

# Are Risk Assessments Important at Political Leaders' Foreign Policy Decisions?

– Prospect Theory's Applicability Tested on  
Prime Minister Göran Persson's and Prime  
Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt's Foreign Policy  
Decisions on the Peace-Generating Operations  
in Afghanistan and Libya

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## **Abstract**

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The aim of this thesis is to try to explain if risk assessments are important at political leaders' foreign policy decisions. Different qualitative methods are used, and texts and documents are analysed. Prospect theory focuses on decision making under uncertainty, and its applicability is tested on Prime Ministers Göran Persson's and Fredrik Reinfeldt's foreign policy decisions on the peace-generating operations in Afghanistan and Libya.

Judging from the empirical material risk assessments were important during all phases of Persson's foreign policy decisions, but only during some phases of Reinfeldt's foreign policy decisions. A plausible explanation of this difference is *the Prime Ministers' different assessments of political gains and losses*. Persson assessed that he could achieve political gains in the international arena by his foreign policy decisions, while Reinfeldt assessed that he could incur political losses in the national arena by his foreign policy decisions. Being in the gains domain Persson's risk assessments were important during the whole decision process, being in the losses domain Reinfeldt's risk assessments were only important during some phases of the decision process. The findings of this thesis indicate that the importance of risk assessments at political leaders' foreign policy decisions depends on their assessments of political gains and losses. The findings also indicate that prospect theory's applicability can be successfully tested on small states not directly affected by a conflict.

**Keywords:** Afghanistan, foreign policy decisions, Fredrik Reinfeldt, Göran Persson, Libya, Muammar Gadhafi, peace-generating operations, prospect theory, risk assessments.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Are risk assessments important at political leaders' foreign policy decisions? Political leaders have to consider many different factors when making foreign policy decisions. Most of these decisions concern peaceful relations with other states, often through well-regulated cooperation. Other decisions concern difficult situations when some type of conflict that directly or indirectly affects a state has emerged. Examples of such difficult situations are when there is a need of military intervention, and when a despotic leader has to be removed from power. When such situations arise, political leaders have to make risk assessments before any foreign policy decisions can be made. A central question within foreign policy decision making is if these risk assessments are important at political leaders' foreign policy decisions.

One theory which is especially suitable for analysing the importance of risk assessments is *prospect theory* which focuses on decision making under uncertainty. Prospect theory has become a leading psychological theory of decision making. Gains and losses of asset levels are considered critical (Mintz and DeRouen Jr. 2010:75). Individuals cherish what they possess and are wary of losing what they already have (Mintz and DeRouen Jr. 2010:76).

This thesis tests and analyses if risk assessments were important at Prime Minister Göran Persson's and Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt's foreign policy decisions on the peace-generating operations in Afghanistan and Libya. As the Minister for Foreign Affairs can also be expected to play a central role in foreign policy decision making, Ministers for Foreign Affairs Anna Lindh and Carl Bildt are also included in some parts of the thesis when this is considered central for understanding the decision-making process. The unit of analysis, however, is the decision making – which is the ultimate responsibility of the Prime Minister.

The two empirical cases Afghanistan and Libya are of current interest and different among themselves, which adds to the validity and possibility of making scientific generalisations from the findings of the thesis. In the case of Afghanistan, the foreign policy decisions were

made by a Social Democratic Government. Swedish humanitarian aid had been provided to the country for many years, and in mass media the US bomb attacks were much criticized. In the case of Libya, the foreign policy decisions were made by a Moderate-led Non-Socialist Coalition Government. Unlike in Afghanistan there had not been any special Swedish humanitarian aid to the country, and in mass media there was criticism of the despotic leader Muammar Ghadhafi rather than of any foreign military intervention.

The analyses in Chapter 3 on Afghanistan and Chapter 4 on Libya focus on the time span when the foreign policy decisions to send Swedish soldiers to these two countries were made. In the case of Afghanistan it was December 2001 – February 2002, in the case of Libya it was March 2011 – June 2011.

Swedish soldiers can be sent abroad on peace-preserving or peace-generating operations. The difference between the operations is that in the latter the use of violence is permitted. According to the Instrument of Government the Government can decide itself, without consulting the Riksdag (Parliament), whether a Swedish armed force shall be sent abroad on peace-preserving operations. Peace-generating operations, on the other hand, have to be approved by the Riksdag in accordance with Chapter 15, Section 16 of the Instrument of Government (Betänkande 2010/11:UFöU3, p. 5). As the military operations in both Afghanistan and Libya were peace-generating, they had to be approved by the Riksdag. As the Government presents the Government Bills to the Riksdag, however, it has the possibility of selecting and framing information in a way that may affect the final decisions (Mintz and DeRouen Jr. 2010:76). Also, the Government is made up of individual leaders, like the Prime Minister, who can influence the Riksdag's decisions by the way information is selected and presented.

Foreign policy decisions can be explained by other factors than by risk assessments. Examples of such factors are the influence of actors like UN, EU and NATO, the Riksdag's power in relation to the power of the Government, the strength of the Opposition, the importance of public opinion, the role of mass media etc. However, it is an open question how important these factors are in foreign policy decision making. In this thesis, a delimitation has been made focusing on risks assessments at the foreign policy decisions by

the Prime Ministers responsible for sending Swedish soldiers on peace-generating operations in Afghanistan and Libya. As the Prime Minister holds a unique position, he can be expected to use this position in critical foreign policy situations when risk assessments have to be made.

## 1.1 Aim and Hypotheses

The aim of this thesis is to test and analyse if risk assessments are important at political leaders' foreign policy decisions, and thereby also to contribute with something new to earlier research. The theoretical perspective tested and analysed is *prospect theory* which focuses on decision making under uncertainty. This perspective will be further developed in the Chapters on Method and Theories.

The following two hypotheses are formulated:

*Hypothesis 1)* Risk assessments are important at political leaders' foreign policy decisions (prospect theory).

*Hypothesis 2)* The importance of risk assessments at political leaders' foreign policy decisions shifts during different phases of the decision process.

There are several possible results of the tests – that the first hypothesis and prospect theory is supported, that the first hypothesis and prospect theory is not supported, that the second hypothesis is supported, and that the second hypothesis is not supported. As peace-generating operations always involve risks for losses, support for the first hypothesis and prospect theory can be expected to be likely. For the same reason, it can be expected that the first hypothesis and prospect theory are not falsified. Support for the second hypothesis, however, can be expected to be both likely and unlikely. In the first case, changes in domestic and international politics during the decision process can be expected to affect the risk assessments. In the second case, it can be expected that political leaders make neatly elucidated risk assessments at foreign policy decisions that are more stable, why the importance of the risk assessments would not shift during different phases of the decision process.

## 1.2 Method

In this thesis, *texts and documents* are analysed and more than one research method is used. The overriding research method is *a qualitative method*, the more specific research methods are *the case study method*, *the congruence method* and *the process tracing method*.

*Analysis of texts and documents.* Texts and documents are analysed in this thesis. After having made the analyses the results have to be interpreted, i.e. their meaning shall be extracted. In this way, the importance of the results for the scientific problem studied can be understood. Interpretation is an important part of almost every text analysis, and the interpretation can be more or less complicated (Bergström och Boréus 2009:23). As written and spoken language are the main working tools for political leaders, the interpretations of what Prime Ministers Göran Persson and Fredrik Reinfeldt have written and said during the foreign policy decision processes on the peace-generating operations in Afghanistan and Libya are particularly important.

An issue that has to be considered is how to find indicators of risk assessments in the material, and how to judge whether these risk assessments are important. For example, if the Prime Minister explicitly expresses that he does not want to send any soldiers on peace-generating operations abroad due to the risks involved, this is an indication of risk assessments being important (*Hypothesis 1*). Also, if he says that it is not enough with a no-fly zone but more powerful military measures – which may put the soldiers at risk – are needed, this is an indication of risk assessments being unimportant. However, risk assessments can also be less explicit like if the Prime Minister says that Sweden will not contribute with any soldiers now, but if the situation would worsen another decision may be made. In this case, the Prime Minister indicates that he is willing to reconsider earlier risk assessments if a more serious situation would emerge. The importance of the risk assessments might therefore shift during different phases of the decision process (*Hypothesis 2*).

In a *qualitative method* observation, analysis of text and documents, interviews, taking notes and transcription are the four larger procedures. Many of these are often used

simultaneously, case study observations may e.g. be combined with interviews (Silvermann 2001:11). Qualitative researchers mean that their methods may give a ‘deeper’ understanding of e.g. social phenomena than what is possible at quantitative methods (Silvermann 2001:32). Quantitative researchers prefer to use data, official statistics and the like, which may be useful in some situations. Qualitative researchers mean that one should not suppose that the techniques used in quantitative research are the *only* ways to lay down the validity of the results of qualitative research. By criticizing – testing – the overriding theoretical assumption and the theory it is possible consciously and systematically to find errors and decide whether the theory shall be supported or rejected (Rosing 1994:134).

*The case study method* is used in this thesis. There are reasons for choosing this method. The central tendency of all types of case studies is that it tries to illustrate a *decision* or set of decisions – why they were made, how they were carried out, and what the results were (Yin 2006:30). As a research strategy the case study method is used in many different situations aiming at contributing to the full knowledge of individual, in groups, organisational, social and political phenomena (Yin 2006:17). The case study method is well-advised to use at research questions of the type ‘How?’, ‘Why?’ and where the focus is on current events, but where no control of the behaviour is required – which is the case at experiments. It would not be fit to use a survey or analysis of sources where the type of research questions are ‘Which, what, where, how many, how much?’, nor an historical study as it does not focus on current events (Yin 2006:22).

*Empirical tests* are used in this thesis in order to investigate whether the theory used, *prospect theory*, accords with observable facts (Rosing 1994:136). As ‘observable facts’ are made up of text analysis it is not possible to objectively *prove* whether the theory is true or false, or whether the theoretical assumption can be supported or rejected (Rosing 1994:149). However, it is possible through the empirical analysis to find *explanations* supporting a theory, and thereby also to make conclusions on whether the theoretical assumption can be supported or rejected (Nye 2007:76).



By using the *congruence method* a single case or a small number of cases can be used for theory development. The essential characteristic of the congruence method is that the investigator begins with a theory, and then attempts to assess its ability to explain or predict the outcome in a particular case. The theory posits a relation between variance in the independent variable and variance in the dependent variable, and it can be deductive or take the form of an empirical generalisation. If the outcome of the case is consistent with the theory's prediction, the possibility that a causal relationship may exist can be entertained (George and Bennett 2004:181). An important question is the cases' representativeness, especially if scientific generalisations are to be made from the findings of the thesis. As two decision processes of two quite different empirical cases are studied, the basis for theory development is more solid than if only a single case would have been studied. And as the method of testing theories on foreign policy decisions is continued in this thesis it will add to the theory testing method which, according to George and Bennett, was initially developed by Fuhrmann and Early.

The way of making the analysis is also close to the research method *process tracing*. The process tracing method attempts to identify the intervening causal process – the causal chain and causal mechanism – between an independent variable (or variables) and the outcome of the dependent variable (George and Bennett 2004:206). Tracing the processes that may have led to an outcome helps narrow the list of potential causes. With more cases, the investigator can begin to chart the repertoire of causal paths that lead to a given outcome and the circumstances under which they occur – that is, to develop a typological theory (George and Bennett 2004:207).

The aim of the thesis is to try to explain if risk assessments are important at political leaders' foreign policy decisions. This can be done by using different scales like a *nominal scale* according to which risk assessments are 'important' or 'unimportant', or an *ordinal scale* that grades the importance of the risk assessments – e.g. 'unimportant, less important, important, very important'. As the aim of this thesis is to find out whether risk assessments are important at political leaders' foreign policy decisions, the choice has been made to use a nominal scale. Also, using an ordinal scale would involve subjective matters of judgement like showing that risk assessments are 'important' and not 'less important' or 'very

important' in the individual case (it is probably easier to show when something is 'unimportant'). Besides, an analysis using such an ordinal scale would not give much added value as there would only be two more grades compared with a nominal scale.

This thesis is made as a *comparative analysis with two cases* according to the following argumentation. The overriding research question is if risk assessments are important at political leaders' foreign policy decisions. This is studied by testing prospect theory's applicability on two empirical cases, Afghanistan and Libya. The decisions to send Swedish soldiers on peace-generating operations in these two countries are made by two Prime Ministers belonging to two different political parties, Göran Persson (Social Democratic Party) and Fredrik Reinfeldt (Moderate Party), leading two types of Government – the Social Democratic Party ruled alone, while the Moderate Party led a Non-Socialist Coalition Government.

In order to increase the validity of the results of the thesis, and also the possibility to make scientific generalisations, two different empirical cases have been chosen for the study. There are several theoretical and empirical arguments for choosing these cases. *The theoretical arguments* are as follows. First, both cases concern the most important characteristic of prospect theory – decision making under uncertainty. Second, according to prospect theory risk is understood as a function of the situation in terms of gains and losses. Analysing and comparing two different empirical cases, in which risk is a central factor, will show whether this can be verified. Third, issues of risk are dealt with in many theories and central to understanding decision making in international politics. The two empirical cases are the most recent in international politics involving Swedish decision making on risks in connection with peace-generating operations, and also comprise some variables that are new to the political leaders. Thus, choosing these cases makes the testing of prospect theory's applicability highly interesting for current research. Fourth, according to prospect theory decisions are influenced by the way options are first framed. As the two cases concern one powerful Prime Minister of a political party that ruled alone, and one less powerful Prime Minister of a coalition government, it can be analysed if options were framed differently in both cases, and if this influenced the decision-making process. Fifth, by examining two Prime Ministers' decision making the applicability of prospect theory to

explain and predict risk-taking behaviour in the international environment is illustrated through parallel demonstration of theory. Sixth, in prospect theory the reference point is a critical concept in assessing gains and losses, and it might be affected by such variables as personal levels of aspiration. As the two cases concern Prime Ministers with very different personal levels of aspiration in international politics, the importance of this variable can be analysed. Seventh, according to prospect theory perceptions of threat, and therefore risk, are likely to shift over time in response to internal or external factors, and these perceptions are critical to a decision maker. As both cases concern decision making over time it is possible to analyse if there were any such shifts and, if that is the case, what internal or external factors affected these shifts.

*The empirical arguments* are as follows. First, the empirical cases stem from a change in an important variable – the foreign policy decisions were made by two different Governments with political leaders representing a Social Democratic Government and a Moderate-led Non-Socialist Coalition Government. Second, recent experiences from peace-generating operations in the former Yugoslav Republic are likely to have given support to the necessity of occasionally using violence against non-democratic regimes in order to achieve peace. Third, it is the first time since the 1960s that Sweden participates in UN-supported international military operations using aircraft (Libya). Fourth, it is the first time that Sweden uses Jas 39 Gripen aircraft in an international military operation (Libya). Fifth, both Afghanistan and Libya are the focus of international attention and intervention, which could be expected to affect the Swedish Prime Ministers' sense of international engagement. Sixth, it is the first time that UN acts united to achieve peace and stability in Afghanistan. Seventh, it is unique that UN acts and employs 'the duty to protect', i.e. that individual persons are considered subjects (Libya).

After having gone through all relevant empirical material, important statements and occurrences in the decision process – here referred to as *Events* – have been selected. Both hypotheses have been tested on each Event (5 for Afghanistan, 6 for Libya) and analyses made. In order to follow the chain of decisions, the analysis has been made chronologically during the time span when the decisions on the peace-generating operations were made. In

the case of Afghanistan it was December 2001 → February 2002, in the case of Libya it was March 2011 → June 2011.

The foreign policy decisions to send Swedish soldiers on peace-generating operations mark the end of the decision process as studied in this thesis. This process starts with informal contacts, after which the Government gets a formal request for Swedish participation in the peace-generating operations. The time span between the formal request and the decision on the Swedish participation in the operations is filled with negotiations between different parties, debates in the Riksdag, statements, press conferences, press releases, newspaper articles etc. wherein the Government and the Opposition present different arguments on why/why not Swedish soldiers should be sent abroad.

The case studies are presented in the following way. In Chapter 3 on Afghanistan and Chapter 4 on Libya both hypotheses are tested and analyses made. *Hypothesis 1* and prospect theory is tested and analysed continuously in connection with each Event, while *Hypothesis 2* is tested and analysed in the end of Chapters 3 and 4 as this hypothesis refers to comparisons over time. In the end of Chapters 3 and 4 there are also conclusions of the tests and analyses. Besides, there is reasoning about the indicator debate activity. In Chapter 5 summary and conclusions are made of the tests and analyses in Chapters 3 and 4. New contribution to earlier research and suggestions for future research are also included in Chapter 5.

### 1.3 Operationalisation

Prospect theory, which focuses on decision making under uncertainty, is especially suitable for analysing the importance of risk assessments at political leaders' foreign policy decisions. However, according to one of the most influential political scientists in the field, Rose McDermott, operationalisation is a particularly difficult aspect of applying prospect theory to cases in international relations (McDermott 1998:180). In this thesis, operationalisation of the concept 'risk assessments' is especially important in order to find any causal links to the resultant foreign policy decisions. The main question of the thesis is if risk assessments are important at political leaders' foreign policy decisions. To answer

this question, prospect theory's applicability is tested on Prime Minister Göran Persson's and Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt's foreign policy decisions on the peace-generating operations in Afghanistan (December 2001 – February 2002) and Libya (March 2011 – June 2011). How is it possible to find causal links in the empirical material showing that risk assessments are important at political leaders' foreign policy decisions (*Hypothesis 1*)? And how is it possible to find causal links in the empirical material showing that the importance of risk assessments at political leaders' foreign policy decisions shifts during different phases of the decision process (*Hypothesis 2*)?

To make the operationalisations it is necessary to go through the primary sources – statements, protocols from debates in the Riksdag, newspaper articles, press releases etc. – and analyse what the Prime Ministers *explicitly state or implicitly indicate*. It therefore needs to be investigated in the empirical material if there are any indicators of 'risk assessments', and if it is possible to establish any causal links to the foreign policy decisions. It can be expected that any risks are emphasized by a Prime Minister who is not in favour of participating in peace-generating operations, and de-emphasized by a Prime Minister who is in favour of participating in such operations. Also, it can be expected that words associated with negative outcomes – e.g. 'injured soldiers', 'dead soldiers' – are seldom mentioned by any Prime Minister, but instead expressed in a more diplomatic and less straightforward language. One example of this is Prime Minister Reinfeldt's statement 'It is not an easy task to send Swedish women and men abroad to protect civilians as the operation is not without any risk'.

Indicators of risk assessments can show both that the latter are important and unimportant at the Prime Ministers' foreign policy decisions. In the first case this supports *Hypothesis 1*, in the second case this falsifies the hypothesis. In the thesis there are quite a few examples of indicators of *risk assessments being important*, e.g. 'humanitarian aid' instead of 'military troops', 'a small group of elite soldiers' instead of 'a large group of conscripts', 'the Swedish Government has no plans of sending Swedish soldiers to war in Libya.....this would be wrong and could lead to very serious consequences', 'the first, second, and third priority for the Government has been to bring Swedish citizens into safety'. In the thesis there are also quite a few examples of indicators of *risk assessments not being important*,

e.g. ‘it is not about UN but about USA and NATO which have to be supported by Sweden’, ‘the Government has decided to suggest to the Riksdag to consent to Swedish participation in the international military operation with Jas 39 Gripen aircraft’, ‘efficient measures must include much more than only a no-fly zone’, ‘soldiers who can board ships’.

As *Hypothesis 2* refers to changes over time it needs to be investigated in the empirical material, by making comparisons between different Events, if there are any indicators of the importance of risk assessments shifting during different phases of the decision process, and if this affects the foreign policy decisions. If risk assessments are explicitly stated or implicitly indicated by the Prime Ministers during some – but not all – Events, there is support for *Hypothesis 2*. If, on the other hand, risk assessments are explicitly stated or implicitly indicated by the Prime Ministers during all Events – or not stated or indicated at all during any Event – there is no support for the hypothesis.

#### 1.4 Material

In order to make the thesis as all-inclusive and objective as possible, information has been collected from different sources. *The primary sources* consist of statements by Prime Ministers Göran Persson and Fredrik Reinfeldt (and Ministers for Foreign Affairs Anna Lindh and Carl Bildt), protocols from debates in the Riksdag, proposals from the Combined Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, newspaper articles, press releases and other material from the most comprehensive Nordic digital news archives ‘Mediearkivet’. As decisions on peace-generating operations have to be made by the Riksdag, it could be expected that there would be a lively debate both on Afghanistan and Libya in this arena. After having gone through the primary sources, however, it has emerged that media rather than the Riksdag was important for the Prime Ministers in debating and otherwise expressing their opinions on the peace-generating operations in Afghanistan and Libya. ***It therefore seems as if the political debate to a large extent has been held in media – and not in the Riksdag.*** ‘Mediearkivet’ is therefore a very important primary source. However, there is *an interesting difference between the two empirical cases*. There was very little debate, especially in the Riksdag but also in media, in the case of Afghanistan, while there was a lively debate both in the Riksdag and in media in the case of Libya. As the primary

sources are made up of material reflecting what the leaders *actually have said*, their reliability and validity is very high.

*The secondary sources* have been collected from academic books and scientific journals. When choosing the secondary sources the aim has been to obtain a wide variety of sources and a balance between political scientists in favour of prospect theory, and political scientists in favour of other theoretical perspectives. The reliability and validity of the secondary sources is therefore also very high.

Is there any reason to be critical to the sources chosen for this thesis? Political statements are usually classified as subjective sources as the person providing the information is part of 'the case' (Thurén 1996:42). In this thesis, however, there is no interest in any 'objective truth' in the primary sources other than the information being correctly quoted. From the sources where the Prime Ministers (and Ministers for Foreign Affairs) express their opinions it should be clear that they reflect *their subjective views on the key questions* – which is the specific focus of this thesis. The subjectivity is thus very clear from the texts. In the secondary sources, however, different authors have chosen different facts depending on different theoretical perspectives. The choice of perspective, in turn, depends on the authors' values (Thurén 1996:63). In order to make the thesis as objective as possible, different authors with different theoretical perspectives have been chosen.

## 1.5 Earlier Research

The advantages of using prospect theory have been stressed by different researchers. *Rose McDermott* points out that when applied to political behaviour, prospect theory places a crucial emphasis on the role of the political environment in helping to determine choice and action, whereas alternative models of psychological decision making place undue emphasis on the individual and fail to incorporate a sufficient appreciation of such political pressures (McDermott 2004:290). One of the real advantages of prospect theory, according to McDermott, is that it can combine political and psychological factors into an analysis of leader choice (McDermott 2004:297).

*Rose McDermott, James H. Fowler and Oleg Smirnov* argue for greater sensitivity to *ecological rationality* in models of politics. How a person thinks, and what constitutes rational behaviour, depends on the situational and environmental context in which that individual operates, according to the authors (McDermott et. al. 2008:336). They show how factors beyond the control of the individual, such as environmental contingencies, can influence independent decisions over risk. These contingencies, in turn, can serve as environmental cues for particular patterns of risk propensity in related but independent contexts, although perhaps not as often or as strongly (McDermott et. al. 2008:339). Political leaders who make decisions with regard to international challenges may accept greater costs to regain the previous reference point in the face of losses. Leaders take much greater risks in the area of war, involving life and death, than in international economic relations (McDermott et. al. 2008:343). The authors mean that a proper model of international conflict should be based not only on the individual *characteristics* of the decision maker/s, but also on the *context* of the conflict (McDermott et. al. 2008:409).

*Gary Schaub Jr.* has in an article on deterrence, compellence and prospect theory compared utility theory and prospect theory. Deterrence demands that the adversary refrain from acting, while compellence demands that the adversary undertake action. In each instance, the objective of the coercer is to present the adversary with a situation in which compliance is preferable to defiance (Schaub 2004:389). Expected utility theory suggests that the value of what is demanded – stakes foregone in deterrence, stakes surrendered in compellence – determines how much the coercer must threaten if its threat is to succeed. It does not matter whether the coercer is demanding that the stakes be given up or not sought: if the stakes are of equivalent value, then the coercer's sanction must be equally costly.

Prospect theory suggests that in deterrence and compellence situations, the adversary will value the stakes differently and will have different propensities to take the risks inherent in defying the coercer. Not only does prospect theory provide an account of human decision making that is empirically superior to expected utility theory, but it also offers better explanations and insights into the problem of coercion – including much-needed prescriptive guidance that cannot be derived otherwise (Schaub 2004:390). According to Schaub, prospect theory provides insights into deterrence and compellence situations that



are missed by expected utility theory. Obtaining compliance with a deterrent demand is easier than gaining compliance with a compellent demand in comparable circumstances (Schaub 2004:405). In addition to providing an empirically superior theory of decision, as well as a more systematic, endogenous, and insightful analysis of the differences between deterrence and compellence, prospect theory can provide practical advice that cannot be easily derived from the application of expected utility theory to the problem of coercion (Schaub 2004:409).

*David O'Connell* uses prospect theory in shedding light on a not much developed topic in political science – the management strategies of presidential campaigns – thereby beginning the process of developing a general perspective on presidential campaign management (O'Connell 2011:64). The argument of his essay is that presidential campaign management is potentially far more predictable than it at first appears. According to the author, prospect theory's central empirical observation, that individuals are risk averse with respect to gains but risk acceptant with respect to losses, seems to offer the hope of at least understanding the processes behind campaign decision making, even when the choices themselves are perplexing (O'Connell 2011:65).

## 2 THEORIES

### 2.1 Foreign Policy Analysis

*Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA)*, of which this thesis is an example, is characterized by an actor-specific focus based upon the argument that all that occurs between nations and across nations is grounded in human decision makers acting singly or in groups (Mintz and DeRouen Jr. 2010:4). The core of FPA is explanations involving psychological factors, small and large group effects, culture and social discourse, and domestic politics (Hudson 2014:161). FPA as an agent-centered, micropolitical study of decisions by leaders is usually subordinated to International Relations (IR) as a structure-oriented, macropolitical study of interactions in regional or global international systems (Walker 2011:6). FPA is conceptualized as a subfield embedded within the field of IR; however, it is often treated as separate from the larger field, which leaves a gap between the two that is not explicitly bridged with a common set of theories, methods or metrics for analysis (Walker 2011:7). FPA dates back to the 1950s, and the period 1954-1993 is characterized as classic FPA scholarship (Hudson 2014:18). Some of the most theoretically long-lived work produced during this period centered on the consequences of making foreign policy decisions in small groups (Hudson 2014:19).

FPA from 1993 to the present reflects the world being liberated from the Cold War. When the bipolar system collapsed with the fall of the Soviet bloc regimes, an important theoretical discovery was made: *it is impossible to explain or predict system change on the basis of system-level variables alone*. With the fall of the Iron Curtain, and with the personalities of political leaders such as Gorbachev, Havel, and Walesa, the need for an ‘actor-specific’ complement to mainstream IR theory became stark in its clarity (Hudson 2014:32). There is no longer any doubt that the FPA field, so long on the periphery of IR, is becoming more theoretically important. This trend has been bolstered by recent advances in neuroscience that have led social scientists in many fields to become intensely interested in the functioning of the human brain as it makes decisions and reacts to physical and emotional experiences. FPA, even though it has been around since the late 1950s, is poised to become one of the cutting-edge fields of social science in the twenty-first century (Hudson 2014:211).

Traditional approaches to the study of foreign policy divide primarily between focusing on ‘states-as-actors’ whose decision making is governed by constraints and incentives associated with their membership in the international system, and ‘individuals-as-actors’ who make decisions under the influence of a broad range of additional constraints and incentives located within states and even within individuals (Wolfers 1962; Hudson 2005 in Walker 2011:7). In FPA there is an emphasis on agent-oriented and agent specific theory, as humans are considered important in decision-making processes. The perspective of FPA is that the source of all international politics and all change in international politics is specific human beings using their agency and acting individually or in groups (Hudson 2014:7).

The single most important contribution of FPA to IR theory is to identify the point of theoretical intersection between the most important determinants of state behaviour: material and ideational factors. The point of intersection is *not* the state, it is human decision makers. Adding human decision makers as the key theoretical intersection confers some advantages generally lacking in IR theory (Hudson 2014:8). FPA traditionally finds itself most interested in decisions taken by human decision makers in positions of authority to commit the resources of the nation-state (Hudson 2014:4).

FPA is the most radically integrative theoretical enterprise for it integrates a variety of information across levels of analysis and spans numerous disciplines of human knowledge (Hudson 2014:7). Two different types of attempts at theoretical integration in FPA may be spoken of. The first is fundamental to the purpose of FPA, and that is theoretical integration across levels of analysis to the end of producing an integrated explanation of foreign policy decision making in particular cases. The second is the desire for greater integration between FPA and IR. Despite the fact that FPA is seen as a subfield of IR, the relationship between the field of IR and its subfield FPA has been, somewhat counterintuitively, disengaged (Hudson 2014:185).

Some classic FPA works that both examined how the ‘specifics’ of nations led to differences in foreign policy choice/behaviour, and put forward propositions in this regard that at least have the potential to be generalizable and applicable crossnationally, centered on the consequences of making foreign policy decisions in small groups (Hudson 2014:18-

-19). The most important work is that of *Irving Janis*, whose seminal ‘Victims of Groupthink’ (simply ‘Groupthink’ in later editions) almost single-handedly began this research tradition. In that volume, and using studies drawn specifically from the realm of foreign policy, Janis shows convincingly that the motivation to maintain group consensus and personal acceptance by the group can cause deterioration of decision making quality (Hudson 2014:19). *Khong* in his 1992 book ‘Analogies at War’ demonstrates how the use of conflicting analogies to frame the problem of Vietnam led to conceptual difficulties in group reasoning about policy options. The ‘Korea’ analogy gained ascendance in framing the Vietnam problem, without sufficient attention paid to the incongruities between the two sets of circumstances (Hudson 2014:20). In his famous ‘Essence of Decision’, *Graham Allison* offers three cuts at explaining one episode in foreign policy – the Cuban missile crisis of 1962. Investigating both the US and Soviet sides of this case, Allison shows that the unitary rational actor model of foreign policy making does not suffice to explain the curiosities of the crisis. Offering two additional models as successive ‘cuts’ at explanation, the organisational process model and the bureaucratic politics model (one of intraorganisational factors, one of interorganisational factors), allows Allison to explain more fully what transpired. His use of three levels of analysis also points to the desire to integrate rather than segregate explanations at different levels (Hudson 2014:20-21).

## 2.2 Foreign Policy Leadership and Decision Making

*Foreign policy leadership* is virtually without exception the utmost responsibility of a head of state. There is no regime type that precludes a leader’s personal influence on policy altogether (Hudson 2014:40). However, a leader may identify with, and thus seek approval from, domestic constituencies rather than the ‘international community’ (Shannon and Keller 2007:6). It matters whether a leader is interested in foreign policy, but even a disinterested leader can become interested if the context is right. Crisis situations will invariably be handled at the highest levels of government power, and almost by definition top leaders will be involved regardless of their general level of interest in foreign affairs (Hudson 2014:40).

In most if not all crises, the moment arrives when a single leader must make faithful choices about the government's course of action. He may seek and obtain counsel from others such as professional advisers, political associates, spouses, friends, and academic experts. But in the end, the leader must decide (Boin et. al. 2009:43). In order to understand how leaders interpret events, why certain types of actors are viewed as more threatening when others are seen as less so, which responses are generally preferred for given situations and why, and ultimately why these leaders act as they do, then it must be looked beyond an exclusive focus on domestic and international 'constraints', and the beliefs that leaders hold and how these beliefs come to be will have to be examined (Walker 2011:189).

Leaders can be looked upon as individuals-as-actors with cognitive, emotional, and motivational subsystems that constitute an interior system of psychological relations comparable in complexity to the exterior system of states-as-actors and the social relations in which they are members (Wolfers 1962, Houghton 2007, Wendt 1999 in Walker 2011:4). The mind of a foreign policymaker is not a tabula rasa: it contains complex and intricately related information and patterns such as beliefs, attitudes, values, experiences, emotions, traits, style, memory, and national and self-conceptions. Each decision maker's mind is a microcosm of the variety possible in a given society (Hudson 2014:23). Under certain conditions – high stress, high uncertainty, dominant position of the head of state in foreign policy decision making – the personal characteristics of the individual would become crucial in understanding foreign policy choice (Hudson 2014:24).

The goals, abilities, and foibles of individuals are crucial to the intentions, capabilities, and strategies of a state. Individuals not only affect the actions of their own states but also shape the reactions of other nations, which must respond to the aspirations, abilities, and aggressiveness of foreign leaders. A prescient leader can direct foreign policy toward important long-term goals that are often ignored by demagogues, bureaucrats, and the general populace. A country's strategic position, domestic politics, culture, and other factors – both systemic and domestic – also shape a state's intentions. However, individuals can often transcend these factors, play them off against one another, or otherwise exercise a direct and decisive influence on a state's behaviour (Byman and Pollack 2001:134).

The work of Margaret G. Hermann deserves being mentioned. It is an attempt to typologize leaders with specific reference to foreign policy disposition. The core of her research is leaders' personality characteristics (1970, 1978). Using a modified operational code framework in conjunction with content analysis, she is able to compare and contrast leaders' beliefs, motivations, decisional styles, and interpersonal styles. Furthermore, Hermann integrates this information into a more holistic picture of the leader, who may belong to one of six distinct 'foreign policy orientations'. Orientation allows her to make more specific projections about a leader's behaviour in a variety of circumstances (Hudson 2014:24).

*Foreign policy decision making* is an important avenue of research because the way decisions are made can shape the eventual choice, i.e. an actor could arrive at different outcomes depending on the decision process (Mintz and DeRouen Jr. 2010:4). Foreign policy decision making refers to choices of individuals, groups and coalitions, and the decisions affect a nation's actions on the international stage. Foreign policy decisions are typically characterized by high stakes, enormous uncertainty and substantial risk (Mintz and DeRouen Jr. 2010:3). Foreign policy decision making involves the critical task of defining the situation, editing the choice problem, and then evaluating options under dynamic and interactive conditions of present and future uncertainties (Levy 1997:99). While the game of international relations may be played according to national interest, there is also a second game being played within each government, a game of personal and/or organisational interests and ambitions, which may in fact be more determinative of a nation's foreign policy than the game of national interest (Hudson 2014:101).

The psychological processes of decision making and learning by leaders are emergent properties of an interior communication and control network, which interfaces with the social processes of cooperation and conflict that are the emergent properties of an exterior communication and control network. Both of these networks can be understood as complex adaptive systems of interaction with interrelated emergent properties (Axelrod and Cohen 1999; Mitchell 2009; see also Deutsch 1966, 1968; Burton 1969 in Walker 2011:4-5).

The process of making foreign policy pertains to the style, structure, and procedures used by the head of state and his advisory system to arrive at decisions. The psychology of a leader may affect the quality of the decision-making process in an administration which may be affected by such things as the leader's openness to information, control orientation, trust level, task orientation and others (Walker 2011:112). Examples of political leaders' psychological characteristics, which may affect their foreign policy decisions, are need for power, distrust, task focus, conceptual complexity, belief in ability to control events, nature of the political universe, strategic approach to goals, control over historical development, and role of chance (Walker 2011:117-118). To mention two of them, when a leader is high in distrust, it appears to start a syndrome of problems: decision making is short-circuited, conflict options become more likely, and national interests are hindered. On the other hand, those leaders who are high on task focus are likely to have better decision-making procedures (Walker 2011:119). Higher task focus results in better outcomes in terms of national interests, why having a high task focus appears to be a good thing for foreign policy decision making (Walker 2011:120).

During the Cold War era, rational choice models of foreign policy decision making were assumed to be valid and initially met the test of outcome validity (Jervis 1994; Hudson 2005; Walker and Schafter 2006 in Walker 2011:22). However, their power to describe and explain the process of decision making was lacking, and with the end of the Cold War the ability of rational choice models to meet the tests of either outcome or process validity became more limited (Jervis 1994 in Walker 2011:22).

*In Sweden*, foreign policy decisions are formally made by the Government and the Riksdag. In practice, however, the Prime Minister, and sometimes also the Minister for Foreign Affairs, is very influential on these decisions – especially when it concerns critical decisions like sending Swedish soldiers on military operations abroad. The Minister for Defence seems to play a minor role in such decisions, at least in the empirical cases studied in this thesis. This is especially obvious in the case of Afghanistan in a statement by Prime Minister Göran Persson – ‘Sweden's international relations and security policy go beyond the field of competence of the Minister for Defence’ – and in the case of Libya by

the Minister's for Foreign Affairs Carl Bildt active involvement in details of the military operations.

### 2.3 Risks and Risk Assessments

A common *definition of risk* is: 'The probability of an adverse future event multiplied by its magnitude' (McLean et. al. 2009:549). Risk is considered to be when 'the odds' are known – that is, when the boundaries of the system under investigation are known and the factors involved can be measured in some way (McLean et. al. 2009:550). Risk issues are frequently bound up in questions of conflicting interests between individuals and groups of stakeholders in society. The various parties may differ in who bears the risk and who stands to gain by any particular settlement of the issues (Graham and Rhomberg 1996:22). When debating risks two distinct arguments usually are presented: objective risk (science-based assessments of risk issues), and perceived risk (risk as a cultural construct) (McLean et. al. 2009:549). *The use of 'risk' in international relations* covers a multitude of finer distinctions and different political and analytical agendas that, ideally, require clarification, separation and an established basis for authoritative adjudication. The challenge of knowing the level of risk.....becomes acute in highly contested circumstances such as when the deployment of massive military force is at stake (McLean et. al. 2009:560).

*Risk propensity* is in some psychological studies seen as a stable personality trait of an individual that influences his or her behaviour across situations and over time (McDermott 1998:2). Also, international relations analyses have tended to treat *risk attitude* as a character trait, determined by the decision-maker's personality rather than the particular decision being faced (O'Neill 2001:618). In prospect theory, however, risk is understood as a function of the situation, seen in terms of losses (costs or fears) and gains (opportunities or greed), not as a predetermined product of an individual decision maker's personality (McDermott 1998:2).

When international relations writers use the idea of *risk aversion*, they either leave it undefined or cite the economics conception (the decision-maker has a concave utility



function for the goal). However, in the international context the goal is typically not money or any other objectively measurable quantity, and in this case the concept of concavity is meaningless. Instead, risk aversion may be defined in two ways. *Comparative risk aversion* specifies the relative degree of aversion but does not specify a zero point. Instead of absolute statements about one person's risk attitude, the definition produces a comparison of risk attitudes (O'Neill 2001:625). *Multiattribute risk aversion* separates risk-averse from risk-seekers in an absolute sense without making comparisons within each group (O'Neill 2001:617). In the typical case multiattribute risk aversion promotes peace in that it increases the attractiveness of compromises (O'Neill 2001:634).

It is impossible to eliminate risk but there needs to be, in policy-making and analysis, a balance of judgements about what are and are not acceptable risks (McLean et. al. 2009:558). *Risk assessments* offer a rational basis upon which a decision maker can evaluate options (McDermott 1998:166). While one must recognize its limits, risk assessments can be of enormous help in distinguishing big risks from little ones (Poe et. al. 2006:487). A lexical *definition of risk assessments* is: 'The act of identifying possible risks, calculating how likely they are to happen, and estimating what effects they might have' (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary 2010). However, every political leader has his subjective perception of risks and assessments of these risks. Different actors value occurrences and other phenomena in different ways (Eriksson 2001:1). Viewpoints, norms and values can be too unshakeable to be influenced, at least in the short turn (Eriksson 2001:10). At the same time, political actors tend to present their threatening images as objective pictures of actual circumstances. To talk about threat and risks as objective phenomena may be a natural part of a spoken dialogue. It is quite a different matter, however, if actors with civic responsibilities – media, experts, researchers, and politicians – present threatening images as undisputed observations of actual circumstances (Eriksson 2001:99).

During the cold war, most attention was devoted to constructing early warning or risk assessment models for *international conflict* (Poe et. al. 2006:487). Important and interesting recent work has used risk as a tool for assessing the significance of the war on terror.....taking the idea of the catastrophic level of risk associated with major terrorist

attacks as the basis for extending technologies, techniques and discourses of surveillance and intelligence-gathering to unprecedented heights in the name of ‘precaution’ (McLean et. al. 2009:553).

## 2.4 Prospect Theory

In this thesis, *prospect theory’s applicability* is tested on the empirical cases. This theory has been chosen mainly because it is a theory of decision making under uncertainty, which is very relevant considering the topic of the thesis. Prospect theory is an experimentally validated approach that predicts puzzling changes of minds by real leaders (O’Neill 2001:631). The theory has broad implications for international relations. It has been used by political scientists inter alia to account for uses of military force when presidents are in political trouble, to show that Latin American leaders in domains of political loss (high inflation) are more likely to adopt the risky option of liberal economic reform, and to explain President Carter’s attempt to rescue hostages in 1980 (Mintz and DeRouen Jr. 2010:75). Before testing prospect theory’s applicability on the empirical cases, however, three alternative theories will be dealt with shortly to find out whether it would have been fruitful to use these theories instead. The first theory is *realism* which focuses on the state as the principal actor, the second theory is *liberalism* which focuses on the spread of legitimate domestic political orders to bring an end to international conflict, and the third theory is *constructivism* which focuses on political leaders and their ideas. As all three theories comprise different perspectives, the choice has been made to focus on the perspective of each theory which is especially relevant for this thesis.

Most rational theories of decision making start with assumptions that remain essentially unchallenged. These assumptions are necessary in order to derive the normative predications and prescriptions that these rational theories offer (McDermott 1998:176). However, when these assumptions are called into question, the descriptive accuracy of the relevant theory is fundamentally challenged. Prospect theory represents exactly that kind of fundamental challenge to normative theories of decision making (McDermott 1998:177). Prospect theory holds predictive as well as explanatory force, which makes it particularly useful for understanding political decisions made under circumstances of high uncertainty,

uniqueness, and complexity. This predictive power also makes prospect theory a serious alternative to more static rational choice models, which fail in their descriptive accuracy and explanatory elegance (McDermott 1998:8).

Prospect theory is a *descriptive theory*. Descriptive theories use empirical evidence, often derived from experimental manipulations, and look at how people actually make decisions to arrive at their conclusions. As prospect theory is based on empirical studies, it does not require implicit and unexamined assumptions in order to support its predictions. Empirical and descriptive support for prospect theory has been extensive, robust, and consistent. *Normative theories* describe what people ought to do (McDermott 1998:12). *Prospect theory makes no normative claims*. Unlike rational choice theories, it does not claim that people *should* behave according to the tenets of the theory, merely that they *do* behave that way. This is in contrast to rational choice theories that argue that people *should* behave in line with their prescriptions, but that have been unable to marshal any systematically clear evidence that people actually *do* act in such ways (McDermott 1998:177).

More than thirty years after its invention, prospect theory is still the only theory that can deliver the full spectrum of what is required for decision under uncertainty, with a natural integration of risk and ambiguity (Wakker 2010:2). Prospect theory was developed inductively from laboratory tests to model the way people make decisions under risk. It assumes that decision makers view the choices before them from either a losses or a gains frame, with respect to a particular reference point. Drawing upon psychological evidence that losses hurt more than equivalent gains feel good, prospect theory posits that decision makers are more risk-averse in the gains domain and more risk-acceptant in the losses domain (Fuhrmann and Early 2008:31). When individuals perceive themselves to be experiencing losses at the time they make a decision, and when their probability estimates associated with their principal policy options are in the moderate to high range, they will tend to make excessively risky, non-value maximizing choices (Haas 2001:241).

Prospect theory's virtue lies in its superior *explanatory power*. This can be useful in two specific instances. First, prospect theory offers a useful tool for analysis and explanation of behaviour that can neither be predicted nor explained adequately from a more rational

perspective. Second, it may well be that prospect theory is better suited for certain types of questions and problems, while rational choice models provide a better fit for different kinds of issues and concerns. If an analyst wants to trace the process of a particular decision, or is interested in investigating a particular case in depth, prospect theory offers richer and more flexible tools to proceed with such analysis. Some problems are not addressed by classical rational models because they do not easily ‘fit’ into large number studies. These kinds of investigations may be precisely the cases that are particularly amenable to examination through the lens of prospect theory, but remain particularly inexplicable from a more normative perspective (McDermott 1998:178).

One of the most useful aspects of prospect theory is the *dynamic nature of its predictions*. Many theories of international relations, including classic realist and neorealist approaches, are static in nature. Prospect theory provides explanations and predictions that allow for change over time in response to changes in the external environment. In prospect theory, the independent variable has to do with the context in which a decision maker is acting, usually constructed in terms of relative gains or losses. Additionally, prospect theory offers provocative insights into phenomena that are dynamic processes by their very nature. Prospect theory illuminates other aspects of time perspective in decision making as well. It helps explain why particular decisions might be spaced the way they are, or announced in a certain order, in order to buffer bad news with more positive information to soften the blow. Couching negative information in a positive context is a particularly salient consideration in reporting emotionally negative information (McDermott 1998:176).

Prospect theory comprises two phases – the editing phase and the evaluation phase. In the *editing phase* the decision is presented and options are identified. The outcome and their associated probabilities are also ascertained. *Framing effects* occur in this phase (Mintz and DeRouen Jr. 2010:76). Prospect theory asserts that the frame held by the decision maker at the time he makes his decision plays an operative role in determining acceptable risks in the choice he will ultimately make (Fuhrmann and Early 2008:31). Individuals cherish what they possess and are wary of losing what they already have. *The endowment effect* is the name given to the high value people place on what they currently possess (Mintz and DeRouen Jr. 2010:76). The *evaluation phase* involves the decision process of choosing

among options (McDermott 1998:20). It includes a well-developed and formalized theory that incorporates loss aversion (Levy 1997:101), an asymmetric S-shaped value function suggesting that a decision maker will value losses more than gains even if they are essentially equivalent (Schaub 2004:400), and a probability weighting function (Levy 1997:101).

A great deal of political psychology literature has suffered from the tendency to overestimate the impact of a given leader on a particular outcome, while simultaneously underattributing cause to situational factors. Prospect theory avoids this bias not by eliminating the leader from consideration, but by reintroducing the *impact of the situation, in the form of domain, on the decision maker's choices* (McDermott 1998:178). *Domain* refers to whether an action takes place in the perceived realm of gains or losses (McDermott 1998:37). Once the domain of the situation is classified as one of gains and losses, it becomes possible to predict individual choices based on that classification. In this way, the conditions under which risk averse or risk acceptant behaviour is seen become clear and predictable, no matter how uncertain the surrounding events, how unique the situation, or how complex the environment (McDermott 1998:9).

The choice made is based on the *reference point* and the value or utility function. Prospect theory considers changes from the reference point critical (Mintz and DeRouen Jr. 2010:76). However, it currently lacks a clear-cut rubric for ascertaining the exact reference point around which individuals frame their choices (Fuhrmann and Early 2008:31). Complicating matters, the reference point need not be the status quo, nor is it always clear what context is being referenced when considering multi-dimensional issues (Mintz and DeRouen Jr. 2010:75). Scholars have primarily taken two approaches to identifying reference points. Some have argued that decision makers reference their status quo position and extrapolate frames based on whether they are content or dissatisfied with their status quo position. Another approach asserts that decision makers judge their status quo position relative to a position held in the past. Decision makers who have improved their positions acquire a gains frame, and those who have declined take on a losses frame. Both methods use readily observable external conditions, such as economic conditions and public opinion polls, to identify the reference points (Mintz and DeRouen Jr. 2010:75).

How individual political leaders frame their reference point is highly subjective and difficult for the analyst to identify (Levy 1997:98). According to prospect theory (Kahneman and Tversky, 1979; Tversky and Kahneman, 1992) a decision maker compares the possible outcomes with some mental reference point, and makes a choice on the basis of changes from this point (O'Neill 2001:621). Because prospect theory lacks a theory of how and when decision makers choose a reference point, it is critical that any application justify its choice of reference points (Schaub 2004:406). Dynamic situations are particularly likely to induce variations in the way reference points are selected because of the absence of a stable status quo that might serve as an obvious focal point (Levy 1997:91).

*The value or utility function.* Prospect theory shares certain characteristics with expected utility (McDermott 1998:18), but it is not merely a descendent of utility models (McDermott 1998:19). Prospect theory is based on psychophysical models. Traditionally, psychophysics investigate the precise relationship, usually mathematically expressed, between the physical and psychological worlds. The goal is to determine the point at which a change in the physical stimulus is psychologically perceived as a sensory change by the subject. Most research in the sensory domain, for example, has determined that physical stimulus must increase geometrically, which produces a concave curve. The value function of prospect theory assumes that the *shape* of the curve is similar for everybody (McDermott 1998:18). Prospect theory recognizes that the curve is not a straight line and that the *utility* of that curve differs between individuals (McDermott 1998:19).

*Prospect theory's potential utility as a theoretical framework* has been debated concerning inter alia the validity of the experimental findings themselves, their relevance for real-world international behaviour that involves high-stakes decisions by collective actors in interactive settings, the conceptual status of prospect theory with respect to rational choice (Levy 1997:87), and the difficulty of determining empirically how an actor defines his/her reference point (Levy 1997:99). Other theoretical considerations have been that prospect theory lacks a theory of the framing, and as a theory of individual choice it does not provide a theory of collective decision making of state actors, or a theory of the strategic interaction between states (Levy 1997:88).

*The relative strengths of a prospect theory approach* can be summarized in four basic categories: the dynamic nature of the theory, its empirical basis and descriptive accuracy, its situationalist emphasis, and its explanatory power (McDermott 1998:175). Prospect theory is an empirically superior theory of decision to the problems of international relations (Schaub 2004:409). The enthusiasm for prospect theory comes from the hope that the discipline now has an account of decision making with more empirical validity. The approach has strengthened the connection of international relations and psychology and introduced the orderliness of a coherent theory (O'Neill 2001:632).

## 2.5 Theory Criticism

The theory criticism focuses on four identified weak points: 1) experiments in laboratory settings, 2) normative claims, 3) reference point, 4) powerful states. 1) Prospect theory was initially developed from *experiments in laboratory settings* to model the way people make decisions under risk. Considering that political leaders' decisions – especially foreign policy decisions – involve many factors, to which should be added the complexity in cases of uncertainty in connection with e.g. military operations abroad, the validity of the experiments for prospect theory's explanatory and predictive force can be questioned. Political conditions, especially those involving international politics and uncertainty, cannot reasonably be transformed into an experimental setting. However, as prospect theory has been applied to many empirical cases outside laboratory settings, it has proven to be valid 'in real life' as a valuable tool for political scientists in their analyses of above all political leaders' decision making under conditions of uncertainty. 2) Prospect theory is a descriptive theory and not a normative theory claiming what people should do. It can be asked why prospect theory has not 'passed the border' between these two types of theories, adding at least *some normative claims* in situations that are almost identical to political decision makers, instead of the wheel having to be reinvented. These claims could then be supported by empirical evidence.

3) As the *reference point* is the basis on which political decision makers make their choices, and a clear-cut rubric for ascertaining the exact reference point around which individuals

frame their choices is missing, this is a weakness of the theory. Also, the very subjective concept ‘decision maker’s mental reference point’ is a clear indication of this difficulty – no analyst can literally penetrate the mind of a political decision maker! More research concerning decision makers’ reference points is therefore needed. 4) Prospect theory has mostly been used in studying *powerful states* directly confronted with risks. As very few states are powerful states, and as many risks are indirect risks, this is a weakness of prospect theory which might be expected to make it more difficult to apply to small states not directly confronted with risks – as in this thesis. Testing prospect theory’s applicability on e.g. USA’s foreign policy decisions on Afghanistan and Libya would seem well-fit as the American Presidents *had* to make foreign policy decisions and take any risks into account, both because of USA’s role in fighting terrorism targeted at its own state, and its role in international politics. Testing prospect theory’s applicability on a *small state* like Sweden and its foreign policy decisions on Afghanistan and Libya seems more delicate, both as Sweden was not directly confronted with any risks, and as Swedish political leaders could avoid the risks altogether by not sending any soldiers on peace-generating operations in these countries.

## 2.6 Three Alternative Theories

The theories *realism*, *liberalism* and *constructivism* are dealt with below to find out whether it would have been fruitful to use these theories, instead of prospect theory, in the thesis. After short summaries of each theory, comments are made. ***Realism*** has been chosen mainly because it is a theory focusing on *national security and conflicts*, and *the state is regarded as the principal actor* – i.e. individual political leaders are not considered important. Realism emphasizes the role of the state in international relations, and argues that states always act in their national interests, with these interests defined solely in terms of power. Military and economic strength, geographical location and the balance of power are for realists the chief governing considerations of foreign policy (Roggeveen 2001:30). The state is looked upon as both unitary and rational, and realists typically assume that among the array of world issues national security tops the list for states (Viotti and Kauppi 1999:55-56). Realists believe it is inevitable in a system with independent states that conflicts arise (Goldmann 1994:19).



According to realists the international environment to a large extent determines states' actions. The most important actors in international politics are considered to be homogeneous states defined as self-serving units. Realists also believe that states compete with one another, and that their conduct virtually can be explained as a product of rational decision making (Blomdahl 2008:6). Realists assume that states act to maximize gains and minimize losses while navigating an anarchic international system. This perspective is often referred to as the ideal type, and many consider it the most desirable form of decision making. The rational decision maker is considered to choose from among a set of alternatives, and finally choose the alternative that maximizes utility (Mintz and DeRouen Jr. 2010:7).

During the 1970s, critics of realism started to investigate domestic, political and individual factors like bureaucratic politics and psychological and cognitive processes, to question realism's assumptions of the homogeneous rational state (Blomdahl 2008:2). In the beginning of the 1990s, realism was criticized by other political science schools like liberalism and constructivism for having failed to predict the end of the cold war (Blomdahl 2008:5). Also, conventional theories on international relations, above all realism, have not been able to explain events like e.g. the terror attacks on September 11, 2001 (9/11) (Malici 2005:91).

*Comments.* In international politics a state must always act as a unitary actor (in what capacity would it otherwise act?), but there are numerous proofs of political leadership being important – and many times decisive – for the actions. As the aim of this thesis is to investigate if risk assessments are important at political leaders' foreign policy decisions, this would not be possible by using realism as it does not focus on leadership. Thus, important information about the political leaders and their decision making would be missing. In Sweden, there is a tradition of consensus on foreign policy issues, especially concerning military operations abroad. This could support realism's ideas that political leaders are not important – providing the findings of this thesis show that there was no difference between Prime Minister Göran Persson's and Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt's foreign policy decisions on the peace-generating operations in Afghanistan and Libya. As

concerns realism's assumptions that states act to maximize gains and minimize losses, the comment can be made that it is logical for a state, or any other actor, to strive to attain this. However, Sweden would never engage in any military operations abroad if it were to maximize gains as such operations always involve risks, large sums of money are involved, it may negatively affect a leader's political career etc. Therefore, for political leaders to engage in military operations abroad is not a question of maximizing gains for the state or the political leaders themselves, but many other international and domestic political considerations have to be taken into account like solidarity with other states, complicity with international organisations' activities, consideration to the domestic political opinion etc.

**Liberalism** has been chosen mainly because it is a theory focusing on the *spread of legitimate domestic political orders* which will bring an *end to international conflict* – i.e. particular states are considered important and an ideal for the rest of the world. According to liberals, the projection of liberal-democratic principles to the international realm is said to provide the best prospect for a peaceful world order because ‘a world made up of liberal democracies.....should have much less incentive for war, since all nations would reciprocally recognise one another's legitimacy’ (Fukuyama 1992:xx in Burchill et. al. 2005:57). *Classical liberals* often disagree on its precise definition, but most regard classical liberalism as the political theory characterized by a firm belief in individualism, negative freedom, non-religious natural law, spontaneous order, a limited state, and the rule of law (van de Haar 2009:35). The ultimate goal of classical liberalism in international relations is the same as in domestic politics: to maximise individual freedom for all people (van de Haar 2009:36).

The foundations of *contemporary liberal internationalism* were laid in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by liberals proposing preconditions for a peaceful world order. In broad summary they concluded that the prospects for the elimination of war lay with a preference for democracy over aristocracy and free trade over autarky. For liberals, peace is the normal state of affairs. The laws of nature dictated harmony and cooperation between peoples. War is therefore both unnatural and irrational, an artificial contrivance and not a product of some peculiarity of human nature. Liberals have a belief in progress and the

perfectibility of the human condition. Through their faith in the power of human reason and the capacity of human beings to realize their inner potential, they remain confident that the stain of war can be removed from human experience. A common thread, from Rousseau, Kant and Cobden, to Schumpeter and Doyle, is that wars were created by militaristic and undemocratic governments for their own vested interests (Gardner 1990:23-29; Hoffmann 1995:159-77; Zacher and Matthew 1995:107-50 in Burchill et. al. 2005:58). The ‘disease’ of war could be successfully treated with the twin medicines of *democracy* and *free trade* (Burchill et. al. 2005:59).

There are many strands of liberal thought which influence the study of international relations. The demise of Soviet Communism at the beginning of the 1990s enhanced the influence of liberal theories of international relations, a theoretical tradition long thought to have been discredited by perspectives which emphasize the recurrent features of international relations (Burchill et. al. 2005:55). The internationalism approach of liberalism is rejected by neo-realists who claim that the moral aspirations of states are thwarted by the absence of an overarching authority which regulates their behaviour towards each other. Also, realists such as Waltz believe that liberals are guilty of ‘reductionism’ when they should be highlighting the ‘systemic’ features of international relations (Burchill et. al. 2005:57).

Comments. It is obvious that liberalism focuses on the state, and not on political leaders, as the important political actor. As the aim of this thesis is to investigate if risk assessments are important at political leaders’ foreign policy decisions, this would not be possible by using liberalism as it does not focus on leadership. Thus, important information about the political leaders and their decision making would be missing. Liberalism’s ideas that a world made up of liberal democracies should not be war-prone since all nations would reciprocally recognize one another’s legitimacy, seem unrealistic. First, it is unlikely that the world would ever be made up of states that are all liberal democracies, as such a situation has never arisen. Second, should this still occur military resources world-wide, as well as regional and global organisations promoting peace like EU and UN, would become redundant. Third, even liberal democracies can develop in the wrong direction through for example a coup d’état, i.e. a government is not set in stone for all time.

Liberalism's ultimate goal in international relations of maximising individual freedom *for all people* also seems unrealistic, and more resembles excessive statements by political leaders. On the other hand, liberalism's opinions that wars were created by militaristic and undemocratic governments for their own vested interests seem realistic – but hardly spectacular! That a government must have some kind of military focus in order to start a war, and that a war is not started by any state unless it is in its own interest, are redundant remarks.

**Constructivism** has been chosen mainly because it is a theory focusing on *international relations*, and *political leaders and their ideas* are important – i.e. the state is not considered important. Constructivists mean that ideas and cultural context are the basis of the exercise of power (Wendt 1999:97). To study the importance of ideas within politics, however, is not a new phenomenon, but has been debated as long as the social sciences have been in existence (Goldstein and Keohane 1993:3). Explanations of power and interest presuppose ideas (Wendt 1999:135). Foreign policy is often shaped under inadequate information, why ideas are a guide to get an overview of the political ground. In order to explain foreign policy the available ideas, the decision makers' images about adequate targets and means, and consequently the formation of preferences, must be known (Demker 2007:54). By culture constructivists generally mean social and legal norms and the ways in which these are deployed, through argument and communication, to constitute actors' identities and interests (Reus-Smit 2005:210). Constructivists hold that normative or ideational structures are just as important as material structures, arguing that systems of shared ideas, beliefs and values also have structural characteristics and exert powerful influence on social and political action (Reus-Smit 2005:196). Constructivists argue that understanding how actors develop their interests is crucial to explaining a wide range of international political phenomenon (Reus-Smit 2005:197).

The rise of constructivism, which had much to do with the end of the Cold War (Reus-Smit 2005:208), has had several important impacts on the development of international relations theory and analysis. Thanks largely to the work of constructivists the social, historical and normative have returned to the centre stage of debate (Reus-Smit 2005:205). Also, constructivism has helped to re-invigorate normative theorizing in international relations by

demonstrating the power of ideas, norms and values in shaping world politics (Reus-Smit 2005:207). Critics of constructivism have above all focused on whether constructivists should aspire to a general theory of international relations, the relationship with rationalism, questions of method, and the relationships between constructivism and critical theory (Reus-Smit 2005:207-208).

*Comments.* Constructivists' views that ideas and cultural context are the basis of the exercise of power seem reasonable, as all political leaders have ideas they want to see translated into practice, and the ideas naturally are culturally anchored. As the aim of this thesis is to investigate if risk assessments are important at political leaders' foreign policy decisions, constructivism seems at first sight to be a suitable theory for analysing Prime Minister Göran Persson's and Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt's ideas on the peace-generating operations in Afghanistan and Libya. However, such an analysis would be incomplete as important information would be missing. No Prime Minister can be expected to make an open account of his ideas on the risks of sending soldiers on military operations abroad, both because such decisions are not easy for any decision maker, and because this could be detrimental to his political career. Rather, it can be expected that the Prime Minister keeps many of his ideas, especially on risks in connection with military operations abroad, to himself and his closest colleagues behind closed doors. Also, not only the Prime Minister's ideas but many other factors like the opinions of the leaders of the other political parties, the public opinion, mass media etc. affect the decisions. To this should be added two factors which can be expected to have made the Prime Ministers' ideas on the peace-generating operations in Afghanistan and Libya less important – that there is a tradition in Sweden of consensus on foreign policy issues, especially on military operations abroad, and that Prime Minister Reinfeldt led a Coalition Government thus having had to adapt to the ideas of the leaders of the other political parties in the Coalition.

### 3 ANALYSIS OF AFGHANISTAN

The results from more than one week's negotiations in Bonn, in the beginning of December 2001, were that Afghanistan got a new provisional government as from December 22 that year. Also, UN Security Council would organise an international military security force to guarantee the security in the capital Kabul. The Afghan Minister for Domestic Affairs said that it should not be a big troop, and it should not be entrusted with other duties than protecting the government buildings (Sydsvenskan, December 6, 2001, p. 11).

UN Security Council Resolution 1386 of December 20, 2001, authorized the setting up of a multinational security force to assist the interim Afghan authority in enforcing the security in Kabul with surroundings. In its decision the Security Council urged UN Member States to provide staff, equipment and other resources to this force (Betänkande 2001/02:UFöU2, p. 1). Reference was made to Chapter VII of the UN Charter stating that if necessary means of coercion may be used (Betänkande 2001/02:UFöU2, p. 8). On the day before the Resolution was decided upon, the United Kingdom sent a letter to the UN Secretary-General offering initially to organise and lead a multinational security force (Betänkande 2001/02:UFöU2, p. 4). UN Security Council decided that the United Kingdom would be head of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), but USA would have the overriding responsibility for the operations. USA also undertook to take action if the new troops would get into difficulties (Göteborgs-Posten, December 20, 2001, p. 26).

In December, 2001, the Swedish Government was invited by the British Government to participate in the multinational security force (Betänkande 2001/02:UFöU2, p. 4). On January 16, 2002, the Riksdag (Parliament) authorized the Government to place an armed force numbering not more than 45 persons at the disposal, during no longer than six months, in a multinational security force in Afghanistan (Betänkande 2001/02:UFöU2, p. 3). The Government's intention was that the Swedish contribution to the security force would be made up of an intelligence platoon with surveillance duties (Betänkande 2001/02:UFöU2, p. 4). The force would consist of professional officers but no conscripts (Riksdagens protokoll 2001:02/54, Anf. 1). Some of the issues discussed before making the

decision were possible threats and the need of co-ordination with the American military forces in order to avoid accidental firing (Betänkande 2001/02 UFöU2, p. 8).

### 3.1 Before the Decision on the Peace-Generating Operations

**Event 1 Strengthened Relations Sweden-USA.** In December, 2001, the relations between Sweden and USA are reported to have been strengthened due to the support in the fight against terrorism by Prime Minister Göran Persson and Minister for Foreign Affairs Anna Lindh. The busy President George Bush meets Sweden's Prime Minister before he meets representatives of the NATO-allied states Denmark and Norway. The Swedish politics is said to have changed considerably from when Anna Lindh in February, 2001, urged USA to withdraw their missile defence developed in Pentagon, to her arguments in November the same year in favour of Pentagon's right to attack targets in Afghanistan (Svenska Dagbladet, December 2, 2001, p. 5).

After having supported USA's and UN's right to use violence to fight terrorism, both the Prime Minister and the Minister for Foreign Affairs are heavily criticized by Swedish non-conservative debaters (Nerikes Allehanda, December 3, 2001, p. 2). During his official visit to USA in the beginning of December, 2001, the Prime Minister defends USA's war in Afghanistan saying that this is according to international law (Dagens Nyheter, December 5, 2001, p. 7). After meeting UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan the Prime Minister comments that compared to the Middle East the situation in Afghanistan is now manageable, while it was 'hell on earth' only a few weeks ago (Helsingborgs Dagblad, December 5, 2001, p. 15).

**Testing of Hypothesis 1.** After 9/11 terrorism and the risk of losses was of great concern for political leaders, especially in the Western World. This was also the case for the Swedish Prime Minister who directed the foreign policy in support of US foreign policy's fight against terrorism. The Prime Minister's *reference point* seems to be in the international arena. This supposition is reinforced by him not only ignoring the criticism of his defence of the US war in Afghanistan by debaters of the same political affiliation as himself, but also – even after this criticism – making statements further supporting the war. The

supposition about the reference point is also reinforced by the Prime Minister's personal levels of aspiration of becoming an important leader in the international arena, which can be grasped by above all his personal contacts with President Bush and Secretary-General Annan. In the *frame* held by the Prime Minister during this phase of the decision process the *endowment effect* seems important, i.e. he wants to avoid any risks of losses due to terrorism. The Prime Minister's foreign policy decisions thus take place in the *domain of gains* – stopping terrorism can be done by supporting USA's war in Afghanistan. The Prime Minister's *risk assessments* are adapted to the risk assessments having been made in the international arena and consequently seem important. Thus, there is support for the hypothesis and prospect theory.

**Event 2 Debate and Political Parties' Divergent Opinions.** On December 6, 2001, the question of an international security force to be sent to Afghanistan is debated in the Riksdag. Minister for Foreign Affairs Anna Lindh refers to UN stating that the best Sweden can do for Afghanistan is to continue to develop the strong engagement and good knowledge within the civil areas. However, she does not exclude any other measures, should that be necessary (Riksdagens protokoll 2001/02:42, Anf. 98).

Prime Minister Göran Persson is said to share the same views on the measures required to stop terrorism in Afghanistan as the leader of the largest Opposition Party, the Moderate Party, Bo Lundgren. Comments are made in media on the quite divergent opinions on the situation in Afghanistan of the ruling Social Democratic Party and its two Supporting Parties, the Left Party and the Green Party. The Left Party has demanded US bomb attacks at Afghanistan to be stopped (Sydsvenskan, December 9, 2001, p. 2), and the Green Party has on several occasions almost regretted that the Taliban no longer rule the country (Göteborgs-Posten, December 11, 2001, p. 2).

**Testing of Hypothesis 1.** It can be noted that the Prime Minister does not take part in the debate in the Riksdag concerning possible Swedish participation in an international security force in Afghanistan. On the one hand it is not strange to hand over questions concerning foreign policy to a Minister for Foreign Affairs, on the other hand it could be expected that



a Prime Minister deeply involved in such an important question as military operations abroad would *not* hand over the responsibility for a debate in the most important parliamentary decision-making body to another Minister. The Prime Minister's *reference point* therefore seems to be in the international arena, which overshadows the importance of taking part in a debate in the national arena. This supposition is reinforced by the Prime Minister not seeming disturbed by his opinions on the situation in Afghanistan being closer to the opinions of the leader of the largest Opposition Party, than to the Government's two Supporting Parties. The *frame*, the *endowment effect*, the *domain of gains* and the *risk assessments* seem to be the same as in Event 1. Thus, there is support for the hypothesis and prospect theory.

**Event 3 EU Troops but No Swedish Troops.** On December 12, 2001, Swedish mass media report that awaiting approval by UN the international security force that will make peace in Afghanistan is being formed. The comment is made that Sweden will hardly take part in the force (Borås Tidning, December 12, 2001, p. 15). UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan says, when talking in the Riksdag on December 12, 2001, that the Swedish Government decides whether Sweden should contribute to the international security force, and what mission the Swedes then should have. On the same day Annan meets Prime Minister Göran Persson who comments, after their meeting, that for Sweden humanitarian aid is most important. Sweden has been in Afghanistan for many years, and will continue to help the country as far as possible (Helsingborgs Dagblad, December 13, 2001, p. 18).

On December 14, 2001, EU Presidency Belgium's Minister for Foreign Affairs Louis Michel declares that all 15 EU States will contribute with troops to a common operation in Afghanistan. However, the other EU States are not familiar with this statement. A multinational force that will work under UN mandate is discussed, but not all EU States have made any commitments of participating. Also, it is not certain whether the United Kingdom, initially organising and leading the operation, wants all 15 EU States to participate (Svenska Dagbladet, December 15, 2001, p. 26).

**Testing of Hypothesis 1.** For the first time during the foreign policy decision process on Afghanistan the Prime Minister comments on any Swedish contributions to the international

security force. His *reference point* seems to be in both the international arena and the national arena as he now also mentions what Sweden shall do in Afghanistan, ‘humanitarian aid is most important’. That the international arena still is very important for the Prime Minister is reinforced by his personal levels of aspiration in this arena, grasped by his personal contacts with UN Secretary-General Annan. That a UN Secretary-General pays an official visit to Sweden, and also speaks in the Riksdag about an international security force, is a very rare occurrence that hardly would have come around without personal contacts with the Prime Minister. The latter’s ideas behind the visit can also be expected to be to pursue Swedish politics in the international arena, as well as to enlighten the Swedish Members of Parliament on the situation in Afghanistan.

It can seem as if the Prime Minister’s *frame* has changed during this phase of the decision process, compared to in Events 1-2. The only change, however, is that in the frame the *endowment effect* now also includes emphasis on national actions such as Swedish humanitarian aid. The Prime Minister’s foreign policy decisions thus take place in the *domain of gains* – stopping terrorism can be done by supporting USA’s war in Afghanistan, Swedish humanitarian aid is also important in this connection. That the Prime Minister finds *risk assessments important* is indicated by his statement ‘.....for Sweden humanitarian aid is most important’. Thus, there is support for the hypothesis and prospect theory.

### 3.2 The Decision on the Peace-Generating Operations

**Event 4 Swedish Troops.** On December 20, 2001, a daily newspaper reports that an hitherto secret elite force, ‘Särskild skyddsgrupp, SSG’ (Special Security Group, SSG), will participate in the international security force in Afghanistan with between 20 and 30 specially trained elite soldiers. Their training and weapons is secret, but most of them are said to have army ranger education (Sydsvenskan, December 20, 2001, p. 14). A journalist comments in an article in one of the daily newspapers that the Swedish platoon will be part of a British company, and thus be directly under NATO command (Dagens Nyheter, December 20, 2001, p. 14). A journalist in another daily newspaper writes that according to BBC the force will have the right to use violence ‘when necessary’ (Göteborgs-Posten, December 21, 2001, p. 26). It is also reported on national radio and TV that the Government

has decided to send a Swedish military troop – an intelligence platoon numbering 45 men at most – to Afghanistan in January next year. They are trained to work with surveillance and other security issues, and will be in Afghanistan during six months (Sveriges Radio Dagens Eko, December 20, 2001).

The Swedish Armed Forces comment on the elite force SSG, which is trained for all sorts of battle and gathering of intelligence information. Part of the force has served under the British in Kosovo: ‘They are good fighters, they are paid for that. They can fight with weapons and without weapons, that is necessary’ says lieutenant-colonel Björn Olsson. The force is equipped with all possible weapons and sensors (Sydsvenskan, December 21, 2001, p. 10). The operation will be peace-generating (Borås Tidning, December 21, 2001, p. 18), i.e. weapons can be used to force one part away from an area (Dagens Nyheter, December 20, 2001, p. 14).

**Testing of Hypothesis 1.** This Event differs from Events 1-3 as it only indirectly, through mass media, refers to an important decision having been made – to send Swedish soldiers on peace-generating operations in Afghanistan under NATO command. It is surprising that this information is never presented by the Prime Minister himself, not even in a press release, as he is ultimately responsible for the decision together with the Riksdag. To this shall be added that he is deeply involved in the question. A plausible explanation of the Prime Minister’s silence is that his *reference point* and personal levels of aspiration in the international arena made him keep the decision as secret as possible in the national arena in order to avoid any ‘disturbances’, both because the two Supporting Parties, the Left Party and the Green Party, were very critical of his support to the war in Afghanistan, and because there already had been much criticism in media of this support.

Even though the earlier decision not to send any Swedish soldiers to Afghanistan now had changed, the *frame* held by the Prime Minister during this phase of the decision process probably had not changed. In the frame the *endowment effect* still seems important, but this now has been adjusted to include not only avoiding any risks of losses due to terrorism, but also avoiding risks of losses *among the Swedish soldiers* taking part in the military operations. The Prime Minister’s foreign policy decisions thus take place in the *domain of*

*gains* – stopping terrorism can be done by supporting USA's war in Afghanistan, the Swedish troops will now also be part of this endeavour. That *risk assessments* have been made before deciding to send a Swedish military troop to Afghanistan, and consequently seem important, is indicated both by the Swedish soldiers not being conscripts but a 'Special Security Group (SSG)', and by this group being very small in numbers. In this way the risks of losses among Swedish soldiers can be minimized in spite of violence being allowed to be used, as a special security group is better trained than conscripts in handling dangerous situations. Thus, there is support for the hypothesis and prospect theory.

**Event 5 Ministers' Popularity and Different Measures against Terrorism.** For Prime Minister Göran Persson the international issues were dominant during 2001. In an interview in one of the daily newspapers he says that he is convinced that a small state can influence international politics (Dagens Nyheter, December 21, 2001, p. 5). According to a grading of the Swedish Ministers' work by Swedish citizens, carried out by the marketing research company SIFO, Minister for Foreign Affairs Anna Lindh gets the highest grade ever (3.5 on a scale where 1 is 'very bad' and 5 is 'very good'), with Prime Minister Göran Persson shortly after (3.4). One explanation of their popularity is that they have been very clear on what is demanded in the fight against terrorism (Sydsvenskan, December 27, 2001, p. 2).

On January 16, 2002, the Combined Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence (Committee of the Riksdag) makes rather a comprehensive reasoning about the situation in Afghanistan from different perspectives, and also about the way UN has handled the matter. The Committee is pleased that all political parties in the Riksdag agree that Sweden should take part in an armed, multinational security force in Afghanistan. The Committee stresses the responsibility of sending an armed Swedish force on an operation in another country, which 'may involve tragic losses of human life'. At the same time, the Committee means that the attitude to questions of this kind is enforced by the unity of all political parties. The Committee considers this a strength of Sweden as an international actor (Betänkande 2001/02:UFöU2, p. 10).

On February 14, 2002, Prime Minister Göran Persson says that Sweden's international relations and security policy go beyond the field of competence of the Minister for Defence. According to the Prime Minister the fight against terrorism after 9/11, and not least the successful accomplishments in Afghanistan, was successful due to the American hard efforts to assemble an international coalition. No state or power, however large or powerful, may in today's open world conduct politics by itself and only focus on national interests. Everything has to be placed in an international context, and the Prime Minister hopes that the international coalition assembled by the Americans can also be used in the future, should further measures be needed (Riksdagens protokoll 2001/02:69, Anf. 54).

**Testing of Hypothesis 1.** Compared to Events 1-4, an interesting change has occurred in this Event. The earlier criticism of the Prime Minister for his support to USA's war in Afghanistan has transformed into popularity among the Swedish citizens, probably due to his views on what is demanded in the fight against terrorism now being shared by many Swedes. Also during this phase of the decision process the Prime Minister's *reference point* seems to be in the international arena. This supposition is reinforced by his opinion that a small state can influence international politics, and consequently a small state's leader also can become important in international politics. The supposition about the reference point is also reinforced by the Prime Minister's opinion that no state or power may only focus on national interests. The Prime Minister's comment that 'Sweden's international relations and security policy go beyond the field of competence of the Minister for Defence' can also be seen as an indicator of the Prime Minister's view on the importance of himself as a leader, and of risk assessments having to be made in the international arena also by small states like Sweden.

In the *frame* held by the Prime Minister during this phase of the decision process the *endowment effect* seems important, i.e. he wants to avoid any risks of losses due to terrorism. The Prime Minister's foreign policy decisions thus take place in the *domain of gains* – stopping terrorism can be done by supporting USA's war in Afghanistan, and in the future the international coalition assembled by the Americans can also be used. The Prime Minister's *risk assessments* are adapted to the risk assessments having been made in the

international arena and consequently seem important. Thus, there is support for the hypothesis and prospect theory.

### **Events 1-5, Testing of Hypothesis 2**

According to *Hypothesis 2*, the importance of risk assessments at political leaders' foreign policy decisions shifts during different phases of the decision process. However, for Prime Minister Göran Persson risk assessments were important during all phases of the foreign policy decision process on the peace-generating operations in Afghanistan. Thus, there is no support for the hypothesis.

### 3.3 Conclusions

*One characteristic of the Events* is that they are strongly affected by the 9/11 terror attacks, which justified USA's war in Afghanistan and Sweden's support to USA in this war. *Another characteristic of the Events* is that Prime Minister Göran Persson wanted to show off as a leader in the international arena. *Sweden's support to USA* is obvious during the whole foreign policy decision process. It starts in December, 2001, i.e. three months after the 9/11 terror attacks. Apart from actively supporting the war there are other proofs of this support. President Bush meets Prime Minister Persson before he meets representatives of the NATO-allied states Denmark and Norway, Minister for Foreign Affairs Lindh favours Pentagon's right to attack targets in Afghanistan after earlier having urged USA to withdraw their missile defence, and the Prime Minister and the Minister for Foreign Affairs ignore the criticism of their support to USA by members of the same political affiliation as themselves.

In the beginning of the *foreign policy decision process* the support to Afghanistan consists of humanitarian support – but no military support. During a later phase, however, the Prime Minister reconsiders the decision not to contribute with any Swedish troops to Afghanistan. Why this is so can only be speculated on, especially as the operations were kept rather secret. One plausible explanation is that the Prime Minister felt a 'moral pressure' from other states and organisations – especially USA, EU and NATO – to contribute with

military troops. Another plausible explanation is that as the Prime Minister wanted to show off as a leader in the international arena, he accentuated Sweden's role in the fight against terrorism by sending Swedish troops to Afghanistan.

It is striking that of the 5 tests and analyses carried out on the empirical material on Afghanistan of *Hypothesis 1* – that risk assessments are important at political leaders' foreign policy decisions (prospect theory) – ***there is support for Hypothesis 1 and prospect theory in all Events.*** One conclusion that may be drawn from the tests and analyses is therefore that for Prime Minister Göran Persson risk assessments were important during all phases of the foreign policy decision process on the peace-generating operations in Afghanistan. How should this be explained? When making the tests and analyses using the reference point, frame, endowment effect, domain, and risk assessments – all important variables of prospect theory – it has emerged that the Prime Minister assessed that he could achieve political gains in the international arena by his foreign policy decisions. This is also reinforced by his personal levels of aspiration in this arena, and by his scanty interest as concerns Afghanistan in the national arena. Being in the gains domain Persson's risk assessments were important during the whole foreign policy decision process which ***does not support Hypothesis 2*** – that the importance of risk assessments at political leaders' foreign policy decisions shifts during different phases of the decision process. Judging from the empirical material it therefore seems as if ***the importance of risk assessments at political leaders' foreign policy decisions depends on their assessments of political gains and losses.***

Apart from testing hypotheses and theories to explain risk assessments at political leaders' foreign policy decisions, the indicator ***how active the leader is in the political debate*** can be used. Surprisingly, Prime Minister Göran Persson made no statements, comments, speeches, press conferences etc. during the whole foreign policy decision process on the Swedish peace-generating operations in Afghanistan – except when he met important leaders, and when he was criticized for his US support. This can be seen as indicators of the Prime Minister's need to demonstrate his role as a leader both in the international arena and in the national arena. ***The results are interesting and unexpected. It could be expected that a political leader would need support from other political leaders in making foreign***

*policy decisions under conditions of uncertainty, and therefore also would need to be active in the political debate. However, in the case of Afghanistan there seems to be no such connection.* One plausible explanation is that the Prime Minister had the role of ‘gate-keeper’, i.e. keeping a low profile in order not to start discussions which may prolong the political process. Another plausible explanation is that as the operations were kept rather secret, the Prime Minister had no interest in discussing the matter in public.



#### 4 ANALYSIS OF LIBYA

On February 26, 2011, UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1970, and on March 17, 2011, Resolution 1973 on the situation in Libya. In Resolution 1973, adopted under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, the Security Council laid down that the situation in Libya constituted a threat against international peace and security. With a view to protecting civilians, the Security Council authorized UN Member States to take all necessary precautions and to establish a no-fly zone over Libya. A weapons embargo in accordance with Resolution 1970 was also enforced. However, any type of occupation force in any part of the country was excluded. On March 19, 2011, an international coalition conducted by France, United Kingdom and USA started to beat out military targets to protect civilians in Libya (Betänkande 2010/11:UFöU3, p. 3).

On March 27, 2011, NATO decided to take over all responsibility for the international military operations in Libya, including the protection of civilians, the no-fly zone and the weapons embargo. Two days later, NATO invited the Swedish Government to contribute to the military operations (Betänkande 2010/11:UFöU3, p. 5).

On March 31, 2011, the Riksdag (Parliament) authorized the Government to place an armed force of not more than 250 persons at the disposal, during no longer than three months, in a multinational security force in Libya to maintain a no-fly zone (Betänkande 2010/11:UFöU3, p. 2). The Swedish contribution decided upon comprised an armed force with at most eight Jas 39 Gripen aircraft, one transport airplane with air tank ability, and observation and support resources. Rotation of airplanes and staff could be done during execution of the operations. Besides, staff officers would be placed at relevant cabinets (Riksdagens protokoll 2010/11:78, Anf. 1).

On June 1, 2011, NATO asked Sweden for continued assistance in Libya. It concerned air observation and air tank ability, but also soldiers who can board ships (Dagen, June 1, 2011, p. 0).

On June 8, 2011, the agreement on the prolongation of the Swedish operations was presented. Participation in the no-fly zone was discontinued, and instead Sweden would contribute with air observation resources, a boarding force, and staff to information operations (TT, June 8, 2011).

#### 4.1 Before the Decision on the Peace-Generating Operations

**Event 1 Prime Minister's Report from the European Council and Possibilities of Influence.** In an article in one of the evening newspapers on February 24, 2011, Minister for Foreign Affairs Carl Bildt comments on the newspaper's criticism that Sweden, and particularly himself as Minister, does not have any clear attitude to the struggles for democracy in Northern Africa. Bildt writes that there is no reason for the Government or himself to be gentle to any dictator – be he communist, socialist, or only an authoritarian suppressor (Aftonbladet, February 24, 2011, p. 32).

On March 17, 2011, Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt informs the Riksdag from the extra meeting with the European Council on March 11, 2011. The agitating situation in Libya was one of the main topics on the agenda, and there was a discussion on the need for a no-fly zone over the country. The conclusion was that this should be decided upon by others, foremost the UN, as a Security Council Resolution is required for giving legitimacy to such an operation (Riksdagens protokoll 2010/11:74, Anf. 10). The Prime Minister's opinion at the meeting was that a decision on a no-fly zone should not be made by EU but by NATO, based on a UN Security Council Resolution and regional support. The Prime Minister questions whether a no-fly zone would be efficient in beating off President Muammar Ghadhafi's troops (Riksdagens protokoll 2010/11:74, Anf. 12), and refers to military experts' analyses in favour of other measures (Riksdagens protokoll 2010/11:74, Anf. 14). He also points out that Sweden is neither a UN Security Council Member nor a NATO Member, which delimits the possibilities of influence (Riksdagens protokoll 2010/11:74, Anf. 46).

**Testing of Hypothesis 1.** The Prime Minister seems to focus on what Sweden *cannot* do in the present situation in Libya, instead of focusing on what it *can* do. His *reference point*

seems to be in the national arena. This supposition is reinforced by his comments that a decision on a no-fly zone over Libya should be made without any Swedish influence, i.e. not by EU but by UN Security Council and NATO. The supposition about the reference point is also reinforced by his focus on the formal structures of influence, i.e. that Sweden is neither a UN Security Council Member nor a NATO Member. However, he oversees many other ways a small state may influence international politics – if the will is there – through cooperation with states that are members of these organisations, through cooperation with states that are not members of these organisations but may jointly influence the former states, through lobbying etc. In the *frame* held by the Prime Minister during this phase of the decision process the *endowment effect* does not seem important as he questions the efficiency of a no-fly zone and instead refers to other military measures – which may involve more serious risks. The Prime Minister’s foreign policy decisions thus take place in the *domain of losses* – stopping Ghadhafi cannot be done by only supporting a no-fly zone over Libya. The Prime Minister’s *risk assessments* consequently do not seem important. Thus, there is no support for the hypothesis and prospect theory.

**Event 2 Priorities, Sharper Measures but No Swedish Soldiers.** This Event refers to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and not to the Prime Minister. As the Prime Minister handed over much responsibility for the foreign policy to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, it is central for understanding the decision-making process to include this Event in the analyses. On March 17, 2011, the Minister for Foreign Affairs says that the first, second, and third priority for the Government has been to bring Swedish citizens into safety. Further, he reports that NATO and UN are planning for military measures against Libya. He states that he himself has said to the other EU Ministers for Foreign Affairs that efficient measures must include much more than only a no-fly zone (Riksdagens protokoll 2010/11:74, Anf. 110). The Minister says that after the first priority to get the Swedish citizens out of Libya in order not to come into a situation with hostages, sharper measures may be discussed and ‘that is where we are now. We shall try to stop, help and build’. To stop requires a mandate from UN Security Council. Bildt says that he has repeated many times that it must be more than a no-fly zone, and refers to Srebrenica where there was such a zone. He wants more mandate for distinct measures, and says that he does not want to be more specific than that. Further, the Minister means that it is not about UN but about USA and NATO, which have

to be supported by Sweden. They have tried to bomb away Ghadhafi before, and then the Left in Sweden were furious and defended Ghadhafi. Bildt stresses that this should be remembered and they should not repeat this mistake (Riksdagens protokoll 2010/11:74, Anf. 118). In answering the Social Democrats about the Nordic Battlegroup (Riksdagens protokoll 2010/11:74, Anf. 126), which Sweden is responsible for (Riksdagens protokoll 2010/11:74, Anf. 120), he says that the Swedish Government has no plans of ‘sending Swedish soldiers to war in Libya’. According to the Minister this would be wrong and could lead to very serious consequences (Riksdagens protokoll 2010/11:74, Anf. 126).

**Testing of Hypothesis 1.** The Minister’s for Foreign Affairs *reference point* seems to be in the international arena. This supposition is reinforced by the following. Even though the Minister for Foreign Affairs shares the Prime Minister’s views that NATO is an important actor, he means that this does not prevent Swedish engagement in the conflict. On the contrary, he says that Sweden should support NATO and USA in their bomb attacks at Libya. Another difference in the Minister’s for Foreign Affairs reasoning compared to the Prime Minister is his statement that ‘it is not about UN’, while the Prime Minister stresses the importance of a UN Security Council Resolution. *The decision-making process is thus ambiguous and confusing.* This is also reinforced by the statements of the Prime Minister and the Minister for Foreign Affairs being presented on the same day (March 17), in the same political arena (Riksdag), and in the same political debate. Who is responsible for the foreign policy decisions, the Prime Minister or the Minister for Foreign Affairs? The supposition about the reference point is also reinforced by the Minister’s for Foreign Affairs personal contacts with the other EU Ministers for Foreign Affairs, as well as his advice to them concerning efficient military measures. In the *frame* held by the Minister for Foreign Affairs during this phase of the decision process the *endowment effect* does not seem important as he not only questions the efficiency of a no-fly zone and instead refers to ‘more mandate for distinct measures’, but also wants Sweden to support USA’s and NATO’s bomb attacks at Libya. Such measures are likely to involve more serious risks. His foreign policy decisions thus take place in the *domain of losses* – stopping Ghadhafi cannot be done by only supporting a no-fly zone over Libya.

The Minister's for Foreign Affairs *risk assessments* are ambiguous. On the one hand he gives priority to bringing Swedish citizens into safety and not sending any Swedish soldiers to the war in Libya, on the other hand he wants sharper military measures and support to the US and NATO bomb attacks. The reasoning is puzzling. Shall the sharper measures be carried out by soldiers of other states than the soldiers of the state suggesting these measures, i.e. Sweden? And how shall the Swedish cooperation with USA and NATO be shaped if no Swedish soldiers are to take part in the military operations? One conclusion that may be drawn is that the Minister for Foreign Affairs finds risk assessments concerning the Swedish soldiers so important that all risks of losses should be avoided. The only way of doing this is by not sending any Swedish soldiers at all to Libya. It therefore seems as if the risk assessments are important concerning the Swedish citizens and soldiers, but not concerning the military operations as such. Thus, there is support for the hypothesis and prospect theory regarding the Swedish citizens and soldiers, but not regarding the military operations as such.

**Event 3 Swedish Military Assistance without Jas 39 Gripen Aircraft.** On March 25, 2011, newspapers report that Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt comments that Sweden is prepared to help Libya with both humanitarian and military resources. Minister for Foreign Affairs Carl Bildt says, after meeting with the Head of NATO Anders Fogh Rasmussen, that Sweden awaits specifications from NATO regarding 'what they want from us'. Bildt further says that he has not offered Rasmussen any Swedish Jas 39 Gripen aircraft (Göteborgs-Posten, March 25, 2011, p. 22).

**Testing of Hypothesis 1.** This Event refers to both the Prime Minister and the Minister for Foreign Affairs. It is another example of the Prime Minister handing over responsibility for the foreign policy to the Minister for Foreign Affairs (see also Event 2), even if he himself delivers the news that Sweden is prepared to help Libya with military resources. It is noteworthy that *only eight days after* the Minister for Foreign Affairs said that the Swedish Government had no plans of sending Swedish soldiers to war in Libya, he says that *Sweden awaits specifications from NATO regarding 'what they want from us'*. Have the Prime Minister and the Minister for Foreign Affairs made new risk assessments concerning the Swedish soldiers when changing their foreign policy decisions from solely humanitarian

resources to also include military resources? How comes that the Minister for Foreign Affairs is rather passive by ‘awaiting specifications from NATO regarding what they want from us’, instead of taking some initiatives of his own? This attitude stands in sharp contrast to the same Minister only a few days earlier repeating what military operations he thinks shall be carried out in Libya – sharper military measures instead of a no-fly zone. The foreign policy change seems to have emerged after the Minister’s for Foreign Affairs meeting with the Head of NATO. A plausible conclusion is therefore that NATO, an organisation Sweden is not a member of, has influenced both the Prime Minister and the Minister for Foreign Affairs in deciding to send Swedish troops to Libya.

The *reference point* for both the Prime Minister and the Minister for Foreign Affairs seems to be in the international arena. This supposition is reinforced by them offering both humanitarian and military resources to the international operations, and also adapting the military resources to NATO’s requirements. In the *frame* held by the Ministers during this phase of the decision process the *endowment effect* does not seem important as both of them have abandoned their former position not to send any Swedish soldiers to Libya, but instead await NATO’s requirements. Their foreign policy decisions thus take place in the *domain of losses* – stopping Gadhafi may be done with Swedish military assistance, at the same time as this may incur losses among the Swedish soldiers who are not, as in the case of Afghanistan, specially trained elite soldiers. Their *risk assessments* consequently do not seem important. Thus, there is no support for the hypothesis and prospect theory.

#### 4.2 The Decision on the Peace-Generating Operations

**Event 4 Swedish Military Assistance with Jas 39 Gripen Aircraft.** On March 29, 2011, Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt informs the Riksdag from the meeting with the European Council on March 24 and 25. NATO has decided to take over the whole operation in Libya according to UN Security Council Resolution 1973. The Prime Minister says that this morning (March 29) a formal request from NATO’s Secretary-General was received, welcoming Swedish operations in Libya. Therefore the Government has decided, at an extra Government Meeting, to suggest to the Riksdag to consent to Swedish participation in the international military operations – with Jas 39 Gripen aircraft. After negotiations with the

Opposition, the Government agreed on limiting the Swedish operations to maintaining a no-fly zone over Libya. The Prime Minister says that ‘it is not an easy task to send Swedish women and men abroad to protect civilians as the operations are not without any risk’, why strong support in the Riksdag for Sweden to take on this responsibility is decisive (Riksdagens protokoll 2010/11:78, Anf. 1).

**Testing of Hypothesis 1.** It is noteworthy that *only four days after* the Minister for Foreign Affairs said that Sweden had not offered NATO any Jas 39 Gripen aircraft, the Prime Minister informs that a Government decision has been made – *to offer NATO such aircraft!* One plausible explanation of this change is that when the decision for Sweden to take part in the no-fly zone was made, it was also logical to offer the most efficient aircraft, i.e. Jas 39 Gripen. Another plausible explanation is that as the Minister for Foreign Affairs seems keen on having the initiative in foreign policy matters, and also likes to communicate his ideas in different media at an early phase of decision making, the decision to offer NATO Swedish Jas 39 Gripen aircraft was made by the Prime Minister without considering or commenting on the Minister’s for Foreign Affairs statement.

When informing about NATO’s request welcoming Swedish operations in Libya, the Prime Minister says that strong support is needed in the Riksdag ‘*to send Swedish women and men abroad to protect civilians*’. It is interesting that the Prime Minister does not use the same wording as the Minister for Foreign Affairs did only twelve days earlier when he said that the Swedish Government had no plans of ‘*sending Swedish soldiers to war*’. This is an example of prospect theory’s ‘framing effects’, i.e. that the way the decision information is presented can affect the choice. The statement can be seen as the Prime Minister’s motivation for the military operations in an attempt to counterbalance any criticism of the risks involved.

The Prime Minister’s *reference point* seems to be in the international arena. This supposition is reinforced by the decision on Swedish participation in the military operations with Jas 39 Gripen aircraft, which is a change compared to in earlier Events. In the *frame* held by the Prime Minister during this phase of the decision process the *endowment effect* does not seem important, as Swedish soldiers will participate in the military operations

together with NATO and US soldiers. The Prime Minister's foreign policy decisions thus take place in the *domain of losses* – stopping Ghadhafi may be done with Swedish military assistance, at the same time as this may incur losses among the Swedish soldiers who are conscripts and officers, but no elite soldiers. At the same time, however, the Prime Minister motivates the operations and emphasizes *risk assessments* in four ways: 1) by pointing out that strong support in the Riksdag is decisive, 2) by using words not associated with war but rather with humanitarian contributions ('to protect civilians'), 3) by pointing out that the operations are not without any risks, 4) by limiting the Swedish operations to maintaining a no-fly zone. Even though using Jas 39 Gripen aircraft can be risky, the risk assessments seem important to some extent. Thus, there is support – albeit weak – for the hypothesis and prospect theory.

#### 4.3 Before the Decision on Prolongation of the Peace-Generating Operations

**Event 5 Prolongation of the Swedish Operations?** On April 29, 2011, the new Leader of the largest Opposition Party, the Social Democratic Party, Håkan Juholt says that he wants the Swedish aircraft to be brought home during the summer as the mandate is time-limited. The Left Party, the Green Party and the Sweden Democrats share this view (TT, April 29, 2011). Juholt's move causes a lot of comments, also by his party members, and he is heavily exposed in media. One military expert says that a Swedish retreat, at the same time as other states continue their operations, would be a political defeat in the international arena (Hallands Nyheter, April 30, 2011, p. 42).

On the same day, Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt says that he is prepared to discuss prolonging the Swedish operations in Libya, if the UN assignment has not been fulfilled. Any prolongation should be discussed with the parties involved in the first decision to send Swedish soldiers to Libya. Reinfeldt reminds of the background to the operations – a UN Security Council Resolution and a broad coalition of states. He means that if there is continued UN support, Sweden must of course consider a prolongation (TT, April 29, 2011).



**Testing of Hypothesis 1.** The Prime Minister's *reference point* seems to be in the international arena. This supposition is reinforced by him being prepared to discuss prolonging the Swedish operations if the UN assignment has not been fulfilled. In the *frame* held by the Prime Minister during this phase of the decision process *the endowment effect* does not seem important as his engagement in Libya appears entirely to depend on whether the UN assignment has been fulfilled. His opinions can be opposed to the opinions of the Leader of the largest Opposition Party, Håkan Juholt, who refers to the mandate being time-limited. The Prime Minister's foreign policy decisions thus take place in the *domain of losses* – stopping Ghadhafi may be done with Swedish military assistance, at the same time as this may incur losses among the Swedish soldiers who are conscripts and officers, but no elite soldiers. The Prime Minister does not make any *risk assessments* of his own regarding the consequences of a prolongation of the Swedish operations, nor does he take the opinions of the Opposition Parties concerning any risks into account. Thus, there is no support for the hypothesis and prospect theory.

#### 4.4 The Decision on Prolongation of the Peace-Generating Operations

**Event 6 NATO Request for Swedish Assistance and Prolongation of the Swedish Operations.** On June 1, 2011, Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt informs that NATO's Secretary-General has asked Sweden for continued assistance in Libya. It concerns above all air observations and air tank ability. NATO wants Swedish Jas 39 Gripen aircraft to start attacking targets on the ground, but the Prime Minister says he has made it clear that this is not of any current interest. As the political parties in the Riksdag have not agreed on any prolongation of the Swedish peace-generating operations and how they should be shaped, Reinfeldt says it is urgent to reach an agreement (Dagen, June 1, 2011, p. 0).

On June 8, 2011, Minister for Foreign Affairs Carl Bildt presents the agreement on the prolongation of the Swedish peace-generating operations in Libya, together with representatives of the Social Democratic Party and the Green Party. Bildt says that the assistance in the no-fly zone is discontinued, the need is very limited, and instead Sweden will contribute with much demanded air observations. Thus, the planes may also take part in maintaining the weapons embargo and the protection of civilians. Besides, Sweden will

contribute with a force to board ships and staff to information operations aimed at Ghadhafi's forces. However, contrary to the aircraft this is nothing that NATO has specifically asked for (TT, June 8, 2011).

**Testing of Hypothesis 1.** The agreement on the prolongation of the Swedish participation in the peace-generating operations seems to be one of adaptation, both to international policy and to domestic policy. The former is exemplified by NATO's needs for air observations, the latter is exemplified by the Government's compliance with above all the Social Democratic Party's demands for a force to board ships and staff to information operations. As the Social Democratic Party's leader Håkan Juholt was very active in the debate in demanding the Swedish peace-generating operations to be finalized, he can be expected to have been very influential on the conditions for prolonging the operations.

The Prime Minister's *reference point* seems to be in the international arena. This supposition is reinforced by his compliance with NATO's request for continued Swedish assistance in Libya, and by his personal contacts with NATO's Secretary-General. In the *frame* held by the Prime Minister during this phase of the decision process the *endowment effect* does not seem important as the Swedish soldiers now will be involved in more risky operations than earlier like boarding ships, which further reinforces the unimportance of the endowment effect. The Prime Minister's foreign policy decisions thus take place in the *domain of losses* – stopping Ghadhafi may be done with Swedish military assistance that now includes more risky operations than earlier during the decision process, which may incur losses among the Swedish soldiers. The only *risk assessments* made by the Prime Minister in relation to NATO's request is that Jas 39 Gripen aircraft should not start attacking targets on the ground. However, it is not clear from the statement whether risk assessments are the Prime Minister's motive for this derogation. Another motive could be that he finds the possibilities of making an agreement with the other political parties larger if NATO does not use Swedish aircraft for attacking targets on the ground. The risk assessments consequently do not seem important. Thus, there is no support for the hypothesis and prospect theory.

### **Events 1-6, Testing of Hypothesis 2**

According to *Hypothesis 2*, the importance of risk assessments at political leaders' foreign policy decisions shifts during different phases of the decision process. For Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt risk assessments were *important* in 2 of the 6 Events, *both important and not important* in 1 of the 6 Events, and *not important* in 3 of the 6 Events. The Events in which risk assessments were *important* were when it was prioritized to bring Swedish citizens into safety and not send any Swedish soldiers to the war in Libya (Event 2), and when the Prime Minister limited the Swedish operations to maintaining a no-fly zone over the country (Event 4). First, it may seem as if the shifts which impacted the Prime Minister's perceptions of threat exclusively were caused by external factors. In Event 2, the main threat seems to have been the external factor of the worsening situation in Libya. In Event 4, the main threat seems to have been the external factor of the risks with the military operations. However, as Swedish soldiers also were sent to the war in Libya during other phases of the foreign policy decision process when the situation was not any better – Events 3, 5, 6 – and risk assessments were *not important*, it seems as if also internal factors impacted the Prime Minister's perceptions of threat and affected the shifts. Consequently, for Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt the importance of risk assessments shifted during different phases of the foreign policy decision process on the peace-generating operations in Libya. Thus, there is support for the hypothesis.

## 4.5 Conclusions

*One characteristic of the Events* is that when military measures were suggested by inter alia NATO in the beginning of the foreign policy decision process, Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt found these measures insufficient and therefore advocated more far-reaching military measures. *Another characteristic of the Events* is that it is not always obvious who is the responsible political leader for the foreign policy decisions, as the Minister for Foreign Affairs is given large room for manoeuvre by the Prime Minister. *Sweden's support to NATO* is obvious during the whole foreign policy decision process. Already in the beginning of the decision process Prime Minister Reinfeldt makes clear that more than a no-fly zone is needed for solving the situation in Libya. Also, Minister for Foreign Affairs Bildt says that it is not about UN but about USA and NATO, which have to be supported by

Sweden. It is interesting that in solving the situation in Libya both the Prime Minister and the Minister for Foreign Affairs seem to attach minor importance to UN, an organisation Sweden is a member of, and great importance to NATO, an organisation Sweden is not a member of.

In the beginning of the *foreign policy decision process* there almost seems to be a lack of interest in the situation in Libya. After having been criticized for this, both the Prime Minister and the Minister for Foreign Affairs suggest more far-reaching military measures than the measures suggested by above all NATO. However, no military support is offered to NATO. Instead, the support is focused on bringing Swedish citizens into safety. During a later phase, however, the Prime Minister reconsiders the decision not to contribute with any Swedish troops to Libya. Why this is so can only be speculated on, even though the operations were kept rather public. One plausible explanation is that the Prime Minister felt a ‘moral pressure’ from other states and organisations, especially EU and NATO, to contribute with military troops. Another plausible explanation is that the Prime Minister felt a ‘domestic pressure’ from some political parties to engage in removing Muammar Gadhafi from power.

It is striking that of the 6 tests and analyses carried out on the empirical material on Libya of *Hypothesis 1* – that risk assessments are important at political leaders’ foreign policy decisions (prospect theory) – ***there is only support for Hypothesis 1 and prospect theory in 2 Events*** (and partly support in 1 Event). One conclusion that may be drawn from the tests and analyses is therefore that for Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt risk assessments were only important during a few phases of the foreign policy decision process on the peace-generating operations in Libya. How should this be explained? When making the tests and analyses using the reference point, frame, endowment effect, domain, and risk assessments – all important variables of prospect theory – it has emerged that the Prime Minister assessed that he could incur political losses in the national arena by his foreign policy decisions. This is also reinforced by him handing over responsibility for the foreign policy concerning Libya to the Minister for Foreign Affairs on several occasions, and by his scanty interest in the international arena. Being in the losses domain Reinfeldt’s risk assessments were only important during some phases of the foreign policy decision process which

*supports Hypothesis 2* – that the importance of risk assessments at political leaders' foreign policy decisions shifts during different phases of the decision process. Judging from the empirical material it therefore seems as if *the importance of risk assessments at political leaders' foreign policy decisions depends on their assessments of political gains and losses*.

Apart from testing hypotheses and theories to explain risk assessments at political leaders' foreign policy decisions, the indicator *how active the leader is in the political debate* can be used. Information about the Swedish peace-generating operations in Libya was kept rather public, which resulted in much debate and media attention. There is plenty of material – statements, comments, debates in the Riksdag, speeches, press releases, newspaper articles etc. – both by Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt and Minister for Foreign Affairs Carl Bildt. However, the Prime Minister was rather passive in the political debate on Libya compared to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, to whom he seems to have delegated the role of handling the debate. *The results are expected. High debate activity seems to be an indicator of a political leader's need for support from other political leaders in making foreign policy decisions under conditions of uncertainty*. In the case of Libya, the necessary support seems above all to emanate from the largest Opposition Party, the Social Democratic Party, and not from the Government's Coalition Parties.

## 5 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The overriding research question of this thesis is if risk assessments are important at political leaders' foreign policy decisions. Two hypotheses were tested on Prime Minister Göran Persson's and Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt's foreign policy decisions on the peace-generating operations in Afghanistan and Libya. The indicator debate activity was also used. After having tested the hypotheses and analysed the findings the conclusion was that, judging from the empirical material, the importance of risk assessments at political leaders' foreign policy decisions depends on their assessments of political gains and losses.

When choosing the empirical cases it was not expected that they would be very different from each other, both regarding the types of peace-generating operations, and regarding the political leaders' risk assessments and resultant foreign policy decisions. This is more a fortunate factor, which adds to the validity and possibility of making scientific generalisations from the findings of the thesis.

*In the case of Afghanistan* the peace-generating operations were kept rather secret, and only consisted of a small group of specially trained elite soldiers (SSG). Prime Minister Göran Persson did not really discuss the operations in the national arena, at the same time as he was very active in the international arena above all supporting USA's war against terrorism. He officially demonstrated personal contacts with important leaders like US President Bush and UN Secretary-General Annan. The Prime Minister believed that a small state could influence international politics. He was inactive in the political debate. The Minister for Foreign Affairs discussed the peace-generating operations on a few occasions in the national arena. She was more active than the Prime Minister in the political debate. The Social Democratic Party ruled alone, the Left Party and the Green Party were Supporting Parties. The opinions of these parties, and the opinions of the Opposition Parties, do not seem to have affected the Prime Minister's risk assessments and resultant foreign policy decisions.

*In the case of Libya* the peace-generating operations were kept rather public, and consisted of a larger group of conscripts and officers. Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt very seldom

discussed the operations in the national arena or in the international arena. He did not demonstrate any personal contacts with important leaders. The Prime Minister believed that a small state that is not a UN Security Council Member or a NATO Member has limited possibilities of influence on international politics. He was not very active in the political debate. The Minister for Foreign Affairs discussed the peace-generating operations on several occasions, both in the national arena and in the international arena. He was more active than the Prime Minister in the political debate. The Moderate Party was the largest party in a Non-Socialist Coalition Government together with the Liberal Party, the Christian Democrat Party and the Centre Party. The opinions of these parties do not seem to have affected the Prime Minister's risk assessments and resultant foreign policy decisions as much as the opinions of the largest Opposition Party, the Social Democratic Party.

‘While the game of international relations may be played according to national interest, there is also a second game being played within each government, a game of personal and/or organisational interests and ambitions, which may in fact be more determinative of a nation's foreign policy than the game of national interest’ (Hudson 2014:101).

*The analysis of both political leaders' foreign policy decisions* shows that the framing of options seems to have been different for both Prime Ministers. During the whole decision process Prime Minister Göran Persson took on board first-hand information due to his interest in the situation in Afghanistan and personal contacts with important leaders, while Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt only had interest in first-hand information during some phases of the decision process due to his vague interest in the situation in Libya and fewer personal contacts with important leaders. Persson's risk assessments were important during all phases of the decision process, while Reinfeldt's risk assessments only were important during some phases of the decision process. Accordingly, Persson supported USA's fight against terrorism in Afghanistan during the whole decision process – albeit sometimes by humanitarian and sometimes by military resources – while Reinfeldt only supported the fight against Libya's dictator Muammar Gadhafi during some phases of the decision process. In the case of Afghanistan, the risk assessments and resultant foreign policy

decisions were not really questioned by any political leaders, and the Prime Minister seemed to have a strong hold of the situation. That there was very little publicity, and that the Social Democratic Party ruled alone, also added to this. In the case of Libya, the risk assessments and resultant foreign policy decisions were much questioned by political leaders, and the Prime Minister did not seem to have a strong hold of the situation. That there was a lot of publicity, and that the Prime Minister ruled a Coalition Government, also added to this.

The difference between both political leaders' foreign policy decisions is obvious until the very end of the decision process. Prime Minister Göran Persson did not make any official statement when the Riksdag authorized the Government to send Swedish soldiers on peace-generating operations in Afghanistan. This is consistent considering Persson's leadership, one characteristic of which was to keep the operations rather secret. Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt delegated to Minister for Foreign Affairs Carl Bildt to present the agreement on the prolongation of the Swedish peace-generating operations in Libya, at a press conference attracting much media attention. Bildt was not accompanied by any representative of the three other Coalition Parties, but instead by representatives of the two Opposition Parties having signed the agreement (Social Democratic Party and Green Party). This is consistent considering Reinfeldt's leadership, one characteristic of which was to delegate leadership for foreign policy issues to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Another characteristic was to attach special importance to the Social Democratic Party's opinions on foreign policy issues.

According to prospect theory, if a leader acts from a secure position the decision is likely to be more cautious, if a leader acts from a more desperate place the decision is likely to be more risky. Before making any foreign policy decisions – especially on critical issues like participating in peace-generating operations – risk assessments have to be made in order to get a representation of the circumstances that the leader has to approach. In both the case of Afghanistan and the case of Libya the Prime Ministers acted from rather secure positions, as there were no threats against Sweden by these states. As no state is an isolated island, however, even a small state not directly affected by a conflict has to take a stand on whether



it wants to engage in a conflict, and what importance the political leaders then attach to possible political gains and losses. According to the findings of this thesis this will affect their risk assessments and resultant foreign policy decisions. After all, for a political leader political gains are the prerequisites of implementing the desired policy, while political losses may rule out the desired policy and even overturn a government.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

- *The importance of risk assessments at political leaders' foreign policy decisions depends on their assessments of political gains and losses.*
- *Prospect theory's applicability can be successfully tested on small states not directly affected by a conflict.*

#### 5.1 New Contribution to Earlier Research

In earlier research prospect theory has mostly been used in making analyses of great powers directly confronted with different types of risks. As shown in the analyses of the empirical cases Afghanistan and Libya it was possible to explain Prime Minister Göran Persson's and Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt's risk assessments and resultant foreign policy decisions on the peace-generating operations by applying prospect theory to these cases. The results of the tests and analyses in this thesis thus show that prospect theory is also a good tool in analysing foreign policy decision making under conditions of uncertainty in small states not directly confronted with risks.

Even though there is research on prospect theory regarding e.g. the role of problem definition, framing, and cognitive phenomena, the importance of risk assessments at political leaders' foreign policy decisions – and the connection with their assessments of political gains and losses – does not seem to have been taken into account in earlier research in the same way as in this thesis. Also, the individual political leader's importance for the resultant foreign policy decisions, despite the decision making formally being vested in a decision-making body, does not seem to have been elucidated in earlier research in the

same way as in this thesis.

## 5.2 Future Research

Foreign policy decision making is an interesting avenue of research, especially as many different factors affect the decisions. Foreign policy decision making under conditions of uncertainty is even more interesting and complex, as ‘uncertainty’ comprises different types of risks that political leaders have to relate to. Research in this field has mostly focused on great powers directly confronted with different types of risks. However, there is not as much research on *small states not directly confronted with risks*. Therefore, more research is needed in this field. Another field for future research is *the importance of the individual political leader* for foreign policy decision making under conditions of uncertainty. As shown in this thesis, even in a state where it is decisive for a Prime Minister to anchor important foreign policy decisions in decision-making body like a Parliament, his own personal interests and ambitions may be determinative of a nation’s foreign policy. To get as a comprehensive basis as possible for theory development, the research should comprise different types of states and different types of political leaders.

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