



Scandinavian Journal of  
Public Administration  
Vol. 29 No. 3 (2025)  
p. 32 - 49

DOI:  
[https://doi.org/10.58235/sipa\\_34390](https://doi.org/10.58235/sipa_34390)

# Essential Security Interest: Challenges to Ammunition Security of Supply in Sweden

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## Abstract

Collaboration between the state and the defense industry has long been seen as critical for national security. Nonetheless, scholarly studies on state defense industry relations (SDIR) are still limited in the field of public policy and administration. This article provides an empirical analysis and national case study of SDIR. Through process tracing methods and analysis of official documents and interviews transcripts, the case study investigates how the issue of ammunition security of supply (SoS) became prominent on the Swedish government's agenda. The case is examined with a Multiple Streams Analysis (MSA) offering insights into policymaking and agenda-setting. The study makes at least three contributions: It addresses the need for bridging public policy and defense and security studies; it adds more empirical research on SDIR to defense and policy studies; and it offers lessons on how states can navigate security concerns in volatile times.

**Keywords:**  
state-defense industry  
relations;  
security of supply;  
policymaking;  
multiple streams analysis

## Practical Relevance

- States need to nurture their relations with companies engaging in national security and safety. A long-term perspective is required for expedient relations between the state and the defense industry.
- Ammunition security of supply (SoS) put state values at stake. Limited security of supply increases the need for the state to share the costs of ensuring reliable access.
- States should identify other areas and goods that may face supply chain disruptions and therefore require careful and long-term policymaking and planning.
- Prerequisites for coupling problems, policy and politics improve if policy entrepreneurs on both sides of the public-private divide collaborate.
- In times of geopolitical rivalry and remilitarization, cross-fertilization between public policy and administration and defense and security studies is essential. Policy perspectives can help evaluate choice in security and defense policy and guide balanced and prudent navigation of the complex value conflicts inherent in the field.

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Article first published as an article in press: May 14, 2025  
Article published in Vol. 29 No. 3: September 24, 2025

## Introduction

How do government and industry work together to foster security in times of normalcy and crisis? Indeed, the relationship between the state and the defense industry has for long been considered vital for national security (DeVore 2017; DeVore & Weiss 2014; Kirkpatrick 2008; Gupta 1997; Weber et al. 1991). The defense industry provides the means for the state to fulfil its security responsibilities. Hence, states need expedient relations between government and industry to effectively promote security (Vestner 2023; Calcara & Marchetti 2022). The state needs reliable sources of weaponry to remain secure, and expedient state-defense industry relations (SDIR) is key to maintaining *security of supply* (SoS), understood as supply sufficient for the state “to discharge its defense and security commitments in accordance with its foreign and security policy requirement” (EU guidance note 2016). Given the crucial nature of SDIR, it is surprising that the topic has only gained limited attention in the field of public policy and administration (Heidenkamp et al. 2013; Calcara 2017). Academic writing on SDIR has primarily been carried out in the field of defense economics focusing on e.g. cost benefit analysis of actual production (Lundmark 2011; Hartley 2011). Recently, however, the return to geopolitics has increased broader scholarly analyses on policy connections to SDIR (Calcara & Marchetti 2022; DeVore 2019). Most of these studies, however, focus on transnational cooperation within the EU. Fiott analyzed how transnational defense cooperation in the EU developed in the early 2000’s and how governments and industry use EU institutions to amplify national interests (Fiott 2019: 136; 140). Brattberg & Valasek (2019) argued that challenges to expedient relations become particularly pronounced in uncertain times when collaboration and partnership between states and defense industries are even more essential. Calcara & Marchetti (2022) dealt with European cyber security governance and suggested three types of SDIR distinguished by government protection, public-private integration and agency-industry autonomy. Hence, recent scholarship has explored theoretical implications on EU institutions and SDIR. But theory development is still restrained due to a lack of empirical contributions and national case studies (Calcara 2017). This study addresses this research gap by shedding light on a process of national SDIR.

The Swedish case of ammunition SoS is strategically selected. Sweden hosts one of Europe’s most sophisticated defense industries (Lundmark 2022: 399). Traditionally, Swedish SDIR was designed as a public governance ecosystem which, after the cold war, turned into a market oriented private governance ecosystem (Lundberg & Rova 2021). The prevailing system thus draws primarily on procurement, rather than on public private partnership (PPP), understood as a durable cooperative institutional arrangement between public and private actors that rests on jointly developed products or services and shared risks, costs, and resources (Van Ham & Koppenjan 2001; Hodge & Greve 2007). Contrary to PPP arrangements, traditional procurement processes entail a relative neglect of joint development and risk sharing between partners (Wang et al. 2017). The Swedish industry, moreover, is highly internationalized, which also adds complexity to the discussion on SDIR.

In light of the above, the purpose of this study is to address the research gap regarding the lack of empirical studies and national case studies on SDIR in the realm of public policy and administration, and in so doing, present a case study of policy making in the Swedish defense sector focused on the interplay between the defense industry and the national government, the Ministry of Defense and the two main defense authorities in terms of military supply chains – the defense procurement agency (FMV) and the Swedish Armed Forces. The study focuses on ammunition security of supply (SoS), which is an appropriate specialization when engaging with SDIR. Firstly, as ammunition is a *sine qua non* of kinetic war and defense, and secondly as it is an example of a modern complex policy problem requiring transboundary collaboration over public-private, military-civilian and national-international divides.

The practicalities of the case include tracing the process of national policymaking in relation to ammunition SoS by zooming in on the government decision to make exceptions for ammunition in military procurement due to essential security interests (ESI) in June 2023. The agenda setting process is back tracked from the decision by a process tracing method (Beach & Pedersen 2019) based on official documents and key informant interviews. The empirical data is further analyzed through a Multiple Streams Analysis (MSA), which provides a systematic

way of explaining policy making and agenda setting processes without neglecting situational contexts (Bolukbasi & Yildrim 2022; Cairney & Jones 2016). Since John Kingdon presented the Multiple Streams Framework (MSF) as an analytical approach some four decades ago, it has been applied to many empirical, sectoral and geographical contexts (Jones et al. 2016; Rawat & Morris 2016). Research applying MSF to defense and security policy, however, is still rare (see Mazarr 2007 for an exception), as are studies on military, defense and national security at large in policy scholarship (Archuleta 2016; Mayland 2024).

The analysis is guided by the following research question: How did the issue of ammunition SoS become prominent on the Swedish government agenda? After the empirical analysis, we move on to the discussion and conclusion, where we examine the insights this case offers on how states can enhance security in times of stability and crisis.

## Previous Research

Below is a short exposé of previous research needed to situate the study. It includes reviews of the literature on SDIR and agenda setting in the field of policy studies.

### State defence industry relations

Relations between the state and defense industry differ from relations between government and other areas of the business sector (Fevolden & Tvetbråten 2016). Governments or authorities representing national states are the only legal subjects permitted to buy materiel required for war and the state holds a regulative role affecting the relation. The defense industry has an oligopolist structure and outlook. Obstacles related to finance, technology, and expertise make new market entries arduous and rare. Hence, only a few firms maintain special relationships with the government (Calcara 2017: 529).

Relations between the state and the defense industry are not well understood in policy and defense studies due to the fragmentation and preferences of the literature. For instance, Military Industrial Complex (MIC) research focuses on tight intra-state connections between policymaker, military and industry elites, and mostly within a US context (Ledbetter 2011). Relations are seen as heavily integrated, and arms policy is assumed to be driven by these coalitions without democratic insight or control (Kolodziej 1987). In essence, the MIC is a shorthand for a powerful set of actors with vested interests in high military spending (Dunne & Sköns 2014). This literature has been criticized for being polemically driven and under-theorized (Calcara 2017: 259; Lundmark 2011).

SDIR are also discussed in the field of civil-military relations (CMR), focusing on interactions between political elites and top-level military leadership (Brooks, 2019: 380). This strand of the literature pays attention to how government maintains control over the military (Huntington 1957; Brooks 2019). The CMR tradition has faced criticism for overlooking relational dynamics inherent in everyday activities (Deiaco 2024: 29) and for placing too much emphasis on "unique military features", portraying the military and defense as exceptional, even though many other professional fields and policy areas also hold distinctive characteristics (Christiansson 2020: 45).

Other scholars engage in theorizing on SDIR by emphasizing institutional factors (Matelly & Lima, 2016, Lundmark, 2011; Serfati 2001). In a recent review of SDIR literature, Calcara & Marchetti reveal SDIR patterns distinguished by national institutional factors such as the degree of protection by the government, interpenetration between public and private sector networks, and status and autonomy of procurement agencies from industry influence. From these categories, they design two governance ecosystems that help explain variations in SDIR (Calcara & Marchetti 2022: 1255). The public governance ecosystem is characterized by a high degree of government protection (not least through ownership or control of industries and preference to domestic suppliers), a high degree of interpenetration between public and private actors (revolving door policy with close relations, and little restrictions regarding career movements between sectors), and an intimate relationship between public procurement agencies and the industry. The market oriented private governance ecosystem, on the other hand, is characterized by low degree of government protection (regulated by competitive procurement

contracts and no preference policies regarding suppliers), low levels of interpenetration between public and private actors and arm's length relationship between public procurement agencies and the private sector, with low levels of inter-sectorial career path mobility (ibid: 1240-1241).

When categorized according to the logic presented above, Sweden is placed in the market oriented private governance ecosystem (Calcara 2020), albeit career mobility is not unusual. Swedish defense procurement is delegated to a detached and specialized defense procurement agency (FMV) operating independently under the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and responsible for major equipment acquisitions. One distinguishing factor is how agencies relate to possibilities and obstacles provided by the regulative environment. In the context of Western democracies, SDIR face challenges due to EU public tendering rules restricting preferential treatment for national companies, by national procurement norms echoing a time of regional peace, and by global trade norms such as just-in-time delivery and global market competition (Heidenkamp et al. 2013).

### **Public policy studies and agenda setting**

A vital part of public policy studies is dedicated to understanding and explaining mechanisms leading to policy change (Sabatier 1988; 2007; Weible & Sabatier 2014; Petridou et al. 2021). This study's focus on how a policy community engages in alternative specification, interest and choice, justifies a public policy and agenda-setting approach. Two basic schools of thought have informed the public policy research agenda (Durnova & Weible 2020; Newman 2017). The first is a functionalist, rationalist and neo-positivist research movement aimed at unearthing explanatory causal mechanism driving agency to push certain solutions (Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Sabatier 2007). Such lenses have increased knowledge on drivers of policy stability and change. In later decades, a critical interpretive school has challenged the neopositivists by emphasizing the unruliness and complexity of policy processes and delimiting rational methods as the only way to form policy (Stone 2012). These lenses question the fundamentals of governing by emphasizing the power of narrative and interpretation (Bacchi 2009). According to the critical school, policymaking is depicted as a struggle over meaning and interpretation (Fischer 1998).

This study applies a policy analysis framework that draws on both research agendas depicted above. The Multiple Streams Approach (MSA) was developed to explain how issues rise to prominence on the policy agenda under conditions of ambiguity (Herweg et al. 2023; Kingdon 1984). It does so by outlining a middle way between empiricism and interpretivism with a relatively loose metaphorical framework largely based on constructionist thinking and open to interpretive aspects (Winkel & Leipold 2016). The approach considers the influence of structure, agency *and* contingency, centering around three independent structural processes or "streams" of problems, policy solutions and politics that can come together to create opportunity for change, especially if a policy window opens and policy entrepreneurs take advantage of the opportunity while conditions are favorable (Kingdon 1984; 2003). Rather than being tangible entities, the streams are conceptual phenomena that capture different forces of structure, agency and contingency in shaping policy.

*Problems*, according to the MSA rationale, are whatever policy makers find problematic. Policy makers' attention to specific aspects of problems are created from indicators, focusing events such as crises, and feedback. These phenomena draw policymakers' attention to issues seen as problematic. The *policy stream* consists of civil servants, consultants, researchers and other interest-groups who form policy communities where likeminded individuals work together to suggest solutions to policy problems (Herweg et al. 2023: 34). The policy community is delimited by value acceptability, technical feasibility and limited resources (Jones et al. 2016), as its members enact softening up processes and proposes policy solutions (Zolnhofer et al. 2022; Herweg 2016: 132). The *political stream* consists of major political institutions such as government and parliament, along with interest groups and the national mood, defined as "a rather large number of people out in the country [...] thinking along certain common lines" (Kingdon 2003: 146). In the political stream interest and ideology are balanced and political support is determined.

*Policy entrepreneurs*, who are “not defined by their specific formal position” (Herweg et al. 2023: 39), are able to couple the streams and influence the agenda, especially when they can capitalize on *policy windows*, which may open in the problem or the political stream. Policy windows are contingent, albeit they can be more or less predictable (cf. disasters and crises or budgets and elections), relatively rare, and limited in time (Herweg et al. 2023). The MSA makes the assumption that, with support from elements outlined above, a problematic policy issue can become prominent on the government’s agenda (Zoelhofer et al. 2022).

In sum, the MSA sees agenda setting not an exercise in rationality or utility maximizing by actors where problems and solutions are presented according to a predetermined order. Rather political decision making is situational and messy. Kingdon uses the garbage can analogy to explain how a mixture of problems, solutions, participants, and opportunities can come together in a non-linear way (Kingdon 2003). When the opportunity presents itself, existing solutions can be fitted with a perceived problem (Herweg et al. 2023: 44). Stream independence is a key assumption situating the framework against overly rationalistic policy process theories that look upon problems and solutions as logically connected (Winkel & Leipold 2016).

The MSA is selected before other competing models as it is developed to explain the policy agenda-setting process by capturing the complexity and unpredictability of how issues gain attention and move onto the governmental agenda. Thus, it differs from other more linear models such as for instance the Punctuated Equilibrium Theory (Baumgartner & Jones 1993) or the Advocacy Coalition Framework (Sabatier 1988), which tend to focus on a specific part of the policy and agenda-setting mechanism. ACF’s and also PET’s explanatory power is considerable when engaging in cases of high politics and ideological and idea driven politics where two ideological sides struggle for political support for their ideas. Both models are useful when looking into the effects of such institutional friction. In the present case, however, ideological friction is not an important explanatory factor, which suggests we need a more dynamic model capturing the complexity, ambiguity and unpredictability of how issues gain attention and move onto the governmental agenda. The MSA does so by paying attention to the interplay of agency, institutions and contingency, which are all crucial in the present case.

## Method and Material

Scarcity of reliable data has been identified as a challenge for researchers interested in European defense industry matters (Giacomello & Preka 2023: 528). For this study of how the issue of ammunition SoS became prominent on the Swedish government’s agenda, we draw on policy documents and key informant interviews delivering firsthand impressions of processes difficult to get insight into.

Policy documents include government defense bills from 2000 to 2020. The defense bills are drafted by the government in collaboration with defense agencies and decided by parliament every fifth year. They are manifestations of national defense policy and its future development. Further, policy documents used in the study are parliamentary Defense Committee reports and government reports dealing with SDIR. These documents were collected from the official websites of the Swedish government or the Swedish parliament. Other policy documents were requested directly from the MoD. These include the actual decision to make exceptions for ammunition in military procurement due to ESI taken by the government on June 1, 2023 and other documents and reports that the decision referred to. A key document in this regard was a report (MoD 2021) conducted by representatives of three Swedish defense companies. Most of the content in this report, known in the defense supply chain domain as ‘The Ammunition Study’, was considered classified by the MoD. Hence, insights into the actual content of that document were obtained partly by key informant interviews.

Key informant interviews were carried out in two phases. The first phase in the spring of 2021 was aimed at mapping the policy community in the area of military supply chains and identifying respondents’ understanding of conditions, obstacles, and opportunities for the industry regarding defense materiel supply. The second phase in the spring of 2024 aimed specifically at mapping the process of agenda-setting of ammunition SoS. Thus, the 2021 interviews focused on mapping SDIR in the military supply chain domain, while the 2024

interviews aimed to uncover specific details regarding the security of supply of ammunition as a case that brought the industry into a closer partnership with the state, understood here as the government, the MoD, the and the central authorities for military supply chains FMV and SAF. In all, twelve interviews were conducted with 15 informants (see table 1). Access to informants was provided by the FOKUS research project. Informants were selected as they were central to the policymaking process under study.

Interviews took place at the informants' workplace, at the workplace of the researcher or remote due to geographical distance. Interviews lasted 41-88 minutes and they were recorded and transcribed. The interviews were semi-structured around themes drawn from the MSA, including mapping out the decision-making, problem representations, indicators, strategies, aims, consequences, risks, alternative specifications, solutions, stakeholders, challenges, reactions, and effects. All informants gave their consent to participate anonymously in the study before the interviews.

*Table 1. Overview of informant interviews*

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Informant 1, Business Development Director, defense company 4, 2021-06-03, 107 min.

Informant 2, CEO, defense company 4, 2021-06-03, 107 min.

Informant 3, Procurement Director, defense company 1, 2021-06-09, 53 min.

Informant 4, Head of Legal, defense company 1, 2021-06-03, 53 min.

Informant 5, Director Sales and Marketing, defense company 3, 2021-06-07, 85 min.

Informant 6, Company Lawyer, defense company 2, 2021-06-14, 48 min.

Informant 7, Senior Advisor logistics, FMV, 2021-06-15, 67 min.

Informant 8, Senior Chancery Officer, MoD, 2024-01-31, 41 min.

Informant 9, Strategic Advisor, FMV, 2024-02-16, 70 min

Informant 10, Business Developer, defense company 3, 2024-03-11, 61 min.

Informant 11, Chief Engineer, FMV, 2024-03-13, 88 min.

Informant 12, Logistics Representative, SAF, 2024-04-26, 56 min

Informant 13, Head of Strategy, defense company 1, 2024-06-18, 78 min

Informant 14 Head of Legal, defense company 1, 2024-06-18, 78 min

Informant 15, Senior Advisor, defense company 1, 2024-06-18, 78 min

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The documents and interview transcripts lay the empirical foundation for a chronological reconstruction of the policymaking process by a process tracing method. Process tracing was developed to trace intervening causal mechanisms in real life cases (Beach & Pedersen 2019; George & Bennett 2005). Hence, we do not try to establish causality as experimental designs in quantitative research. Instead, we intend to map out complex phenomena and processes, and generate rich, in-depth insight by tracing mechanisms triggered by several causes (Beach & Pedersen 2019: 3). The process tracing was followed up by detailed dissection and content analysis of the chronological processes. Content analysis is appropriate for reducing original texts by categorizing them according to similar meanings, and in so doing by extracting the most

vital parts from each text (Cho & Lee, 2014), without losing subtle or hidden textual meanings (Kuckartz, 2014). This entailed applying a predefined coding scheme operationalizing the key metaphorical MSA concepts, as outlined above, to the selected texts.

## Empirical Analysis

Below the Swedish case is contextualized by highlighting processes and events essential to the case. The next section delves into the MSA of how the issue of ammunition SoS became prominent on the Swedish government agenda leading up to the 2023 decision to invoke exceptions for ammunition procurement due to ESI arguments.

### Policy context

Sweden transformed its armed forces after the collapse of the Soviet Union (Petersson, 2011; Holmberg, 2015). In line with the 2000 and 2004 defense bills, SAF's mission changed from deterrence and territorial defense to expeditionary forces aimed at international peacekeeping (GB 2000: 30; GB 2005: 5). Security of supply became dimensioned for peace, not war. The 2009 defense bill concluded the military downscaling. Meanwhile, the national defense industry transformed in relation to the diminishing threat. During the Cold War, Swedish defense industry was state-owned, or state-subsidized but privately owned (Britz, 2010). Along with military downscaling policies close SDIR turned distanced. The defense industry shifted from a public governance ecosystem to a market oriented private governance ecosystem. State ownership was transferred to the private sector and to international firms (Lundmark 2022: 404). For instance, in 1998 the main Swedish producer of ammunition became a subsidiary of a Norwegian-Finnish firm (Lundberg et al. 2024).

Meanwhile the EU developed overarching regulations fueling inter-company competition. Article 346 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) was enacted on December 1, 2009, and integrated into the national Act on Procurement in the Fields of Defense and Security (LUFS) in 2011. The national act states that defense procurement foremost should take place through competition. There are no exceptions in directives or national procurement laws for contractual acquisitions made during heightened preparedness and ultimately during war. However, the state may invoke coercive requisition laws in the event of risk of war (GR2019: 48ff).

Essential Security Interest (ESI) is a key concept in procurement regulation, allowing governments to deviate from standard procedures regarding military material trade and production by approaching suppliers directly to protect ESI (GR 2022: 100). This is regulated in Article 346 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). Article 346 is not a catch all exclusion mechanism. It should only be used in exceptional cases and on a case-by-case basis (Randazzo 2014: 2). Deviations may be based on national security reasons such as sensitive information or SoS, not on economic reasons such as offsets or job protection (Fiott 2017: 407). Sweden defined its first ESI in combat aircraft, 2013, and the second in underwater capability, 2014 (Olsson 2021).

Russia's increasingly aggressive security policy in the 2000s prompted a parliamentary decision on reconsidering total defense planning in 2015 (GB 2015: 2). The 2015 bill introduced a shift in attitudes, breaking the trend of decreasing military funding. Initially, re-securitization was initiated through incremental reform (Wither 2020). Sweden kept to its a careful approach to ESI, although the 2020 defense bill added "integrity critical parts of command and control, such as sensors, tele warfare and crypto" as a third ESI (GB 2020: 119). In 2022, a government report stated that singling out parts of the defense as more critical than others was problematic, adding that: "Most European countries define essential security interests in a broader and more general manner". The report concluded that "The ability to [...] defend Sweden against armed attacks, constitutes a fundamental security interest for Sweden" (GR 2022: 199).

### A Multiple Streams Approach to Ammunition SoS

The June 1, 2023, government decision allows FMV to address a procurement offer directly to a Swedish or Nordic ammunition manufacturer. The decision enables long-term contracts, more

reliable deliveries for the state, and expanded production for the industry (Informant 8; 10). The analysis below is structured according to the main conceptual tools of the MSA, i.e. the problem stream, policy stream, political stream, policy window and policy entrepreneur.

### *The problem stream*

The decision to make exceptions from procurement laws for ammunition motivated by ESI, drew on indicators presented in policy reports and attention from contingent events (Holmström 2023; Informant 8). Foremost it responded to the return of geopolitics in European security, due to increasingly aggressive Russian security policies. Over time, focusing events interplayed, pushing the attention of policymakers to limited supplies and challenges to restocking. Interestingly, the 2008 Russo-Georgian war did not sufficiently converge the defense policy community's attention to instigate policy change. The shift came instead after the 2014 annexation of Crimea. As one industry informant stated: "After Crimea, people started thinking about things like security of supply" (Informant 15). The stance became noticeable in the 2015 defense bill, although the bill did not explicitly relate to the SoS concept. Instead, the key indicator was how the risk of war was assessed (Informant 8; 10). The 2015 bill stated that although "the threat of military attacks can never be completely ruled out [...] A direct military armed attack against Sweden remains unlikely" (GB 2015: 2). Remilitarization reform increased shortly thereafter. Further indicators were noted in the 2017 Defense Committee report (DCR 2017: 61), and the 2020 defense bill, which, unlike previous bills and reports, declared that an armed attack could not be ruled out (GB 2020: 26). The 2020 bill also emphasized the need to implement and strengthen "the war organization" (GB 2020: 28). This entailed the need to ramp up military planning to the needs of war, rather than peace, which in turn called for a shift in SoS policy.

Ramping up ammunition SoS became arduous. Ever since the 1990s, the state had disregarded national defense industry contracts and looked upon ammunition as any market commodity. FMV and SAF still purchased ammunition from the national industry according to the lowest market bid, but now it was getting complicated (Informant 8; 5). The market approach worked when global demand was limited. But when planning expanded to all preparedness levels amid heightened geopolitical threat levels, ensuring continued access to sufficient quantities of ammunition became increasingly challenging (Informant 8). This was first noticed at the SAF where the leadership began to argue for closer SDIR and more long-term planning for SAF and FMV regarding ammunition supply (Informant 12; Holmström 2022).

During this process, the Covid-19 pandemic became an important focusing event. The pandemic was a societal rather than military crisis. Still, it drew attention to SoS and preparedness challenges (GR 2022: 139; Informant 1; 7). The global spread of Covid-19 in 2020 and 2021 revealed the potential impact of crises on global trade flows and it brought the insight that states are not guaranteed delivery of requested commodities (Informant 2; 5; 13; 14). In the words of an informant from FMV:

People started to see this in a whole new way. They understood, 'Whoops! Global supply chains: [...] They're very easily disrupted by small things [...] and then the system collapses.' It's the small details that make the difference. And people didn't quite grasp that before (Informant 10).

Increased competition for limited components also led to political awareness of the problem. In 2020 the government commissioned an investigation to develop SDIR and suggested a new defense materiel supply strategy (GR 2022: 280). Meanwhile, SoS became increasingly emphasized in the government's regulatory letters to defense authorities (Informant 7; GD 2021). In January 2022, the Commander in Chief publicly acknowledged shortages in ammunition SoS, underlining that this had been communicated to the government ahead of recent defense bills (Holmström 2022).

The big push, however, came when Russia attacked Ukraine in February 2022. Supplies were already limited after decades of military downscaling, and now European governments engaged in EU-sanctioned scouring for donations to Ukraine, further diminishing supplies (Informant 11; 12). Maintaining military supplies to Ukraine coupled with restoring and increasing national contingency stocks, set the stage for a European ammunition supply chain crisis (Pfeifer & Nilsson 2023). As one informant at FMV admitted: "In the global world we've lived in for 30

years, ammunition availability has never been a limiting factor in the same way" (Informant 9). Ammunition suppliers, already limited in numbers, now struggled to ramp up production to meet demand (Informant 12). As a SAF informant mentioned:

It has shifted – the war in Ukraine is one of those cases that shows there's nothing more to procure.  
All suppliers produce at full capacity, but the order books are packed to the brim (Informant 12).

The war in Ukraine suggested that the old ways of organizing ammunition logistics supply through the market ecosystem, assuming the state could purchase from the global market by selecting the lowest bid, was no longer sufficient. The war also led policy makers and the public to align with the defense policy community's beliefs. Indicators increased in vocation with each focusing event and together they provided feedback arguing that the policy designed for peacetime and no external threat was no longer functional. Until February 2022, incremental change of total defense policy had been accepted (Wither 2020). The war in Ukraine, however, legitimized arguments for compressed time frames in scaling up ammunition supplies. Policy entrepreneurs in the defense community increasingly argued for making use of the policy window opened by the war. As one industry informant stressed: "Now we have five years. Five, ten years. Russia is weakened now. Now we can build up our capabilities" (Informant 10). In the government decision, similar references were made as e.g. increased production capacity was said to be "extremely urgent" (GD 2023: 2).

### *The Policy Stream*

The issue of ammunition SoS required alternative policy processes (cf. Alford & Head 2017). Complementing national, bilateral and international processes operated in overlapping policy communities. One such policy community focused broadly on defense logistics and on ways to organize "long-term ammunition supply in the event of crises and war" (Informant 15). This policy community consisted of senior government officers, researchers and industry representatives coming together to raise awareness on ammunition SoS. The community wanted rapid action in SAF, FMV and government. They wanted tightened bonds and improved SDIR in general, and SoS of ammunition in specific. They argued that government should "take action now or there is an evident risk that the activities of our ammunition industry will either decrease in scale or be relocated outside the country" (Ibid.). On that note they laid the groundwork for an investigation informally dubbed 'The Ammunition Study', which became a key softening up process for closer SDIR and for infusing alternative solutions to the contemporary ammunition procurement policy. The primary goal was to offer the industry's perspective on how to ensure SoS in ammunition in crisis and war (Informant 10; 11). As one of the instigators of the project recalled:

We didn't think investigations into the role of the business sector in total defense were perfect. It essentially ended with a number of questions and proposals for new investigations. At that point, we pondered ... this idea of... 'What can we do to help?' So, we came up with the idea of the Ammunition Study (Informant 5).

The initiative thus came from policy entrepreneurs in the industry. Two long-standing defense industry managers representing two different defense firms initiated the discussions (Informant 10; 15). To ensure legitimacy and impartiality they engaged a third firm. As an industry informant explained: "Now we have the entire Swedish ammunition industry on board. Now we can act as... well, the Swedish ammunition industries [...]" (Informant 15).

The industry representatives presented their idea to the liking of the relevant authorities, *viz.* FMV, SAF and MoD. FMV then placed the formal order to the companies (Informant 9; 10; 11; 15), which was to analyze and assess Swedish ammunition SoS and to outline alternative options for the state to improve it, e.g. by connecting to Norwegian and Finnish solutions (MoD 2021).

The group worked in a collaborative setting for about a year (Informant 9; 10). One participant described the process as "relatively frequent meetings between us and primarily FMV" (Informant 15). The final report was handed to the MoD in September 2021, and presented to FMV, the MoD, and SAF (Informant 9). The report suggested that the most appropriate SDIR model should be based on long-term commitment to SoS and long-term delivery contract agreements. According to an FMV official involved in the project, "It was very well received" (Ibid.). Another informant added: "It rose high on the agenda within the Armed

Forces as well, so there's a better understanding of the challenges, and we received more attention from senior leadership" (Informant 12). The 2023 government decision explicitly referred to the study as a basis for its recommendations (Informant 15; 10; GD 2023). As one informant pointed out: "One can assume that the study influenced the decision, or at least helped it along" (Informant 10). That said, twenty months elapsed between the submission of the report and the government decision (MoD 2021), indicating that the softening up process and specified alternatives were not sufficient for a decision.

A long-term contract agreement, as suggested by the Ammunition Study, implied making exceptions for ammunition due to ESI reasons. Designating ammunition supply as an ESI contrasted to Sweden's traditionally restrictive stance on ESIs. The Swedish government linked ESIs to the national industrial base, particularly combat aircraft and submarine production. Continuing such domestic manufacturing was seen as crucial (Informant 12). According to a SAF informant, the alternative to declare SoS of ammunition as Sweden's fourth ESI, would grant SAF and FMV greater flexibility in procurement. Distinct and longer contracts with parts of the industry would give the industry better conditions to increase and maintain capacity and consistent delivery (Informant 12). Besides the practicalities of direct procurement and long-term contracts, the decision also had symbolic value according to an informant from the industry:

It is an important signal to [defense company 3]. Particularly to [defense company 3], which has foreign owners, stating that we in Sweden, the Swedish state, see this as important. We will no longer say, 'Let's just go with the lowest price,' as we did until 2021, 2022. That's how things worked then. Now, however, there has been a shift. It's no longer up to individual authorities to decide. This is important for the nation (Informant 10).

The decision regarding long-term contracts also required renegotiating and clarifying the distribution of risk between the state and industry in scaling up production (Informant 15). As a result, the alternative would require the state to invest in the entire supply chain, not just its final stages. This necessitated a political decision with broader implications for how the state should prioritize limited resources.

### *The Political Stream*

The 2023 government decision was made within the Cabinet's given mandate (Informant 8). Hence, it was not deliberated upon by parties of varying ideologies in Parliament. It can be argued, however, that the decision was politically grounded in the deteriorating security situation, which had also influenced the 2015 and 2020 defense bills and the defense sector's political orientation to emphasize territorial defense and SAF's wartime needs. As a government official stated when interviewed: "Now our needs are defined by the war, not like previously during the expeditionary defense. And this naturally leads to questions about security of supply" (*Ibid.*). Further, SAF had increasingly presented proposals to the government, highlighting areas where it was difficult to rely on public procurement regulations. According to a SAF informant, the authority needed "an industrial base that can deliver over time [with] a significantly greater long-term perspective than seven-year contracts typically allowed under military procurement acts [LUFS]" (Informant 12). In line with this outlook, FMV sent a formal request to the MoD to allow exceptions from the law on military procurement in consideration of ESI on March 15, 2023 (Informant 8; FMV 2023).

Process tracing of the formal decision-making process implied a process limited in time. It involved joint preparation within the Government Office's Legal Secretariat and the Ministry of Finance's Public Procurement Unit (Informant 8). As a result, the MoD requested FMV to complement the request with more clarity and on May 17 a new request reached the Government Offices. The government decision that followed argued for the selected option and explicitly claimed there were few, if any, alternatives. The government e.g. claimed that "To fulfil the essential security interest in the event of a crisis or war, it is necessary to have domestic production of ammunition" (GD 2023: 4) and that "exceptions from legislation is the only way to ensure [...] procurement at various levels of preparedness [...] taking into account the necessary urgency" (GD 2003: 3).

The government decision also stated that “the only reasonable option is to carry out procurements with industries already established in Sweden or the Nordic countries” (GD 2023: 2). This entailed that the seemingly hasty agenda-setting process was coupled to a lingering process of Nordic defense materiel cooperation by policy entrepreneurs at the MoD and FMV. The 2023 decision explicitly claimed that procurement with “in Sweden or the Nordic countries already existing industry [is] the only reasonable alternative” (GD 2023: 2). Nordic cooperation was prioritized as the main Swedish ammunition company is a subsidiary in a Norwegian Finnish ownership structure with the Norwegian state as the majority owner. This, in turn, reduced the Swedish government's maneuverability. The level of integration of the ammunition industry in the Nordic countries meant that specifying alternatives to the problem of ammunition SoS required a Nordic collaborative effort. A Nordic collaborative SoS process was pushed by policy entrepreneurs at FMV. Steppingstones included the NORDEFKO agreements of 2009 and 2015 (Informant 8; 9; SÖ 2017:2) and the 2019 SoS annex agreement (NORDEFKO++) signed by the governments of Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Denmark stating six supplement agreements (Informant 8; 9). According to an FMV informant involved in the process, Finland's delegation proposed ammunition as one of the supplements: “We quickly agreed that if the Finns, who are better off than the rest of us, [...] suggest the idea of cooperating in a Nordic context on ammunition, then we should follow that lead” (Informant 9).

Thus, governments in the Nordic countries were politically committed to building SoS together, with ammunition as the first focus area (Informant 12), and this paved the way for further agreements on agency level (Informant 9). In August 2022, a strategic partnership agreement was signed (Informant 10; MoD 2022: 4). The Nordic way of organizing SoS of ammunition was also emphasized in FMV's initial request to the MoD with references to how Norway and Finland had signed long term contracts on ammunition SoS by direct procurement due to ESI (FMV 2023: 2).

How then did the national mood play into the decision? While the specific issue of ammunition SoS had not provoked much debate, the overarching idea of territorial defense, total defense and military preparedness struck a chord in the national spirit. A few weeks after the decision, national news reported on the shortage of ammunition and the ESI decision in connection to an interview with the SAF Chief of Operations (Holmström 2023). Six months later, the Minister of Defense emphasized the importance of ammunition SoS at a major defense policy conference. Nonetheless, there was no real political debate, indicating that ideological party-political camps were united in prioritizing ammunition SoS. Ideology and interests seemed to play a limited role in the decision. Ever since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, party politics had been downplayed in territorial defense issues. Defense policy reports released after 2022 implied a broad and previously unseen level of political unity on strengthening total defense and SoS policies and increasing military funding (cf. DCR 2023). According to census research, support for increased defense funding was at an all-time high in 2023 (Ydén et al. 2024: 136), indicating that the government and defense agencies made use of the policy window created by the war in Ukraine. The war was explicitly referred to as a motivation to the decision and for increasing the need for sustainable ammunition supply in peace, crisis and war.

## Discussion

The analysis of how the issue of ammunition SoS became prominent on the Swedish government's agenda shows how agency, structure and contingency interplayed as agenda setting mechanisms. The issue of ammunition SoS became noticed as a policy problem following political shifts due to structural change in the international security landscape. The issue became more prominent on the Swedish government's agenda as focusing events, including the annexation of Crimea, the Covid-19 pandemic and not least the Russo-Ukrainian war, opened policy windows for policy entrepreneurs from the industry and the public sector to initiate softening up processes and couple the streams. In an effort of policy entrepreneurial collaboration across the public-private divide, alternatives to the dominant procurement policy were suggested. Meanwhile, the government's options were limited by ownership structures restricting solutions to those involving transnational Nordic collaboration. Structures thus

delimited the government's maneuverability (cf. Winkel & Leipold 2016), while contingencies opened policy windows for policy entrepreneurs from defense authorities and the industry.

What lessons then can this study disclose on how states can foster security in times of normalcy and crisis? Firstly, the study shows that strong institutional and decentralized systems, such as the Swedish one, tend to cloud the visibility of who the exact policy entrepreneurs are. This finding echoes the claim by Bolukbasi and Yildrim (2022: 51) that "Institutions inevitably filter who gets to play the role of policy entrepreneurs, their strategies and chances for success". The strong institutional setting also had repercussion as entrepreneurs who represented agencies and firms rather than the political level became central to the coupling of the streams. There are at least two reasons why the issue primarily was dealt with on the agency level. First, the institutional structures are of importance yet again. National authorities are relatively independent from the Government Offices and tasked to deal with problems occurring in their practical field. Second, there was little motivation for political elites to make politics of ammunition SoS, as support for enforcing total defense and supplying Ukraine with weaponry was high.

The analysis moreover underlines the importance of sharing risks and rewards in public private collaboration (Wang et al. 2017). When SoS of ammunition is at risk, grand values are at play for the state, but not necessarily for the industry. While the state was struggling to get access to a key defense commodity, the industry could turn to its established customers in international markets. This predicament on account of the state, emphasized the need of moving towards a PPP model with long term contracts and shared resources and risks. The Swedish case provides an example of how government and the private sector can work together to foster security in volatile times by sharing risk and resources. Analyzing these potential implications further highlights the value of policy entrepreneur collaboration. Prerequisites for entrepreneurial collaboration were strengthened as the involved parties shared similar experiences and outlooks. Policy entrepreneurs on both sides of the public private divide had previous experiences of SAF vocation and training (Informant 1; 5; 7; 11). Indeed, industry entrepreneurs related first to their company, but they were also invested in national defense. Previous research has shown that working together for the same goal is required for expedient collaboration (Agranoff & McGuire, 2003: 4). In line with these findings, the study demonstrates how SDIR can benefit from cross-sector collaboration and entrepreneurial initiative.

Arguably the most explicit feature of the study was the role of the policy window opened for increased SDIR by the focusing event of the war in Ukraine. Suddenly the short-term commodity of ammunition became strategic. The sudden change impacted on the SoS of ammunition and the government received feedback regarding the need for the state to invest in the entire supply chain, not just the latter part of it. Such investments are costly, however, and need to be balanced against other essential state tasks and interests. Analyzing such value conflicts calls for research that can cross fertilize defense and security studies with lenses from public administration and public policy. Theoretical lenses that bring issues of public value, interest and ethics to the fore (Rutgers 2008: van der Wal 2016) are beneficial when investigating the defense and security policy domain as it is permeated by value conflict.

The analysis also demonstrates the importance of adaptability in security and defense policy. Essential values are at stake in this policy field, emphasizing the importance of persistent work, adaptability and reimagining in the face of rapidly emerging threats. The policy process analyzed here shows how a prolonged process can be reinvigorated if conducive contextual factors align and if agents act to grease the wheels. Furthermore, adaptability became manifest as the alternative to the current policy caught on. This entailed moving away from the market oriented private governance ecosystems in the area of ammunition, back towards a previously experienced public governance ecosystem (cf. Calcaro & Marchetti 2022). This shift, however, can be understood as a relatively short-term solution, and one that does not necessarily deal with the root of the SoS problem, *viz.* limited state control of an essential security interest in volatile times.

## Conclusion

This study answered the scholarly call of e.g. Calcara (2017) and Heidenkamp et al. (2013) to add empirical work to the field of SDIR. The purpose of the study was to address the research gap regarding empirical studies on national cases of SDIR in the realm of public policy and administration and in so doing, present an empirical study of policy making in the Swedish defense sector. To that end, a process tracing of the Swedish government 2023 decision to make exceptions from procurement regulations for ammunition due to ESI was conducted. This defense policymaking process was further analyzed through a Multiple Streams Analysis intended to explain how the issue of ammunition security of supply emerged as a political issue and subsequently gained traction on the Swedish government's agenda. Applying the MSA to the case of ammunition SoS in Sweden also served to bridge public policy and administration and defense and security studies (cf. Archuleta 2016).

Guided by the MSA's main metaphorical concepts, the analysis delivered a detailed account of how the issue of ammunition SoS became prominent on the government's agenda. The MSA tenets were helpful in this regard, assessing the relative influence and interplay of agency, structure and contingency, including the former's room to maneuver due to restraints and possibilities formed by the latter (Winkel & Leipold 2016).

The analysis highlights the importance of states fostering strong relationships with companies involved in national security and safety. In times of volatility, limited state control over essential security interests poses a significant vulnerability, increasing the risk of dependence on external powers and foreign influence. This is a predicament for the state, rather than for the industry. The case study of Swedish ammunition SoS demonstrates how a move from market-oriented policy to stronger institutional policy, including public-private partnership arrangements, serve as crucial mechanisms to mitigate these challenges. The findings, moreover, underscore the necessity of a broader governmental perspective to proactively identify other sectors and commodities at risk due to supply chain constraints. There may well be other areas or goods in need of prudent and long-term political decision-making and the case of ammunition security of supply can serve as a catalyst for such inquiries.

This empirical account of agenda-setting in Swedish defense policy further demonstrated the conceptual richness of policy theories and potential advantages of bridging the scholarly fields of public policy and administration studies and defense and security studies. Policy theories shed light on important democratic aspects of policy making such as public value, power, interest, and agency, and this is especially useful in turbulent political environments where multiple interests converge (Kingdon 2003). Further, as previous research into military influence has found, the return to geopolitics in defense policy and the war in Ukraine challenge societies in terms of fiscal priorities, military production, public discourse and societal views (Kofroň & Stauber, 2023; Bayer et al. 2023). This real-world development produces a vital call to scholars to shed light on defense policy and governance processes that traditionally have only been given limited attention and insight and where consequently data has been scattered and inconsistent (Giacomello & Preka 2023). Hopefully, this study can inspire future research to engage with the lack of cross fertilization between the fields of public policy and administration and defense and security studies. Broader perspectives from public policy and administration are needed to evaluate choice in security and defense policy and to benefit prudent and balanced navigation among the significant value conflicts inherent to the field.

## Acknowledgments/Funding

This research is financed by the Knowledge Foundation (grant number 20200004). The author would like to thank Dan Hansén, Martin Lundmark, Susanne Hertz and two anonymous reviewers for constructive feedback that helped improve the manuscript.

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