce risks to Swedish security.

Democracy and the international law

An equally important aspect for understanding the Swedish reasons behind its support of Ukraine is the role of democracy and international law. Stockholm's political rhetoric clearly emphasizes the role of this aspect.

It is typical for Swedish political discourse to emphasize the Ukrainian democratic system and violation of international law from the Russian side. In a report on the consequences of Russian aggression for Sweden, for example, the government writes about "Russian unprovoked aggression against *sovereign and democratic* Ukraine".³⁵ In a statement on government policy from July 10, 2022, then Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde proclaimed that "on February 24, Russia launched an unprovoked, illegal, and unjustified war against its neighbor, *the democratic state* of Ukraine".³⁶ Ann Linde's characterization of the war is also indicative: "Russia's aggression against Ukraine is not only a gross violation of *international law*, but also a vivid example of *an authoritarian state's attack on a democratic state*".³⁷

Democracy and international law play an important strategic and ideological role for Sweden. Strategically, Stockholm considers international law to be an important aspect of its security environment. Swedish documents emphasize a correlation between repressive policies at home and aggression abroad. Thus, promoting democracy and human rights is an attempt to stabilize the international security environment, especially in the neighboring states.³⁸

However, ideology is also important. Sweden foreign policy traditionally has a strong ideological aspect. Sweden commonly presents itself as a "moral superpower", a state that

³³ Statement of Government Policy in the Parliamentary Debate on Foreign Affairs Friday 10 June 2022: <https://www.government.se/contentassets/9e7ed2449dc54caa99f326f876a43322/statement-of-foreign-policy-june-2022.pdf>

³⁴ Säkerhet i ny tid: https://www.regeringen.se/contentassets/dc054ef38cde47dabf5aadf63dcab469/sou-2016_57.pdf

³⁵ Deterioration of the security environment — implications for Sweden: <https://www.government.se/legal-documents/2022/05/ds-20228/>

³⁶ Statement of Government Policy in the Parliamentary Debate on Foreign Affairs 10 June 2022: <https://www.government.se/contentassets/9e7ed2449dc54caa99f326f876a43322/statement-of-foreign-policy-june-2022.pdf>

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ The Swedish Defense Commission's report on security policy: <https://www.regeringen.se/contentassets/de808e940116476d8252160c58b78bb7/sammandrag-pa-engelska-av-allvarstid-ds-202319.pdf>

pursues a missionary foreign policy and seeks to build a better world.³⁹ This manifests as advocacy for nuclear disarmament, promotion of international law, peacekeeping, mediation of international conflicts, protection of human rights, fight against climate change, and large-scale international assistance programs that support democracy⁴⁰ and gender equality.⁴¹

The war in Ukraine is perceived as a confrontation between a law-abiding democracy and an authoritarian state that violates international law. The Swedish political discourse interprets this as a confrontation between good and evil.⁴² This confrontation is taking place not only in Ukraine. Sweden's strategic documents emphasize that the confrontation between democracies and dictatorships is global, and the war in Ukraine is a part of it.⁴³

These strategic and ideological aspects create an additional dimension of Swedish assistance to Ukraine. On the one hand, Russian aggression undermines international law and creates a risk of authoritarian rule over a democratic country. Russian success may destabilize the security environment of the Kingdom.⁴⁴ On the other hand, it is part of a global ideological confrontation in which Ukraine and Sweden are on the same side and in which supporting Ukraine is an ethically right choice.⁴⁵

³⁹ Sweden: Once a Moral Superpower, Always a Moral Superpower?: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40204222>

⁴⁰ Democracy and human rights are relatively new focuses of Swedish aid. During the Cold War, Stockholm promoted economic and social development, prioritizing them over individual freedoms and political rights. This often led to support of regimes with a questionable human rights record: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40204222>

⁴¹ The report on the activities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sweden, which focuses on these priorities, is quite typical for Sweden: <https://www.regeringen.se/informationsmaterial/2016/04/regeringskansliets-arsbok-2015/>

⁴² Riksdag member Martin Ådahl characterizes Russia's war against Ukraine in this way. The leitmotif of other MPs' speeches also matches this characteristics: https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-och-lagar/dokument/protokoll/protokoll-20212287-torsdagen-den-24-mars_h90987/html/

⁴³ The Swedish Defence Commission's report on security policy: <https://www.regeringen.se/contentassets/de808e940116476d8252160c58b78bb7/sammandrag-pa-engelska-av-allvarstid-ds-202319.pdf>

⁴⁴ Deterioration of the security environment — implications for Sweden: <https://www.government.se/legal-documents/2022/05/ds-20228/>

⁴⁵ Swedish politicians from different political parties voice the same sentiments during the parliamentary debates. For example: https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-och-lagar/dokument/protokoll/protokoll-20212287-torsdagen-den-24-mars_h90987/html/

Chapter 2

Swedish Military Aid



Training

After Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2014, Sweden began to take an active role in developing the capabilities of the Ukrainian armed forces. These efforts were focused on promoting NATO standards. Although Sweden was not a NATO member, the Swedish armed forces had a high level of interoperability with the Alliance, and thus their representatives joined training missions of NATO member states.

Stockholm, for example, participated in the Joint Multinational Training Group-Ukraine (JMTG-U), which aimed to train both Ukrainian Armed Forces units and Ukrainian trainers according to Alliance standards.⁴⁶ At the same time, Swedish troops joined a similar Canadian training mission, UNIFIER.⁴⁷

Since the beginning of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, Stockholm's focus has shifted from NATO standards to helping Ukraine to repel the Russian aggression.

The Sweden military is participating in the British training mission Interflex. As part of this mission, Sweden provides 120 instructors. It is one of the leaders in terms of involvement.⁴⁸ Stockholm also supports the European Union Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine (EUMAM), where Swedish instructors conduct medical and infantry training, as well as teach Ukrainian military to operate Swedish weapons.⁴⁹

Stockholm also provided trainers for orientation courses on JAS 39 Gripen aircraft and participated in the joint training of Ukrainian deminers as part of a joint project of the Nordic countries. The latter was launched to prepare the Ukrainian offensive in the south of the country. It was supposed to train 4,800 sappers by the end of 2023.⁵⁰

In 2024, the government of Sweden expanded the mandate of the Royal Swedish Armed Forces. The mandate allows the Swedish Armed Forces to scale up existing training programs and to respond faster to new needs of Ukraine. In particular, the mandate allows conducting exercises on the territory of Sweden. The Swedish government expects that in 2024, programs involving the Swedish military will train at least 18,000 Ukrainian soldiers.⁵¹

⁴⁶ American military instructors from Florida arrived to Lviv region: <https://www.mil.gov.ua/special/news.html?article=65403>

⁴⁷ Military instructors from Canada demonstrated how they train Ukrainian soldiers: <https://armyinform.com.ua/2023/08/23/vijskovi-instruktory-z-kanady-pokazaly-yak-trenuyut-ukrayinskyh-vijskovosluzhbovcziv/>

⁴⁸ New military support package to Ukraine: <https://government.se/press-releases/2023/10/new-military-support-package-to-ukraine/>

⁴⁹ Military support to Ukraine: <https://www.government.se/government-policy/swedens-support-to-ukraine/military-support-to-ukraine/#content>

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

Financial aid

The Swedish government provides financial assistance to the Ukrainian armed forces, both through international trust funds and directly to Ukraine.

Stockholm provided about 17.9 million euros for the Comprehensive Assistance Package for Ukraine. The money was partially spent on winter gear. 30 million euros were transferred to the British International Fund for Ukraine. These funds were used to purchase "defense materials" for the Armed Forces of Ukraine. An additional 96.6 million euros were transferred directly to the National Bank of Ukraine. 30 million euros was donated by the Swedish government to the Czech initiative to purchase ammunition for Ukraine.⁵² As a member of the Drone Coalition, Sweden has financed the production of drones in Ukraine, contributing another 10 million euros.⁵³ In a recent package, Sweden announced its intention to allocate 61 million euros for the funds that support Ukraine and to finance the purchase of military equipment for another 62 million euros.⁵⁴

In total, the Swedish government has allocated at least 300 million euros to support Ukraine, excluding the cost of training and direct military aid.

Direct military aid

Like many other countries, Sweden provided personal protective equipment and anti-tank weapons in the beginning of the invasion. The first aid package was announced on February 27, 2022. It included 5,000 helmets, 5,000 bulletproof vests, and 5,000 ATGMs (most likely AT-40).⁵⁵ Several subsequent aid packages continued to supply ATGMs, as well as assault rifles and coastal defense equipment.⁵⁶

Notably, Stockholm agreed to provide portable air defense systems only in November 2023 amid massive shelling of Ukraine's heating and energy infrastructure.⁵⁷ Similarly, Sweden began supplying armored vehicles and heavy artillery much later than other partners. The transfer of the systems was announced in January and February 2023 as part of the tenth and eleventh Swedish aid packages.⁵⁸

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Sweden to join a drone cooperation for Ukraine: <https://www.government.se/press-releases/2024/07/sweden-to-join-a-drone-cooperation-for-ukraine/>

⁵⁴ New military support package to strengthen Ukraine's defense capabilities: <https://www.government.se/press-releases/2024/09/new-military-support-package-to-strengthen-ukraines-defence-capabilities/>

⁵⁵ Ukrainian forces receive new Swedish AT4 grenade launchers: <https://mil.in.ua/uk/news/syly-ukrayiny-otrymuyut-novi-shvedski-granatomy-at4/>

⁵⁶ Military support to Ukraine: <https://www.government.se/government-policy/swedens-support-to-ukraine/military-support-to-ukraine/#content>

⁵⁷ Government to send record support package to Ukraine: <https://www.government.se/articles/2022/11/government-to-send-record-support-package-to-ukraine/>

⁵⁸ Heavy advanced weapons to Ukraine: <https://www.government.se/articles/2023/01/heavy-advanced-weapons-to-ukraine/>

Heavy advanced weapons to Ukraine in new support package: <https://www.government.se/press-releases/2023/02/heavy-advanced-weapons-to-ukraine-in-new-support-package/>

The tenth package contained SV-90s along with Carl Gustaf and AT4 anti-tank weapons, as well as Robot 57 (better known as NLAW) ATGMs, assault rifles, and mine clearance equipment.⁵⁹ In the eleventh package, Stockholm sent to Ukraine the Archer self-propelled artillery system, a Swedish modification of the Leopard 2 tank, Hawk air defense systems, and components for the IRIS-T system.⁶⁰

The next three aid packages focused mainly on ammunition and spare parts.⁶¹ The fifteenth package, however, also included Robot 70 and Robot 55 systems, an order for new CV-90s, Combat Boat 90s and unnamed underwater armament. At the time, this package was the largest Swedish aid package since the start of the full-scale invasion.⁶²

However, Stockholm soon set a new record. In the next, sixteenth package, Sweden announced the provision of two ASC 890 airborne early warning and control aircraft, which will strengthen Ukraine's air defense by enabling it to detect and track low-altitude targets at greater distances.⁶³ The ASC 890s can also be used in tandem with the F-16, allowing them to acquire targets from a longer distance without de-masking. In the same package, the Kingdom's government announced the transfer of additional artillery ammunition, RB 99-AMRAAM missiles, and the entire Swedish stock of PBV 302 armored personnel carriers.⁶⁴ As it was later clarified, Sweden transferred to Ukraine more than 200 PBV 302s.⁶⁵

Despite a large scale of support, Swedish assistance has not always been without troubles. Sweden hesitated to transfer heavy weapons, including CV-90, Archer and Leopard 2. The possibility of transferring the JAS 39 Gripen multirole fighter aircrafts was a subject of intensive debates. In all these questions, the Swedish government faced several security dilemmas, some of which will continue to impact further assistance.

⁵⁹ Heavy advanced weapons to Ukraine: <https://www.government.se/articles/2023/01/heavy-advanced-weapons-to-ukraine/>

⁶⁰ Heavy advanced weapons to Ukraine in new support package: <https://www.government.se/press-releases/2023/02/heavy-advanced-weapons-to-ukraine-in-new-support-package/>

⁶¹ Twelfth support package to Ukraine: <https://www.government.se/press-releases/2023/06/twelfth-support-package-to-ukraine/>

Thirteenth support package to Ukraine: <https://www.government.se/press-releases/2023/08/thirteenth-support-package-to-ukraine-focusing-on-ammunition-and-spare-parts/>

New military support package to Ukraine: <https://www.government.se/press-releases/2023/10/new-military-support-package-to-ukraine/>

⁶² Government presents largest military support package to Ukraine to date: <https://www.government.se/press-releases/2024/02/government-presents-largest-military-support-package-to-ukraine-to-date/>

⁶³ Tom Samuelsson: <https://x.com/tomsamuelsson/status/1795856321863934355>

⁶⁴ Military support package 16 to Ukraine: <https://www.government.se/press-releases/2024/05/military-support-package-16-to-ukraine--new-capability-to-strengthen-ukraines-air-defence-and-support-to-meet-its-prioritised-needs/>

⁶⁵ New military support package to strengthen Ukraine's defense capabilities: <https://www.government.se/press-releases/2024/09/new-military-support-package-to-strengthen-ukraines-defence-capabilities/>

Chapter 3

Challenges of Swedish aid



The main factor that limited Sweden's military assistance was its vulnerable geopolitical position before it joined NATO. On the one hand, the government was concerned about the possibility of a Russian invasion. As noted earlier, the Swedish government believed that the possibility of aggression against the Kingdom cannot be ruled out.⁶⁶ On the other hand, Stockholm was disappointed with the extent of NATO's support for Ukraine. If earlier Swedish strategy was largely based on the expectation of assistance from the North Atlantic Alliance in case of aggression against the Kingdom, "Russia's aggression against NATO partner Ukraine... has highlighted the limits of NATO's obligations to non-members and made it clear that Article 5 applies to the defense of Allies only." The Swedish government concluded that "NATO's collective defense does not include a partnership dimension".⁶⁷ This fact made Sweden to abandon its previous policy of formal neutrality and security solidarity. Sweden decided to integrate into NATO, but faced opposition from Turkey and Hungary.⁶⁸

The reason for Hungarian opposition was Stockholm's previous criticism of Orban's government and attempts to block European funding for Hungary.⁶⁹ The Hungarian position was to a large extent also linked to Turkey. Budapest tried to maintain warm relations with Ankara. According to Orban, "Turkey is also our ally, so we need to listen to it. And since we are closer to it than other NATO members, we may listen to it more closely."⁷⁰

Turkey, for its part, accused Sweden of granting asylum to members of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which Ankara considers to be a terrorist organization.⁷¹ However, even after concessions from the Sweden side, Ankara did not agree to ratify the accession. Turkish President Recep Erdogan demanded further actions to fight the PKK and to ease the arms exports rules for Turkey.⁷² At the same time, Ankara demanded to lift Canada's arms embargo and permit Turkey to purchase F-16s, which was blocked by the US Congress.⁷³ Turkey essentially used its veto over Swedish accession to push its agenda, not only in relations with Stockholm, but with the allies that support Swedish integration.

This situation left Sweden in a security limbo. Its position was further complicated by the integration of Finland, which left Sweden to be the only Scandinavian country outside the

⁶⁶ The Swedish Defence Commission's report on security policy: <https://www.regeringen.se/contentassets/de808e940116476d8252160c58b78bb7/sammandrag-pa-engelska-av-allvarstid-ds-202319.pdf>

⁶⁷ Deterioration of the security environment — implications for Sweden: <https://www.government.se/legal-documents/2022/05/ds-20228/>

⁶⁸ Statement of Government Policy in the Parliamentary Debate on Foreign Affairs Friday 10 June 2022: <https://www.government.se/contentassets/9e7ed2449dc54caa99f326f876a43322/statement-of-foreign-policy-june-2022.pdf>

⁶⁹ Hungary says 'grievances' hold up ratification of Sweden's NATO accession: <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/hungary-says-grievances-hold-up-ratification-swedens-nato-accession-2023-03-29/>

⁷⁰ Prime Minister Viktor Orbán on the Kossuth Radio programme "Good Morning Hungary": <https://miniszterelnok.hu/en/prime-minister-viktor-orban-on-the-kossuth-radio-programme-good-morning-hungary-2023-02-24/>

⁷¹ Turkey Demands Sweden Expel Kurd Suspects Before NATO Entry: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2023-06-22/turkey-wants-sweden-to-extradite-kurds-before-nato-accession>

⁷² Erdoğan says (again) that Sweden isn't doing enough against Kurdish militants: <https://www.politico.eu/article/recep-tayyip-erdogan-turkey-sweden-kurdish-militants-nato/>

⁷³ Turkey links Sweden's NATO bid to US approving F-16 jet sales and Canada lifting arms embargo: <https://apnews.com/article/turkey-sweden-nato-congress-f16s-jets-d851a62123ed4c5ff250929c3d9b67f6>

Alliance and thus the most likely target of Russian aggression in the region. Although the United Kingdom and the United States provided Sweden with transitional security assurances,⁷⁴ the experience of Ukraine has called into question the reliability of any assurances outside of NATO's collective defense.⁷⁵

As a result, the Swedish government sought to preserve its own capabilities as much as possible, both to deter and to repel potential aggression.⁷⁶ Given the large disparity of forces between Russia and Sweden, as well as the relatively small arsenal of military equipment, supplying weapons to Ukraine without weakening its own forces was problematic for Sweden.⁷⁷

Stockholm likely tried to avoid provoking Russia too. Swedish politicians rarely acknowledged this. But one of the few such examples is a speech by Allan Widman, a representative of the Swedish parliament, in which he called to stop being afraid of being on Putin's "blacklist" and provide Rbs-70 systems to Ukraine.⁷⁸ The argument hints at the broader influence of fear to provoke Russia, which would explain the Swedish hesitation to transfer more advanced weapons to Ukraine.

These reasoning together with Stockholm's broader strategic calculations, allow us to model the prospects for further support for Ukraine from Sweden.

⁷⁴ The UK and the US will help Sweden and Finland with security: <https://www.dw.com/uk/velykobrytaniia-ta-ssha-dopomozhut-shvetsii-y-finliandii-z-bezpekoiu-do-vstupu-do-nato/a-61688722>

⁷⁵ Deterioration of the security environment — implications for Sweden: <https://www.government.se/legal-documents/2022/05/ds-20228/>

⁷⁶ The Swedish Minister of Defense, in response to a parliamentary request for additional assistance to Ukraine, for example, noted that all relevant decisions should be weighed in the context of supporting its own defense capabilities: https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-och-lagar/dokument/svar-pa-skriftlig-fraga/vintermateriel-till-ukraina_h9121856/

⁷⁷ The Military Balance, Volume 124, Issue 1, 2024

⁷⁸ Minutes 2021/22:87 Thursday, March 24: https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-och-lagar/dokument/protokoll/protokoll-20212287-torsdagen-den-24-mars_h90987/html/

Chapter 4

Prospects for further support



Having received the desired concessions, Turkey ratified Sweden's integration into the North Atlantic Alliance.⁷⁹ Hungary gave its approval shortly after.⁸⁰ The integration gave Stockholm more reliable security guarantees and, accordingly, reduced the degree of anxiety about possibility of Russian aggression. This allowed the Swedish government to increase its assistance to Ukraine and to guarantee its sustainability in the mid-term perspective. In May 2024, Sweden allocated 6.5 billion euros to support Ukraine over the next three years.⁸¹

Earlier, Stockholm also signaled willingness to support Ukraine with fighter jets after accession into NATO.⁸² Integration into the alliance has indeed moved this issue forward. As part of a recent aid package, Sweden has purchased spare parts for the JAS 39C/D with the intention of preparing them for a potential transfer.⁸³ According to then Swedish Foreign Minister, Tobias Billström, the country is ready to discuss the transfer of the fighters if a request comes from Ukraine.⁸⁴ Kyiv for now is focused on preparing infrastructure and personnel to increase the number of F-16s. It will probably be possible to reopen the discussion once Ukraine has spare resources to prepare for Gripens' acquisition. The Swedish government confirms such a possibility.⁸⁵

Despite its membership in the North Atlantic Alliance, Sweden will likely seek to retain a significant part of its capabilities as part of the Alliance's common defense and its own deterrence. Given limited arsenal, future assistance from Sweden is likely to focus more on procurement than on direct transfers from existing stockpiles. The Swedish government explicitly articulated this intention in its recent aid package.⁸⁶

The maintenance of the weapons already transferred to Ukraine and the supply of ammunition will be a significant part of future Swedish military aid.⁸⁷ In particular, the Swedish defense industry is working to increase the production of 155 mm shells.⁸⁸ Stockholm and Kyiv also plan to start joint Ukrainian-Swedish defense production. In this context, Sweden

⁷⁹ Turkey formally ratifies Sweden's NATO membership, leaving Hungary as only ally yet to endorse it: <https://apnews.com/article/turkey-sweden-nato-ratification-expansion-3686af974e7f9238ee9698451e649ea9#>

⁸⁰ Hungary's parliament ratifies Sweden's NATO bid: <https://apnews.com/article/hungary-ratify-sweden-nato-membership-efc791c0d2e4da9fdb247a2d6624cab>

⁸¹ SEK 75 billion in military support to Ukraine: <https://www.government.se/press-releases/2024/05/sek-75-billion-in-military-support-to-ukraine/>

⁸² Sweden pledges more military aid to Ukraine, considers fighter jets: <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/sweden-give-ukraine-new-200-million-military-aid-package-2023-10-06/>

⁸³ New military support package to strengthen Ukraine's defense capabilities: <https://www.government.se/press-releases/2024/09/new-military-support-package-to-strengthen-ukraines-defence-capabilities/>

⁸⁴ Sweden is ready to provide Ukraine with Gripen fighter jets: <https://www.holosameryky.com/a/shveciya-gripen-ukraina/7692793.html>

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Press release from Ministry of Defense New military support package to strengthen Ukraine's defense capabilities: <https://www.government.se/press-releases/2024/09/new-military-support-package-to-strengthen-ukraines-defence-capabilities/>

⁸⁷ This trend is quite noticeable in the last few Swedish aid packages: <https://www.government.se/government-policy/swedens-support-to-ukraine/military-support-to-ukraine/>

⁸⁸ Sweden will increase production of 155mm ammunition for Ukraine: <https://mil.in.ua/en/news/sweden-will-increase-production-of-155mm-ammunition-for-ukraine/>

and Ukraine have signed a statement of intent to launch joint production of CV-90 infantry fighting vehicles.⁸⁹ The Swedish government has also announced the extension of training support for Ukraine until the end of 2024.⁹⁰ It is highly likely that these efforts will be extended to 2025.

Such a scale of support makes Sweden one of Ukraine's most important partners. According to then Swedish Foreign Minister Tobias Billström, Stockholm considers support of Ukraine to be the main task of its foreign policy in the coming years.⁹¹ Long-term financial commitments, indeed, prove the statements. If the security environment of Sweden does not deteriorate critically, Sweden will continue to be a reliable and proactive friend of Ukraine.

⁸⁹ Ukraine and Sweden Will Jointly Produce Cv-90 Infantry Fighting Vehicles: <https://www.eurointegration.com.ua/eng/news/2023/08/19/7167856/>

⁹⁰ New military support package to Ukraine: <https://www.government.se/press-releases/2023/10/new-military-support-package-to-ukraine/>

⁹¹ Sweden says its main foreign policy task in coming years is support to Ukraine: <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/sweden-says-its-main-foreign-policy-task-coming-years-is-support-ukraine-2024-01-07/>