

Polaris Submarines and the Unilateral US Security Guarantee – A Case of Cold War Fiction

By *Simon Moores*

In *Tidskrift i Sjöväsendet* (1/2008) Nils Bruzelius, doctoral candidate at the Royal Institute of Technology's Department of Philosophy and History of Technology, claimed that the Eisenhower administration's unilateral security guarantee for Sweden came about as a result of the US needing 'to improve the security of the Fleet Ballistic Missile Submarines' deployment area, located at the West Coast of Sweden'.¹ Naturally, the focus of this article will be on Bruzelius' assumption and a number of its flaws; however, for those readers of this journal who are unfamiliar with Bruzelius' earlier work, it would perhaps be an opportune time to point out that this is the second of his bold hypotheses. The first is that due to the limited range of the Polaris A-1 missile

and the favourable resting places on the seabed off the west coast of Sweden for the US Navy to launch these missiles, the US Polaris submarines were deployed to patrol in the Skagerrak as well as off the Swedish west coast between November 1960 and the end of 1963.² As Kjell Engelbrekt, the external examiner for Bruzelius' licentiate thesis, quite correctly points out in his article 'Alla ägg i en korg', for the second hypothesis to be 'meaningful to examine', Bruzelius must initially be able to prove that his first hypothesis about the deployment area for the US Polaris submarines is correct. Engelbrekt concludes, however, that 'the evidence which is put forward to support hypothesis 1 is not convincing to such a degree that a solid basis has been established to examine hypothesis 2'.³ This

1 Bruzelius, Nils: "Unilaterally if Necessary" – One Motive behind the American Security Guarantee to Sweden', *Tidskrift i Sjöväsendet*, No. 1, 2008, p 50.

2 See, for example, Bruzelius, Nils: "Near Friendly or Neutral Shores": *The Deployment of the Fleet Ballistic Missile Submarines and US Policy towards Scandinavia, 1957–1963* (KTH/Marinlitteraturföreningen, Stockholm 2007).

3 Engelbrekt, Kjell: "'Alla ägg i en korg'" [All Your Eggs in One Basket], *KKrVAHT* 4. häftet 2007p. 64. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

observation has also been highlighted by myself in an article entitled ‘En djävur tes utan empiriskt stöd: en källkritisk analys av teorin om Polarisubåtarnas operationer i Skagerrak’ (co-written by Jerker Widén), in which with the aid of secondary sources, declassified CIA documents as well as oral histories and interviews it has been possible to cast serious doubt on Bruzelius’ first hypothesis.⁴

First Hypothesis Revisited

In Bruzelius’ latest article, this speculative claim is once again presented as a proven fact, without even a footnote as supporting evidence. In keeping with Engelbrekt’s egg theme (‘Alla ägg i en korg’ can be translated as ‘All your eggs in one basket’), it appears that Bruzelius has already counted his ‘Polaris chickens’ before they have hatched. This is strange given that he still appears unsure of the whereabouts of these submarines; first claiming that their deployment area was ‘located at the west coast of Sweden’, but by the end of the article concluding that it ‘*most probably* was located at the west coast of Sweden’ (emphasis added).⁵

Moreover, four new pieces of evidence have come to light which further weaken Bruzelius’ assertion. First, one of the ‘key’ documents used by Bruzelius to support his hypothesis has been misinterpreted. In his article ‘Källkritiskt bottenläge’ Bruzelius refers to a document entitled ‘Introduction of the Fleet Ballistic Missile into Service’ (from January 1957) and states that ‘here it is evident that the submarines will operate “near friendly or neutral shores”’.⁶ However, a closer inspection of the aforementioned document reveals this not to be the case. The authors of the document instead wrote the following: ‘Characteristics other than submerged endurance, quiet operation and rapidity of launch require only routine emphasis, since submarines *can* operate near friendly or neutral shores’ (emphasis added).⁷ Bruzelius’ selective quoting and unfortunate use of the Swedish word ‘skall’ (will) drastically changes the original meaning of the sentence and gives the reader the impression that the authors of the document meant that the Polaris submarines were *about to/going to* operate in these stretches of water. However, they were merely stating that these submarines

4 Moores, Simon and Widén, Jerker: ‘En djävur tes utan empiriskt stöd: En källkritisk analys av teorin om Polaris ubåtarnas operationer i Skagerrak’ [A Bold Hypothesis without Empirical Support: A Source-Critical Analysis of the Theory of the Polaris Submarines in the Skagerrak], *KKrVAHT*, 4. häftet, 2007, pp. 71–85.

5 Op. cit. footnote 1, p. 54, 64.

6 Bruzelius, Nils: ‘Källkritiskt bottenläge’ [Source-Criticism at Rock Bottom], *KKrVAHT*, 4. häftet, 2007 p. 90.

7 ‘NAVWAG Study No. 1, Introduction of Fleet Ballistic Missile into Service’, 30 January 1957, http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/nsa/NC/nh1_4.gif, accessed 1 Dec. 2008.

were able to patrol or capable of patrolling off the coasts of ‘friendly or neutral’ countries. Thus, there is no hard evidence in this document to suggest that the US Navy had earmarked the west coast of Sweden as a definite deployment area; this was merely expressed as a possibility, and, from the other evidence below, it is clear that this option had been ruled out even before the USS *George Washington* was deployed in November 1960.

The second piece of evidence can be found in Robert J. Watson’s *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Vol. 4: Into the Missile Age, 1956–1960*. In January 1960, US Secretary of Defense Thomas Gates formally asked his British counterpart, Harold Watkinson, whether the Polaris tenders could be stationed in the Gare Loch in the Clyde Estuary of Scotland seen as ‘the initial patrol area for Polaris submarines was to be the Norwegian and North Seas’.⁸ The third piece of information is provided by Vice Admiral Charles

H. Griffiths, Commanding Officer of the USS *Robert E. Lee* (SSBN 601) at the time of the Cuban Missile Crisis (October 1962), who has recounted that ‘[b]ack in the Holy Loch simultaneously with the setting of the higher DEFCON all hands worked at a frantic pace to get the two submarines alongside to sea... Understandably, many repairs had to be completed while en route to their patrol areas in the Norwegian Sea’.⁹ Finally, Captain Arthur Clark Bivens, who served onboard the USS *Patrick Henry* (1959–1962) and later went on to become Commanding Officer of the USS *Sam Houston*, has in his autobiography written a whole chapter on the deterrent patrols of the aforementioned submarines. According to Bivens, ‘[a]fter clearing the AGI [a Soviet intelligence gathering ship] and submerging near the 100-fathom curve north of Ireland we would transit to our assigned areas in the Norwegian Sea or further out in the Atlantic Ocean’.¹⁰ These sources, coupled with those presented in an earlier

8 Watson, Robert J.: *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Vol. 4: Into the Missile Age, 1956–1960* Department of Defense, Washington, D.C, 1997, p. 562.

9 Griffiths, Charles H.: ‘Role of Polaris Submarines in the Cuban Missile Crisis’ (U.S. Naval Academy Alumni Association & Foundation), <http://www.usna.com/NetCommunity/SSLPage.aspx?pid=2861&srcid=502>, accessed 15 June 2008.

10 Bivens, Arthur Clark: *From Sailboats to Submarines: A Personal, Informative History of the Early Days of Our Nuclear Powered Submarines*: Infinity Publishing.com, West Conshohocken, PA 2004, p. 182. The accounts of Vice Admiral Griffiths and Captain Bivens support the information already given to the author by Commanders Charles A. Orem and Robert J. Bowman as well as Dale V. Barrios, Quartermaster First Class. See Moores and Widén: ‘En djärv tes utan empiriskt stöd’, pp. 77–9. I would like to thank Commander Robert J. Bowman, navigator onboard the USS *Robert E. Lee* (1962–1965), for checking this section for its historical accuracy.

article, all debunk Bruzelius' claim that the US Navy deployed its Polaris submarines off the west coast of Sweden.¹¹

In the past, Bruzelius has refuted similar evidence by playing the conspiracy card; with the claim that such sources are part of the US Navy's disinformation activities so that the 'myth' of the US Polaris submarines' patrols in the Norwegian and North Seas can be kept alive, and that the 'truth' can only be found using other sources.¹² What evidence does Bruzelius have to support this claim? Namely, a quote from Harvey Sapolsky who has written on the Polaris programme, but whose work Bruzelius readily admits 'does not deal with submarine operational matters'.¹³ The quote used by Bruzelius, in fact, refers to US targeting policies and makes no reference to the deterrent patrols of the US Polaris submarines.¹⁴ An academic, on the other hand, well versed in the operational matters of that period is David A. Rosenberg, a leading historian of US Cold War

naval and nuclear strategies and a Navy Captain intelligence officer. According to Rosenberg, the operational data he was privy to as an intelligence officer and as Admiral Arleigh Burke's biographer, with complete access to the admiral's papers and the recollections of both submarine and intelligence officers from that period, do not support Bruzelius' hypothesis.¹⁵ Is Bruzelius suggesting that Rosenberg is also part of this 'conspiracy'? Thus, at present, Bruzelius has no evidence whatsoever to back up this claim that those onboard the US Polaris submarines are actively involved in a cover-up. Again, until such empirical evidence can be presented, this remains pure speculation on his part.

The Polaris Submarines – The Not-So-Secret Secret

As already pointed out, for the second hypothesis to be of any relevance, the first hypothesis must be proven, which is far from the case at present. Nevertheless,

11 Op. cit, footnote 4 pp. 71–80.

12 For instance, in response to the information offered by Commander Bowman about where the USS Robert E. Lee was deployed, Bruzelius claimed not only that 'Bowman keeps to the "official" truth which the US Navy uses as a bodyguard around the Polaris submarines', but also that 'if you want to study the official version of the Polaris submarines' operations old oral evidence can be of interest. In other contexts, it is not'. Op. cit footnote 6, p. 91, 93.

13 Op cit footnote 2, p. 20. For the quote used see Bruzelius, footnote 6, p. 88.

14 Op. cit. footnote 6, p. 88; Sapolsky, Harvey M.: 'The U.S. Navy's Fleet Ballistic Missile Program and Finite Deterrence', in Sokolski, Henry D.: (ed.), *Getting MAD: Nuclear Mutual Assured Destruction, its Origins and Practice* Strategic Studies Institute, Carlisle, PA: 2004, p. 123.

15 It is interesting to note that Bruzelius was actually told this by Professor Rosenberg when the former was starting out on his research. Rosenberg, David A.: 'Eisenhower's Response to a Soviet Attack on Austria' [e-mail to the author], (11 June 2008) drosenbe@ida.org, accessed 1 Dec 2008.

Bruzelius' assumption raises a number of questions about the reason(s) behind the Eisenhower administration's decision to give Sweden a unilateral security guarantee. Thus, his 'empirical evidence' deserves a closer examination.

What is most striking about Bruzelius' fourteen-page article is that only one of the documents used to support his hypothesis even mentions the word 'Polaris'. Bruzelius draws the conclusion that the absence of the word 'Polaris' in US documents naturally confirms the level of secrecy surrounding the 'real' reason for the unilateral security guarantee. According to Bruzelius, 'this motive [for the unilateral security guarantee] had a higher secrecy than "Top Secret"'.¹⁶ In other words, he subscribes to the 'too-sensitive-to-be-written-down-on-paper' school of thinking. As evidence for this, Bruzelius refers to the memorandum of discussion from the 439th meeting of the NSC on 1 April 1960. Here, those participating in the meeting, including President Eisenhower, Secretary of State Herter and Admiral Burke, Chief of Naval Operations, do not mention the word 'Polaris' in connection with providing Sweden with a unilateral security guarantee.¹⁷ Secretary of State Herter's reservations about the NSC approving Paragraph 28

and President Eisenhower's subsequent inability to provide a clear-cut answer are seized upon by Bruzelius as evidence of Eisenhower being 'not inclined to answer in that way, he cannot reveal the reasons for the guarantee in such a large congregation where notes are taken'.¹⁸ However, what empirical evidence – a *sine qua non* for historical writing – does Bruzelius provide to support his assertion that the subject in question was too sensitive to be written down on paper: a document? No. An interview? No. An oral history? No. Instead, Bruzelius dresses up a possible alternative as an indisputable fact. Without either written or oral evidence it is impossible for Bruzelius to determine what Eisenhower was really thinking at the time.

Moreover, Bruzelius' claim that it is 'inconceivable' that Eisenhower would permit those serving in his administration to talk or write freely about such matters [the US nuclear policy] appears flawed in the light of available primary sources.¹⁹ For instance, at the very same NSC meeting which looked at US policy towards Scandinavia the Minuteman ICBM system was discussed, during which Secretary of State Herter raised a question concerning the 'mobile land-based Polaris missiles in Europe'. In front of Herter and the other

16 Op. cit footnote 1, p. 61.

17 Op. cit footnote 2 pp. 63–70; *ibid.*, pp. 56–7.

18 *Ibid.* p. 70.

19 Op. cit footnote 1, p. 60.

members of the NSC President Eisenhower claimed that he foresaw ‘no difficulty in transporting the missiles’ seeing as ‘Navy boats had been hauled across Europe for operations on the Rhine during World War II’.²⁰ Another example of the freeness with which the subject of Polaris was discussed within the confines of the NSC is the meeting held on 28 April 1960. Those present heard the subject of reloading the Polaris submarines being openly considered by President Eisenhower, Secretary of Defense Gates and Admiral Burke. Admiral Burke informed those present that an ammunition ship carrying Polaris missiles could be dispatched to a ‘remote part of the South Atlantic’ in order to avoid being destroyed and then ‘return to the Northern Hemisphere to reload the submarines’. President Eisenhower, however, was worried that the ammunition ship might be sunk on the return leg, whereupon Admiral Burke suggested that the Polaris submarines might be able to reload in the South Atlantic.²¹ The question that Bruzelius’ ‘too-sensitive-to-be-written-down-on-paper’ theory has yet to answer is why did the NSC see fit to openly examine the question of mobile land-based Polaris missiles and the reloading of the Polaris submarines,

and not the need to increase the security of the Polaris submarines? Again, until his claim can be substantiated with empirical evidence, it remains pure speculation.

The Raborn Briefing – A Case of Poetic Licence

Another instance of Bruzelius blending fact with fiction is Rear Admiral Raborn’s meeting with Secretary of State Herter in early April 1960. In his licentiate thesis Bruzelius writes the following:

Admiral Burke, directly after the debacle at the NSC meeting, asked Secretary Herter to receive Rear Admiral Raborn for a briefing on an important issue. At the briefing Raborn could explain the need for US to defend Sweden and by that secure, in the event of war, the Polaris’ safe haven on the west coast of Sweden. If all other reasons for the Raborn presentation can be excluded, a direct link between the security guarantee to Sweden and the deployment of the Fleet Ballistic Submarines can be considered as established.²²

And again in his latest article, Bruzelius, using the very same source, claims that ‘Admiral Burke participated in the meet-

20 Memorandum of Discussion at the 439th Meeting of the National Security Council, 1 April 1960, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958–1960: National Security Policy; Arms Control and Disarmament*, Vol. III US Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 1996, p. 391.

21 Discussion at 442nd Meeting of the National Security Council, 28 April 1960, in *ibid.*, p. 401.

22 Op cit footnote 2, p. 72. In a later article published in *Pennan & Svärdet* Bruzelius presents the details of the briefing as if they are an established fact and without a shred of evidence to support this. Bruzelius, Nils: ‘Döden vid Vinga’ [Death at Vinga], *Pennan & Svärdet*, No. 5A, 2007, p. 14.

ing on 1 April, the week after he sent Rear Admiral Raborn to the State Department in order to secure the survival of the guarantee'.²³ However, a closer look at the document upon which Bruzelius bases his claim reveals that he has, in fact, indulged in a piece of poetic licence:

Secretary Gates suggested that he and the Secretary [Herter] get together one of these days on other subjects. The Secretary mentioned the briefing on Polaris which Admiral Rayburn had given in the Department and said he was greatly impressed by it and found it very useful.²⁴

There is no disputing the fact that Rear Admiral Raborn held a briefing in the State Department with Herter present, but where in the quoted source does it state that Admiral Burke had contacted Herter and asked him to be briefed? It does not, and, more importantly, nor is there any evidence to suggest that the briefing had to do with explaining Washington's supposed need to defend Sweden in order to protect the Polaris submarines' deployment area

off the west coast of Sweden. As has been shown, Bruzelius has not filled in the gaps in this historical event with empirical evidence, but instead with his own made-up version. He then goes on to reject a number of alternative reasons for such a briefing, stating that if they can be discounted 'a direct link between the security guarantee to Sweden and the deployment of the Fleet Ballistic Submarines can be considered as established'.²⁵ This, however, is an erroneous claim. Just because Bruzelius has managed to dismiss a number of other possibilities does not automatically mean that his proposed explanation is correct; it simply remains an unsubstantiated claim, especially seeing as he has overlooked one alternative reason for the briefing.²⁶ According to available primary sources, at two NSC meetings held on 28 April and 5 May 1960 respectively, Polaris was discussed.²⁷ One person, however, unable to partake in these NSC meetings was Secretary of State Herter who at the time of the second NSC meeting was in Athens after having attended a NATO ministerial meeting in Istanbul (30 April–4 May). Prior

23 Op. cit. footnote 1, p. 60.

24 Herter Papers, Box 12, CAH Telephone Calls 3/28/60–6/30/60 (3), Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, cited in Op. cit. footnote 2 p. 72.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid.

27 Discussion at 442nd Meeting of the National Security Council, 28 April 1960, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958–1960: National Security Policy; Arms Control and Disarmament*, Vol. III, p. 401; National Security Council, 'Discussion at the 443rd Meeting of the National Security Council, Thursday, May 5, 1960', 5 May 1960, NSC Series, Box 12, Eisenhower Papers 1953–1961, Ann Whitman File, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, <http://history.nasa.gov/sputnik/may60.html>, accessed 15 June 2008.

to Herter's Turkey visit, he had already been away from Washington for almost a week and a half, with an overnight stop in London (26–27 April) and a three-day CENTO ministerial meeting in Tehran (28–30 April).²⁸ It is, therefore, quite plausible that Herter, seeing that he was going to miss both these NSC meetings, and Under-Secretary of State Dillion (the State Department representative in Herter's absence) might have simply wanted to be given more information about Polaris which was slated for discussion. This is an alternative scenario that needs to be given closer consideration. Until Bruzelius can find concrete evidence which reveals the true nature of the briefing involving Rear Admiral Raborn and Secretary of State Herter, it remains simply conjecture.

Not Just Room for Sweden – The Non-Aligned European Countries under the US Security Umbrella

A further flaw in Bruzelius' argument is his claim that it is 'highly unlikely' that another non-aligned European country was the recipient of a unilateral security guarantee like Paragraph 28 in NSC 6006/1.²⁹ It can be inferred from this that

Bruzelius is claiming that the reason for this 'uniqueness' was that Sweden was the only non-aligned European country whose coastal waters would serve as a safe haven for the US Polaris submarines; otherwise, Sweden would never have been the recipient of the unilateral US security guarantee in the first place. Bruzelius points out that not only did Washington have no intention of giving military assistance to Finland in the event of a Soviet attack, but also that in the light of Secretary of State Herter's remark during the discussions on NSC 6006, the US had no plans to defend Austria. The same, Bruzelius contends, also applies to Switzerland.³⁰ Although policy statements à la Paragraph 28 in NSC 6006/1 have, as far as this author is aware, yet to be found for the other non-aligned European countries, there is still evidence to suggest that Washington was prepared not only to come to Austria's aid if attacked by the Soviets, but also to that of another non-aligned European country, one which Bruzelius has overlooked, namely Yugoslavia.³¹

In the case of Austria, during an NSC meeting in May 1958, Eisenhower let it be known that he did not subscribe to the

28 Memorandum of Conversation, 4 May 1960, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958–1960, Eastern Europe, Finland, Greece, Turkey*, Volume X, Part II US Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 1994, p. 718, fn. 1; 'Christian A. Herter', <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/trvl/lis/13033.htm>, accessed 1 Dec. 2008.

29 Op.cit. footnote 1, p. 63.

30 Ibid., p. 56, 63.

31 For instance, neither of the following documents contain such a security guarantee: NSC 6020, US Policy towards Austria, 9 December 1960 [unsanitized], RG 59, Records Relating to State Department Participa-

view that if the Soviets tried to occupy Austria Washington could ‘fight them’ in what he termed a ‘nice, sweet World War II type of war’, which he deemed to be ‘very unrealistic’.³² Eisenhower’s comment thus gives a clear indication that the US would not remain a bystander in the event of a Soviet military attack on Austria, and this time nuclear weapons would be used.³³ The Austrian Oliver Rathkolb who has written extensively on this subject has come to the conclusion that President Eisenhower would have only been prepared to use military means to assist Austria if the Warsaw Pact forces launched a direct attack on the Northern/Southern line of NATO which ran from southern Germany through the Tyrol

to Italy.³⁴ The Kennedy administration also appears to have been prepared to defend Austria. In a *Foreign Affairs* article written by McGeorge Bundy, President Kennedy’s National Security Advisor, the author made it known that the US intended to support and protect both its ‘friends and allies’ and as examples of the former Sweden and Austria were explicitly mentioned.³⁵ As for Yugoslavia, Marc Trachtenberg has shown in his article ‘la formation du système de défense occidentale: les Etats-Unis, la France et MC 48’ that the NATO (read: US) plan during the Eisenhower years was to use nuclear weapons if Moscow attacked Yugoslavia. This point was made clear by Eisenhower’s very good friend

tion in the Operations Coordinating Board and the NSC, 1947–1963, Lot File 63D 351, Box 100, NARA 2; State Department Guidelines for Policy and Operations, Austria, March 1962, Austria General, 4/61–5/62, Country Files, Box 9, National Security Files, John F. Kennedy Library. See also Widén, Jerker: *Väktare, ombud, kritiker: Sverige i amerikanskt säkerhetstänkande 1961–1968* [Guardian, Representative, Critic: Sweden in US Security Thinking 1961–1968] (Ph.D. thesis, Åbo Akademi University, forthcoming). I would like to thank Jerker Widén, the Swedish National Defence College, for bringing these documents to my attention.

- 32 Memorandum of Discussion at the 364th Meeting of the National Security Council, 1 May 1958, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958–1960: National Security Policy; Arms Control and Disarmament*, p. 87.
- 33 Throughout his presidency Eisenhower viewed a war in Europe as one that would be waged against the Soviet Union and would thus certainly be a general war. Given the high stakes Eisenhower reasoned that both sides would use whatever weapons they had at their disposal, and not refrain from using nuclear weapons. See Trachtenberg, Marc: *A Constructed Peace: The Making of the European Settlement*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ 1999, pp. 160–1.
- 34 Rathkolb, Oliver: *Washington ruft Wien: U.S.-Grossmachtspolitik und Österreich, 1953–1963* Böhlau Verlag, Wien 1997. I would like to thank Professor Oliver Rathkolb, Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for European History and Public Spheres, for bringing this to my attention.
- 35 McGeorge, Bundy: ‘Friends and Allies’, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (October 1962). This article is referred to in Dalsjö, Robert: *Life-Line Lost: The Rise and Fall of ‘Neutral’ Sweden’s Secret Reserve Operation of Wartime Help from the West* Santérus, Stockholm 2006, p. 56.

General Alfred Gruenther, the Supreme Allied Commander in Europe (1953–1956).³⁶ Seeing as Bruzelius' 'uniqueness theory' has now been disproved and there is no evidence to suggest that US policymakers regarded land-locked Austria and the Adriatic Sea along Yugoslavia's coastline as suitable safe havens for their Polaris submarines, the *raison d'être*, put forward by Bruzelius, for the security guarantee has also been undermined. However, a more plausible reason why Austria, Sweden and Yugoslavia came to enjoy various degrees of protection afforded by the US security umbrella is that it was a way of shoring up NATO's northern and southern flank as well as its central sector. For instance, in the case of Austria, it was acknowledged that a Soviet occupation would enable the Red Army 'to commence offensive action

with her Forces already having outflanked Central Europe and Italy'.³⁷ As for Tito's Yugoslavia, it was noted, in 1955, by Admiral Arthur Radford, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, that 'the general Yugoslav tendency toward neutrality and possible rapprochement with the Soviet bloc' were factors that would 'increase the weakness in the southern flank of NATO' and if the Soviets penetrated Italy via the Ljubljana Gap it 'could result in: (1) turning of the NATO southern flank. (2) splitting Greece and Turkey and the Middle East from Western Europe. (3) facilitating Soviet access to the Mediterranean'.³⁸

In the case of Sweden, its strategic importance regarding the defence of the Scandinavian region is clearly visible in a policy statement circulated by State Department officials as early as the summer

36 Trachtenberg, Marc: 'la formation du système de défense occidentale: les Etats-Unis, la France et MC 48', in Maurice Vaïsse, Pierre Mélandri and Frédéric Bozo: *La France et l'OTAN, 1949–1996* Complexe, Paris 1996, p. 116. I would like to thank Professor Marc Trachtenberg, University of California at Los Angeles, for bringing this to my attention.

37 The State Department document is cited in Borhi, László: *Hungary in the Cold War, 1945–1956: Between the United States and the Soviet Union* Central European Press University, Budapest 2004, p. 8; for Austria's importance to the defence of the Italian frontier, NATO's southern flank and its central sector, see James Jay Carafano, *Waltzing into the Cold War: The Struggle for Occupied Austria* Texas A&M University Press, College Station, TX 2002, p. 152; Nuti, Leopoldo: 'Comment on the 1965 Warsaw Pact War Game Exercise', http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/coll_wargame/comment_nuti.cfm?navinfo=16606, accessed 1 Dec 2008; and Memorandum by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Radford) to the Secretary of Defense (Wilson), 9 December 1953, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952–1954, Germany and Austria*, Volume VII, Part II US Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 1986, pp. 1932–3.

38 Admiral Radford's observations are cited from Memorandum from the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Radford) to the Secretary of Defense (Wilson), 25 May 1955, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955–1957, Central and Southeastern Europe*, Vol. XXVI US Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 1992, pp. 4–5; For the importance of the defence of Yugoslavia and, in particular, the Ljubljana Gap to the security of southeastern Europe and NATO's southern flank, see, for example, Memorandum of Conversation, by the Director of the Office of Western European Affairs (Byington), 22 October 1953,

of 1949. The document's authors noted that Sweden held a key position on the north-western flank of the USSR and regarding the Baltic Sea and the Danish Straits. The conclusion was drawn that a Soviet attack on Sweden 'could not fail to create the most serious effects for' Washington. One of the upshots being that a Soviet-occupied Sweden 'would render infinitely more difficult any future defense of those countries [Norway and Denmark]'.³⁹ As Mikael Nilsson has pointed out, these officials 'more or less anticipated' that American military assistance to Sweden would be required in the event of a Soviet attack.⁴⁰ It can thus be inferred from this document that the US

unilateral security guarantee was gradually beginning to take shape and it became even firmer before the end of the Truman administration.

In March 1952, and only a few months after the approval of NSC 121, a new policy document regarding Scandinavia, the US Intelligence Advisory Committee (IAC) produced National Intelligence Estimate-49, 'Sweden's Position in the East-West Conflict'.⁴¹ This document is of particular interest since it is one of the few that illuminates the US intelligence community and defence establishment's thinking with regard to Sweden's strategic importance as well as the role it could

Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952–1954, Eastern Europe; Soviet Union; Eastern Mediterranean, Vol. VIII US Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 1988, p. 325; Memorandum of Conversation, by the Deputy Director of the Office of Greek, Turkish, and Iranian Affairs (Baxter), 30 October 1953, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952–1954, Eastern Europe; Soviet Union; Eastern Mediterranean*, Vol. VIII US Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 1988, p. 854; Lorraine M. Lees: *Keeping Tito Afloat: The United States, Yugoslavia, and the Cold War* Pennsylvania State University Press, University Park, PA 1997, p. 173.

39 Policy Statement of the Department of State, 15 August 1949, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1949, Western Europe*, Vol. IV, US Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 1975, p. 773.

40 Nilsson, Mikael: *Tools of Hegemony: Military Technology and Swedish-American Security Relations 1945–1962* Santérus, Stockholm 2007, p. 391. See also Widén, *Väktare, ombud, kritiker*. It is interesting to note that this sentiment was echoed by John Moors Cabot, the US Ambassador to Sweden (1954–1957), who, in 1955, noted that a 'partial or complete occupation' of Sweden à la Denmark in 1940, or the Kremlin being allowed to transit troops across Sweden, like the Germans in the Second World War, would be 'disastrous' and was likely to mean 'knocking Norway and Denmark out of the war with all the further consequences that would then ensue'. Ambassador Cabot to Livingston Merchant, 1 July 1955, RG 59, Records of Ambassador John M. Cabot, 1945–1963, Box 1, Folder 2, Lot File 81 D 402, NARA 2.

41 The intelligence organisations of the Departments of State, the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, the JCS along with the CIA were the authors of this assessment. National Intelligence Estimate-49, 'Sweden's Position in the East-West Conflict', 20 March 1952, www.foia.cia.gov, accessed 1 Dec 2008. See also Moores, Simon and Widén, Jerker: 'Sverige under det kalla kriget – den amerikanska underrättelsetjänstens perspektiv, mars 1952' [Sweden during the Cold War – The American Intelligence Service's Perspective, March 1952], *KKrVAHT* 5. häftet, 2003, pp. 78–92.

play in the defence of Scandinavia. The document's authors believed that in the event of war the likely main objective for both Washington and Moscow would be to control the air and naval bases and radar sites along the Norwegian coastline. It was felt that Sweden, due to its strategic location and military capacity, could 'be of critical importance to Norway's defense'.⁴² What the IAC would then go on to state deserves to be quoted in full:

While Sweden's strategic importance to the NATO powers is primarily defensive, once these powers were strong enough to defend the Scandinavian peninsula (and perhaps Denmark), Sweden would have potential value as a base for offensive air and perhaps eventually naval and amphibious operations against the Soviet Baltic flank. The logistical difficulties of supplying NATO forces in Sweden in the face of probable Soviet local air superiority in the Baltic area would doubtless limit NATO use of bases in Sweden itself, but the valuable Norwegian coastal bases could be protected and Soviet egress from the Baltic made more hazardous.⁴³

This above excerpt from NIE-49 contains a number of interesting revelations. First, it clearly spelt out that once the NATO powers had the military capacity they

would 'defend the Scandinavian peninsula' [read: Norway and Sweden]. So, already in 1952, the US intelligence community and military establishment regarded it as just a matter of time before Sweden would be enjoying the protection afforded by the NATO security umbrella. Second, the IAC envisaged that there would be 'logistical difficulties of supplying NATO forces in Sweden'. This can be seen as an admission that the IAC foresaw NATO forces in the event of war actually operating on Swedish soil. More evidence of this then follows when it is pointed out that 'probable Soviet local air superiority in the Baltic area would doubtless *limit* NATO use of bases in Sweden' (emphasis added). It is interesting to note the use of the word 'limit'. The IAC appeared here to have considered NATO's use of bases on Swedish territory as restricted, but still part of the military equation. Finally, the IAC felt that with NATO being able to use bases in Sweden 'the valuable Norwegian bases could be protected'.⁴⁴ This shows that the IAC saw a direct link between the defence of Sweden and Norway: defending the former on its own soil would, in turn, increase the latter's security and keep its military bases out of the hands of the Kremlin.

Conclusion

With regard to the unilateral US security

⁴² Ibid (National Intelligence Estimate-49), p. 4.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

guarantee contained in Paragraph 28 of NSC 6006/1, there is due to the paucity of documents currently available on the subject no one single document that clearly spells out the reason for its inclusion. However, a careful reading of other declassified US documents suggests that Sweden's strategic importance to the defence of its NATO neighbours was the primary reason for the codification of a unilateral security guarantee that was already in its infancy before the Polaris programme had even begun.⁴⁵ During the NSC's discussion of Paragraph 28, in April 1960, President Eisenhower called upon those present to consider the positions of the Scandinavian countries and Europe, if the Soviets attacked Sweden. In light of this request a State Department study from September 1960 noted that to keep this strategically important region out of the paws of the Soviet bear would require the defence of Sweden.⁴⁶ As has already been shown in 1949 the US State Department foresaw the need to furnish Sweden with military assistance in the event of a Soviet attack; non-action would have seen Washington facing an uphill struggle to protect Norway and Denmark.

Moreover, before the end of the Truman administration, the US intelligence community and defence establishment viewed not only Sweden as a future de facto beneficiary of NATO's security umbrella, but also Norway's security as being increased with the defence of Sweden. Research has also shown that, like Sweden, Austria and Yugoslavia would have received US military assistance if the Soviets launched an attack given that they were deemed crucial to the defence of NATO's central sector and southern flank.

If, on the other hand, we look at the second of Bruzelius' bold hypotheses it appears to have fallen at the first hurdle. As has been argued here and in other articles, his first hypothesis, 'only based on mathematical calculations and technical characteristics of the Polaris system', has been unable to demonstrate that the US Polaris submarines ever carried out (or even planned to carry out) their deterrent patrols off the west coast of Sweden.⁴⁷ In this article, not only have new sources added to the growing weight of evidence that points to the US Polaris submarines actually having operated in the Norwegian Sea and the Atlantic Ocean, but also it has

45 According to Bruzelius, the Polaris programme was given the all clear to develop in December 1956. *Op. cit.* footnote 2, p. 27.

46 US Policy Toward Scandinavia (Denmark, Norway and Sweden), Secret [undated], Appendix C to Memorandum for the National Security Council, 'US Policy Toward Scandinavia (Denmark, Norway and Sweden), 12 October 1960, Executive Office of the President (NSC), Secret, RG 59, Records relating to State Department Participation in the Operations Coordinating Board and the NSC, 1947-1963, Lot File 63D 351, Vol. 99, NARA 2. See also *Op. cit.* footnote 4, p. 81.

47 See *Op. cit.* footnote 3, pp. 63-9, citation from p. 68; Moores and Widén, 'En djärv tes utan empiriskt stöd', pp. 71-85.

been noted that the key document used by Bruzelius to support his hypothesis has, in fact, been misinterpreted. Contrary to what Bruzelius has previously claimed, the writers of this document did not state that US Polaris submarines were to operate off the west coast of Sweden. Given what we now know it seems inconceivable that US policymakers would have furnished Sweden with a unilateral security guarantee in order to increase the security of the Polaris submarines' deployment area off the west coast of Sweden seeing as they were not going to patrol in this stretch of water.

Even if we leave Bruzelius' first hypothesis to one side, there are, as this article has highlighted, still a number of fundamental flaws in the second hypothesis, the biggest one being that only one single document used to support his claim even mentions the word 'Polaris', and even then not in conjunction with the unilateral security guarantee. Logic would suggest that with no trace of Polaris to be found in the US documents there must then be another reason for the unilateral security guarantee. However, Bruzelius subscribes to the 'too-sensitive-to-be-written-down-on-paper' school of thinking and, in doing so, draws his conclusions from what is not in the documents – a very dubious methodology to say the least. Still, it has been revealed using primary sources that Polaris had been openly discussed by the NSC, not just on other occasions, but also at the very same

NSC meeting which looked at US policy towards Scandinavia. This means that Polaris was certainly not such a well-kept secret, as Bruzelius would have us believe. Moreover, it has been possible, again using primary sources, to put forward a plausible alternative explanation for Rear Admiral Raborn's briefing at the State Department, which Bruzelius, in his future research, will need to closely examine before claiming that it was about the unilateral security guarantee. And although no similar security guarantees à la Paragraph 28 in NSC 6006/1 have been found for the other non-aligned European countries, published research has nevertheless shown that the US was indeed prepared to offer military assistance to both Austria and Yugoslavia in the event of a Soviet attack. Thus, Bruzelius' claim that Sweden was unique in that it was the only non-aligned European country that would receive military assistance due to Washington needing to protect its Polaris submarines off the west coast of Sweden is seriously undermined. In light of all the flaws which have been highlighted in this article, Bruzelius' earlier audacious claim that his research findings mean as a consequence that 'Swedish post-war history has to be rewritten' seems very premature, especially given that, in their present form, his hypotheses can be consigned to the realms of Cold War fiction.⁴⁸

I am grateful to Jerker Widén, researcher at the Swedish National Defence College, and Sara Collmar for their insightful comments.

48 Bruzelius, Nils:*Döden vid Vinga*, Pennan & Svärdet, No 5A, Stockholm 2007, p. 15.

The author is a freelance researcher. In 2005 he completed his PhD entitled "Neutral on Our Side": US-Swedish Military and Security relations during the Eisenhower Administration at the London School of Economics and Political Science.