

Abstract

This thesis examines the military neutrality of Austria and Sweden in response to the developments following the Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022. It focuses primarily on the differences that can be observed in the two countries in response to these developments, which ultimately led to the divergent decisions of these until recently long-standing neutralities. The thesis seeks to answer the research question of why some countries are now leaving neutrality and others are not. Using the comparative study method, the thesis analyzes and compares the current foreign policies of the two countries and looks for specific differences.

The comparison shows that Sweden is more existentially threatened by Russia than Austria, that the Swedish domestic political debate is more supportive of NATO membership than Austria's, both at the level of political parties and public opinion, and that elements of Swedish identity such as solidarity and belonging with Finland have led Sweden out of the neutral camp. Among these reasons, the thesis observes the interplay and thus the limitation of the potential to be independent of sufficient conditions for leaving neutrality, naming specific similarities.