

# “Punching above their weight”

*An analysis of small states’ leverage in the case of  
Syria in the UN Security Council*

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# Abstract

The objective of this thesis has been to explore how leverage by small non-permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) can be explained. I have investigated this by examining the efforts by three small non-permanent members, Luxembourg, New Zealand, and Sweden. These states are all known to have achieved leverage in the UNSC in the case of Syria between 2013 and 2018, despite the asymmetrical power structure of the UNSC.

The thesis is guided by the theoretical framework of the neoliberal institutionalist perspective and the concept of soft power, to investigate how institutional arrangements of the UNSC, and the states' identities can help facilitate leverage in the UNSC. I have conducted an explanatory case study and applied congruence method to deductively connect the theories with the empirical evidence. The findings indicate that both theories have explanatory power when used complementary.

The conflict in Syria has been a highly politicized and deadlocked case in the UNSC, and leverage by small states should therefore not be exaggerated. However, this thesis illustrates how the UNSC is not only governed by the five permanent members without any impact from small non-permanent members. During their tenures in the UNSC, the three small states in my case study established themselves as leaders of the humanitarian issues regarding Syria in the UNSC and developed several important resolutions. The empirical findings suggest that these states achieved leverage by taking advantage of the existing formal and informal institutional arrangements, especially the procedure of penholdership. The findings further highlight how the identities of the three small states provided the possibility to gain a role as an honest-broker in the humanitarian track. Due to their objective, egalitarian, and legitimate identities they achieved a unique role in the UNSC. This position provided leverage in the specific humanitarian track of Syria, but it also provided a window of opportunity to achieve access into other negotiations. The thesis' findings are in line with previous studies of small states' search for influence in international politics and illustrates how small states sometimes can "punch above their weight" within international institutions.



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Any shortcomings or mistakes are entirely my own.

Jenny Nortvedt

Oslo, 23 May 2019

# List of Abbreviations

Council	United Nations Security Council (also referred to as the UNSC)
HDI	Human Development Index
E10	Elected ten non-permanent members of the United Nations Security Council
EU	European Union
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OCHA	The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
P3	The often allied three permanent members (US, UK, France)
P5	The permanent five members of the United Nations Security Council
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNSC	United Nations Security Council (also referred to as the Council)
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
US	United States
WEOG	The Western European and Others Group



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# 1 Introduction

On 22 February 2018 the Swedish and Kuwaiti Missions to the United Nations in New York drafted a Security Council resolution calling for a cessation of hostilities in the war-torn part of Syria called Eastern Ghouta. As Russia is an allied partner of the Syrian regime, many expected Russia to veto the draft resolution. Nevertheless, the two non-permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) tabled the draft hoping to reach an agreement between the fifteen Council members. During the meeting's second day on 24 February, all members of the UNSC voted unanimously in favor of Resolution 2401 (United Nations, 2018). Was it just a coincidence that Russia decided to support the resolution, or did the two small non-permanent members play a role in the process?

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate how small non-permanent members can affect processes and decisions in the UNSC, illustrated above, and to develop a deeper understanding of what role small states can play in the fifteen member-Council. The broader thematic discussion in this thesis is about small states' search for power and influence in international politics, and especially their role within international organizations in a changing political climate. In the past years, we have seen several high-risk conflicts in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and Afghanistan, as well as a global migration crisis that has increased closed-border politics in several states. International affairs seem to become increasingly interest-driven, with several indications of how the US and several European states are re-nationalizing their foreign policies (Snyder, 2019). In addition, we have seen a colder front between the West and Russia after Russia's annexation of Crimea and its meddling in the American elections in 2016. As the international rule-based order is challenged on multiple fronts, the small states are those most vulnerable, as small states depend on a multilateral system with institutions that reduce uncertainty and regulate disputes (Freedom House, 2018, Carvalho & Lie, 2015, p. 59).

The literature concerning power and influence is often focused on the powerful actors in an anarchic system without any higher authority. In this view, influence translates directly into international institutions, and the institutions are only relevant if the powerful states believe they are. The power dynamics of the Council are often described as dominated by the five permanent members Russia, China, the US, France, and the UK (the P5), and little attention is given to the elected ten non-permanent members (the E10). Especially small non-permanent

members in the UNSC are often overlooked (Barnett & Finnemore, 2008; Thorhallsson, 2012).

Still, the non-permanent members make out a large part of the UNSC, and the international developments of recent years make it important to understand how small states can achieve leverage in this institutional arena. In addition, the rotating non-permanent seats in the UNSC are highly contested. In the competition for the ten non-permanent seats, states normally use vast resources on their campaigns, and some have questioned if the effort is worth it, due to the asymmetrical power structure of the Council. This makes it relevant to question how small non-permanent members in the UNSC achieve leverage during their two year-access.

## 1.1 Research question

The research question that will be explored in this thesis is: *How can small non-permanent members' leverage in the United Nations Security Council be explained?*

The objective of this thesis is to investigate how small non-permanent members can affect processes and decisions in the UNSC and to illustrate the dynamics through an in-depth multiple case study of three small non-permanent members' work. The former member states in the case study are Luxembourg, New Zealand, and Sweden.

I will answer the research question by examining the three small states' actions and involvement in the case of Syria in the UNSC from 2013 until 2018. The objective is not to explore the Syrian civil war, but by examining this case get an in-depth view of how these small states achieved leverage in the UNSC. The case of Syria is threefold due to how the work in the UNSC is organized: one part is about the use of chemical weapons, which I define as the *chemical track*; the second part is about the political situation in the state, which can be defined as the *political track*; and the third part concerns the *humanitarian track*. Together the three dimensions encapsulate both realpolitikal and normative aspects of the Syrian crisis. The humanitarian track will be the main focus of this thesis. However, the other tracks will be touched upon, because they all have an impact on each other.

When studying the humanitarian track of the Syrian case in the UNSC, it is important to consider that the matters on the agenda of the UNSC often are characterized by different

levels of tension. Naturally, this can affect the opportunities for non-permanent members' influence and consequently the findings in this thesis. To get a deeper understanding of the mechanisms available to small non-permanent members, this thesis focuses on the area where small states have been able to take the lead on several occasions, namely the humanitarian issues in the UNSC. In contrast to cases of high political tension, this has been a working field the non-permanent members have paid attention to and achieved results. Humanitarian affairs are not the primary focus of the UNSC but are still one of the four purposes of article 1 of the UN Charter (United Nations, 1945). The humanitarian work on Syria has mainly been developed and handled by the non-permanent members since 2013, which makes it an interesting place to start the inquiry.

To understand how small non-permanent members of the Council affect political procedures, an analytical framework is necessary. This thesis is based on the international relations theory of *neoliberal institutionalism* (Keohane, 1986a) and the theoretical concept of *soft power* (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998; Nye, 1990; Ruggie, 1998; Wendt, 1994). External-oriented rational theories like neoliberal institutionalism assume that power in international politics translates directly into influence in international organizations (Keohane, 1984; Waltz, 1979). To some extent, this is true concerning the UNSC, as the permanent members often exercise their dominating position by using the veto. It is therefore interesting to examine small states, which often exercise influence in the UNSC disproportionate to their power outside the UN (Barnett & Finnemore, 2008). The theory of soft power argues, in contrast to rational approaches, that values, policy, and culture can affect a state's influence and standing, both in the world system at large and within international organizations. This approach can help explain how actors with few hard power resources can influence political processes by other means. The theories have different views on how small states' leverage can be explained and this will be elaborated on further in this thesis.

To achieve the objective in a meaningful manner, the analysis is delimited in several ways. Regarding time, the focus is the period between 2013 and 2018, as 2013 is the year when the work on the humanitarian track regarding Syria began in the UNSC. It is also a period of time where non-permanent members have been especially active and have taken several initiatives (Security Council Report, 2016). Furthermore, the case studies are limited to only focus on three small likeminded states: Luxembourg, New Zealand, and Sweden. This is a small selection from a broader population of non-permanent members. There are several reasons for

the choice of states. First, New Zealand, Luxembourg, and Sweden can all be regarded as “small states” in the UNSC. The definitions of small states are fragmented and unprecise, and the division between micro states, small states, and middle states are often blurred. There are different ways of defining small states, but traditional definitions are often based on capabilities and quantitative criteria like GDP (Thorhallsson, 2012, p. 135). In this thesis, the definition is based on Kjølbergs and Nyhamars (2012, p. 7) argument that in order to define a state as “small” we need to measure the state’s capacities in four different areas relative to the most powerful actors. Thus, the definition is both objective and relational (Neumann & Gstöhl, 2004). These factors are size, population, military capacity, and GDP. Under this definition, the most powerful actors in the UNSC are the United States, China, Russia, the UK and France. Small states are often categorized with a population of less than 10 million, which between 2013-2018 was the case with both Luxembourg, New Zealand, and Sweden.<sup>1</sup> All three states have significantly lower GDP, less military capacity, and smaller size than the permanent members (Thorhallsson, 2012). Therefore, New Zealand, Luxembourg and Sweden are all *small states* relative to the five permanent members of the UNSC. However, compared to great powers, the definition of small states has often been confused with weak states, which is not necessarily the case (Neumann & Gstöhl, 2004). The size and power of states should be assessed through the power they exercise (Rickli, 2008). This thesis will investigate other means of influence by small states in the UNSC, to explain how small states sometimes do “punch above their weight”.

Second, the three states were non-permanent members of the UNSC during the years 2013-2018 and have all been highly involved in the humanitarian track of the Syria case. However, the states were not members at the same time. Luxembourg was a member between 2013-2014, New Zealand between 2015-2016, and Sweden between 2017-2018. It is interesting to study three small states’ actions in the same area of work. Even though the conflict in Syria has escalated during this time period, the dividing lines in the UNSC remain the same.

Third, the states had, to a large extent, similar values and background when entering the Council. They are all members of the Western and Others geographical group (WEOG) in the UN, which makes them relevant cases for comparison. By studying these states during their

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<sup>1</sup> Sweden has in 2019 surpassed 10 million citizens (Mæhlum, 2019).

time in the UNSC, this thesis might be able to give a more precise understanding of the possibilities for small states in the UNSC.

## **1.2 Contributions and literature review**

Most of the literary contributions concerning the UNSC in the past years have focused on reform, and the effectiveness of the Council resolutions creating peacekeeping missions or sanctions regimes (Luck, 2006; Malone, 2004; Thakur, 2006; Kjeksrud, 2015; de Conig & Peter, 2019). This thesis aims to explain a different area – the Council member dynamics and leverage by small states in the UNSC. There seems to be a lack of contributions on this issue, mostly because most of the existing literature on the UNSC focuses on the five permanent veto members (Bosco, 2009; Liu, 2014; Thompson, 2010). This trend matches the realist school in international relations, which sees international organizations as a tool for the powerful states involved. The result is that the non-permanent members of the UNSC have been neglected by both UN scholars and the classical international relations theories.

This thesis focuses on the space for maneuver for the small non-permanent members and can therefore possibly contribute to the UN literature. As mentioned earlier, Barnett and Finnemore (2008) highlight a gap regarding the relationship between state power in the world at large and power translated into influence within the UN bodies. Thus, they underline the importance of understanding influence within intergovernmental organizations like the UN. Even though there are few studies of small states in the UNSC, studies of small states have been undertaken in other arenas. There is a large literature on how small states sometimes “punch above their weight” in international politics. Several interesting studies have been undertaken of small states in the European Union, which to a certain degree can be transferable to the UNSC (Bjørkdahl, 2008; Jacobsen, 2009; Romsloe, 2004; Thorhallsson, 2006). Romsloe (2003, 2004, 2005) explored influence by Sweden, Denmark, and Finland into the EU’s common foreign and security policy and found that small states are able to influence decisions by using communicative behavior. Bjørkdahl (2008) investigated Sweden’s role as a norm entrepreneur regarding conflict prevention, a topic often dominated by the powerful states in the EU. She found that norm advocacy was a successful strategy for small states to gain influence. However, these findings are not directly transferable to the UNSC, because the organization and work in the EU in many ways are different from the UNSC. Especially the fact that there is no veto power in the EU, all states have the same vote

in European Commission, separates the EU from the UNSC (Romsloe, 2003, p. 8). Still, their findings might have explanatory power, and will be considered further in the analysis.

A few studies of non-permanent members in general have been undertaken in the past years, like Ralph & Gifkins (2017), Wouters, Drieskens & Biscop (2009), and Pirozzi (2008). However, the studies of specifically small states as non-permanent members are less developed. The exceptions are Thorhallsson (2011), a speech by Keating (2008) on options for small states, and a study by Lupel, & Mälksoo (2019). After Norway's membership in 2001-2002, there were also important contributions regarding the Norwegian membership (Carvalho & Schia, 2004; Kolby, 2003; Schia, 2004; Tønnesson, 2003). Niels Nagelhus Schia (2004, 2013b, 2015) studied formal and informal political procedures in the Council, and how Norway operated in the UNSC during its two-year term. He concluded that the permanent five members possess power beyond the veto, because the permanent membership places them in the center of several informal procedures. These practices narrow the scope of action for the non-permanent members. The study by Schia is from the anthropological field of research, and there are several other interesting contributions regarding the culture and diplomacy within the UNSC. Hurd (2002) studied the connection between legitimacy and symbolic power of the UNSC. Adler-Nissen and Pouliot (2014) investigated how diplomatic practice was used in negotiations on Libya in the UNSC, while Troels Gauslå Engell (2018) examined what practices guide the members of the UNSC regarding the inclusion of human rights in Council resolutions. These studies concerning the culture, diplomacy, and social aspects of the UNSC have demonstrated that it might prove difficult to study leverage within the UNSC without understanding the informal procedures in the Council.

By studying the small non-permanent members' scope of action, this thesis might be able to say something specific about small states' possibilities within the UNSC. Furthermore, it might contribute to our knowledge on small states' search for influence in international politics, and especially within international organizations. The thesis is further relevant regarding certain policy contributions, as the study of three small states might be of relevance for other small states seeking a UNSC membership. Norway is currently campaigning for a non-permanent seat in the UNSC. Due to the similarities between the states studied in this thesis and Norway, the findings might provide relevant implications for understanding how a small state, like Norway, can achieve results in the UNSC if the campaign is successful.



### 1.3 Formality and informality of the UN Security Council

To be able to analyze the small non-permanent members in UNSC appropriately, some background information on the Council is necessary. When studying small states and influence, the UNSC is not the most natural place to start, as the Council dynamic is centered on the five permanent veto members. The UNSC consists of 15 members, of which the US, the Russian Federation, the UK, China, and France (the P5) are permanent members. There are ten non-permanent members elected for non-consecutive two-year terms by the General Assembly (UNGA). Five members are elected each year, and the elections are organized according to the UN geographical groups. All members of the UNSC have a vote on procedural and substantial matters, but in substantial matters the P5 hold veto power over all decisions. In procedural matters, the veto is not applicable, but it always takes nine affirmative votes to get a matter adopted (article 27, UN Charter). The presidency of the Council is rotated among all members in alphabetical order during the year. The president sits for one month at the time, acts as chairman of the Council and conducts the meetings on the agenda (Schia, 2018, p. 126).

Hurd (2002, p. 35) describes the relationship between the formal and informal power of the Council: “The Charter of United Nations gives the UNSC enormous formal powers, but it does not give it direct control of the tools with which to enact those powers”. This quote demonstrates how the UNSC works. The Council is governed by the UN Charter, which regulates the UNSC functions, composition and power. Its objective is to maintain international peace and security. Chapter VI concerns the peaceful settlement of disputes, while chapter VII presents the different measures the UNSC can take, including authorization of armed force (United Nations, 1945).

Pursuant to article 30, the Council can decide its own rules of procedure, and while the procedures have never been formally adopted, it presents the work of the Council in detail (United Nations, 1945). Many states have attempted to codify these procedures in Note 507, informally called the Working Methods Handbook (UN, 2017b). When entering the Council, the non-permanent members often put much attention on following the procedures and working methods. An example is that even though article 35 of the Charter says that any member of the UN can propose issues to the agenda of the UNSC, the non-permanent members rarely do so unless they hold the presidency. The Council meets in the formal

UNSC chamber, which holds the formal public meetings. All meetings are held here, unless the members wish to have closed consultations. The closed consultations are held in a small meeting room outside the chamber, with Chatham House rules and seats reserved for the fifteen Ambassadors and a few experts only. These meetings are not to be quoted from, and therefore allows for “creativity and personality”, as Schia (2018, p. 130) found in his study of the formal and informal UNSC procedures. The Charter gives the Council its formal power, but there are more to the Council than the Charter. “Even in a highly formalized diplomatic setting like the UNSC, informal processes are central to understanding how states operate, as well as how the Council itself functions” (Schia, 2018, p. 122). For example, informal communication between missions or contacting the president state before it sets the monthly agenda are ways of influencing decisions.

Another such informal practice is the *penholder system*. Since the end of the Cold War, the UK, France and the US (P3) have been responsible for producing the outcomes from the Council. However, there were no firm arrangements to allocate the different cases to different member states. The penholder system grew from proposals made by these three permanent members. The idea was to manage an increasing work load and make the Council more effective by creating a system for division of labor. Therefore, a penholder refers to the member that takes the lead on a particular topic or conflict and keeps the leadership over time. The system of continued leadership on an issue developed around 2008-2009, and by 2010 it was customary practice (Security Council Report, 2016).

The penholder procedure is informal and unwritten, but the practice has developed into a way of keeping ownership of an issue in the UNSC, something the P5 have taken advantage of. In 2017 the German ambassador to the UN described the practice as “The one who leads, the one who presents the text, who stakes out a position early in the day, is the one who more or less determines the game” (Ralph & Gifkins, 2017, p. 642). Until 2013 the position as penholder was exclusively held by the permanent members, especially by the P3. These three states divided the work load between them and did all the work on decision drafting. The drafts would later be circulated and discussed with the other two permanent members, Russia and China, and first later on would the ten non-permanent members get to evaluate the drafts. After 2013, as I will elaborate further on in the analysis, the small non-permanent members achieved a seat as penholder in the Syrian humanitarian track.

Although many of these practices are informal, they seem difficult to change. In addition, the P5 missions have large resources, both in term of cultural capital, networks and expertise. The informal practices of the Council are to a large extent developed and dominated by the P5. This means that the informal structures in the Council strengthen the institutional position of the P5. In this way, Schia (2018) argues that the will of the Council often is reduced to what these five members see as being in their own interest. It can seem, therefore, like the institutional structures of the UNSC, both formal and informal, have a restrictive impact on what non-permanent members can achieve in the Council. This thesis, however, will explore an area where non-permanent members have achieved results.

## 1.4 Defining leverage

In the attempt to define leverage, I draw on the concepts of power and influence. These concepts are elusive and difficult to measure, but that does not make the concepts meaningless (Nye, 2011, p. 4). The concept of power has been discussed by many of the classical political science scholars, including Thucydides, Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Weber. Robert Dahl (1957) went further and tried to develop a formal definition of power: “A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something B would not otherwise do” (Dahl, 1957, pp. 202-203). This definition is close to the realist tradition, and its assumptions of military might and economy as the most important measures of state power. Military force tells us something about a state’s power, but not all. The resources used to produce power capabilities have become more complex (Keohane & Nye, 2012, p. 9). For example, military power will not tell us much about a state’s international standing regarding climate change. Dahl’s definition is defined as the “first face of power”.

Keohane (1986, p. 11) emphasizes how many people fail to distinguish between power as a resource and power as the ability to influence others’ behavior. If you do not distinguish, you fail to comprehend why the states with large military and economic power not always have been successful. In this thesis, I will investigate the ability to influence policies and other states in political processes in the UNSC, in other words behavioral power. This kind of power is often described as influence or leverage and is not necessarily based on hard power resources, but rather qualitative measures (Nye, 2011, p. 6; Thorhallsson, 2012, p. 139). Still, *leverage* might be the better term, because influence does sometimes rely on hard power resources. Leverage is defined as the “power to influence people and get the results you want”

(Cambridge Dictionary, 2018). The ability to achieve the results you want through behavioral power is dependent on several factors. First, it is important to define who you want to influence and what topics are involved. In this case, the small non-permanent members wish to affect the other members of the UNSC regarding the humanitarian situation on the ground in Syria.

Second, in an institution like the UNSC there are several ways to execute and obtain leverage. Keohane (1994, p. 48) defines institutions as a “persistent and connected set of rules (formal or informal) that prescribe behavioral roles, constrain activity, and shape expectations”. Therefore, states can through institutions achieve leverage using institutional tools like agenda-setting, coordination of issues, or by increasing transparency. These tools can help states frame issues and set the agenda, or alternatively keep issues off the agenda. According to Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz, these institutional elements were missing from Dahl’s definition of power and they named it the “second face of power” (Bachrach & Baratz, 1962; Nye, 2011, p. 12). The “second face of power” has close connections to institutional theories, and this form of leverage will in this thesis be explained as *institutional leverage*.

Third, the sociologist Steven Lukes added an important aspect to the discussion regarding power in the 1970s (Lukes, 1974). He emphasized that ideas and beliefs may be effective factors when you try to shape others’ preferences and called it the “third face of power”. This form of behavioral power is about getting others to want the same outcomes as you, through attraction and social mechanisms (Nye, 2011, p. 13). Nye highlights that if you only focus on hard power resources, the so called first face of power, you fail to understand the social forces that can constitute power. These give you the ability to create networks of trust and gain power with, rather than over, others. This kind of power is often called normative or ideational power and is connected to the theory of social constructivism and Nye’s theory about soft power. It includes positive attraction through culture, foreign policy and values, in other words, a state’s identity and reputation. This type of leverage will in this thesis be defined as *leverage through identity*.

An important element regarding the meaning of leverage is context (Guzzini, 2005). The leverage small states achieve in the humanitarian track of the Syrian crisis in the UNSC, might not be the exact same leverage in another area of work in another organization. Leverage is a dynamic process that occurs both in specific entry points and in a general sense.

In this thesis I elaborate on leverage specifically in the Syrian humanitarian track, but I also touch upon the power position small non-permanent members achieve in the UNSC in general.

In chapter 2, I develop theoretical propositions on how states can achieve *institutional leverage* and *leverage through identity*, based on the two theories liberal institutionalism and soft power.

## 1.5 Thesis outline

The thesis consists of 6 chapters. This introductory chapter is followed by a presentation of the theoretical framework in chapter 2, presenting one rational theory of international relations, *neoliberal institutionalism* and the theoretical concept of *soft power*, which overlaps with *social constructivism* in several ways. These two theoretical approaches develop theoretical propositions that will guide the empirical analysis. Chapter 3 explains the research design and methods. The choice of the explanatory multiple case study as research design is discussed, in addition to the use of congruence method, document analysis and semi-structured interviews. Chapter 4 is the first chapter of the empirical analysis and presents the three units of study: Luxembourg, New Zealand, and Sweden, and evaluates how they achieved leverage. This is done by examining the case of Syria through the lenses of *neoliberal institutionalism* and *soft power*. Chapter 5 compares the three small states' leverage in the Council and discusses the findings. Chapter 6 concludes the thesis by summarizing the main findings, highlighting theoretical and empirical implications, and presenting ideas for further research.

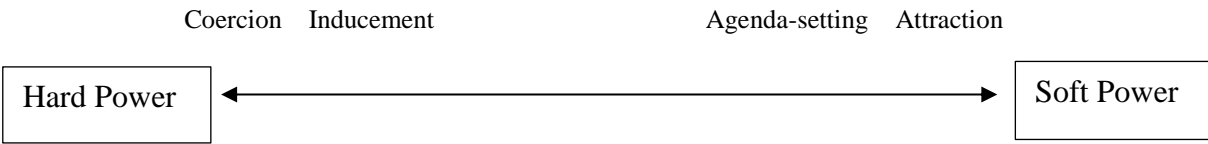
# 2 Theoretical Framework

## 2.1 Introduction

How can you explain small state behavior and influence in international politics, and especially within international organizations? Are states acting mainly on the basis of rational self-interest, or do institutions, values, and social interaction affect states' actions and leverage? The purpose of this chapter is to present the theories that create the basis for answering the thesis' research question in chapter 1.1. The theoretical assumptions will be thoroughly examined and result in two theoretical propositions of how leverage is achieved.

The UNSC is an institution caught in the intersection between liberal ideas and realpolitik. The United Nations at large is often categorized as a liberal institution based on idealistic ideas and the legacy from the League of Nations. The UNSC, however, is organized in a different way than the rest of the UN due to the veto power. Therefore, the Council has often been characterized as dominated by the permanent five veto members (Taylor & Curtis, 2014, p. 306). Realism is the theory often associated with rational power relations and the UNSC. It predicts that the non-permanent members have little, if any, room to maneuver. In the study of non-permanent members and the UNSC, it is therefore interesting to move beyond the scope of the realist theory to capture other dimensions of the internal dynamics in the Council.

**TABLE 1 DIFFERENT POWER BEHAVIOR**



Inspired by Nye (2004, p. 8).

Table 1 shows a way of categorizing different types of power behavior, ranging from hard to soft. The scale displays hard power behavior to the left and soft power behavior to the right. On the left side, the behavior is based on hard resources like military might and economy. As laid out in chapter 1.3, the thesis will not focus on hard power behavior like coercion and inducement, but rather shed light on soft power behavior like agenda-setting and attraction.

According to Nye (2004, p. 8) agenda-setting is often behavior associated with institutional arrangements, while attraction is behavior based on a state's culture, values, and policy. In other words, institutional arrangements and a state's culture, values and policy constitute a state's soft power resources, while agenda-setting and attraction constitute soft power behavior. However, according to Keohane (2015) there are several ways institutions can facilitate cooperation beyond agenda-setting, and I therefore assess several institutional arrangements. The soft power resources and behavior are especially interesting when examining small states in the UNSC, because they lack the resources that constitute hard power behavior (Nye, 2011, p. 6).

In this thesis, there will be a theoretical proposition derived from the theory of *neoliberal institutionalism*, which can be characterized as a rational interest-based approach. This approach will be supplemented by the concept of *soft power*, which builds on the neoliberal institutionalist approach, but incorporates several ideas from *social constructivism* (Layne, 2010, p. 54).

Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) argue that social theory does not need to be seen in absolute contrast to rational theories like neorealism and neoliberal institutionalism, but that rationality and norms are linked and should be seen in connection when explaining international phenomena. This is similar to Keohane's (1994) recommendation that when studying international phenomena, you should use both rational and reflective theories. Studying the UNSC is a complex matter, which needs more than one theoretical perspective to understand the political processes. However, a challenge using these two theoretical approaches in combination is that the concept of soft power may overlap with institutionalism and complicate the patterns of inferences. This challenge will be elaborated further in the methodological chapter 3. Still, I argue that the theories are not mutually exclusive, and should rather be seen in a complimentary fashion. When combining the theories, I can capture different dynamics at work in the UNSC, and bridge the rational and social approach. I achieve a more holistic comprehension when utilizing both theories, because nuances that otherwise would have been neglected are discerned and analyzed.

## **2.2 Neoliberal Institutionalism**

Neoliberal institutionalism is a rational theory with a positive outlook on cooperation. The theory is connected to the scholars Robert O. Keohane (1986a), Joseph S. Nye (Keohane & Nye, 1989), Ernst B. Haas (1980), and Robert Axelrod (1985). Regarding its ontological starting point the theory is based on rationalism and tends to focus on materialism and hard facts. Therefore, the social structures like norms, identity, and argumentation get less attention (Rieker, 2004).

The neoliberal approach emerged after the Second World War. The theory was less idealistic than the former liberalism, and it promoted a middle ground between the realist and liberalist traditions. In the 1970s and 1980s the focus of neoliberalism shifted to transnationalism and complex interdependence (Haas, 1980; Keohane & Nye, 1989). This was the view that the world is connected and that states are mutually dependent on each other. Scholars highlighted the consequences of globalization and how the world was becoming more linked together. In a world of complex interdependence, organizations can set agendas, create coalitions, and act as arenas for weaker states. Organizations therefore create important forums for states without large resources (Keohane & Nye, 2012, p. 31). The current trends of neoliberal institutionalism continued in this path and focus on issues of global governance and the role of institutions (Lamy, 2014, p. 132).

The debate between the neoliberals and the neorealists has dominated international relations theory since the mid-1980s, even though the theories share many assumptions (Lamy, 2014). Neoliberal institutionalism consists of three main assumptions: International politics is characterized by anarchy, rational sovereign states interested in maximizing their self-interests are the main actors in international politics, and institutions can play an important role in facilitating cooperation. Keohane (1986a, p. 159) expresses the need for neorealism in any theoretical approach as “realism is a necessary component in a coherent analysis of world politics because of its focus on power, interests and rationality is crucial to any understanding of the subject.” The neorealist tradition sees power as tangible capabilities and that it is unequally distributed between states in the international system. The system is anarchical in the sense that there is no higher authority to regulate the relations between states (Waltz, 1979). The international society is therefore characterized by power politics between states with the goal of maximizing their security and wealth. In this regard, the neoliberal approach shares several assumptions with neorealism.



Based on these assumptions, neorealism does not ascribe much attention to international institutions and sees cooperation as a relatively rare phenomenon. In this view the UNSC is mainly seen as a “playground” for the P5, and multilateral cooperation is only an option if it is in the interest of these members. Neoliberal institutionalism shares the assumption that for cooperation to occur, mutual interest needs to exist. If states do not see any possible self-interest from cooperation, cooperation will not occur (Keohane & Martin, 1995, p. 136). Still, the theory has a positive view on the role of institutions and the possibilities of cooperation. It rejects the neorealist assumption that states are naturally steered by power and conflict (Rieker, 2004). States can be persuaded to cooperate if they are convinced that all states will comply, and convinced that cooperation will result in absolute gains for the state in question (Keohane, 1984; Lamy, 2014, p. 136). The neoliberal institutionalists believe that institutions can modify the anarchic state system and create cooperation. The core of neoliberal institutionalism is therefore the focus on the dynamics within institutions. When utilizing this theory focus is on formal and informal processes inside the UNSC, and how they create room for maneuver for non-permanent members. All institutionalist approaches stress the same fundamental point that the structure of an institution can to some extent determine the states’ behavior (Keohane, 2015, p. 56).

The premise of mutual self-interests shows that neoliberal institutionalism does not ignore the power structure and power relations institutions are rooted in. Keohane (1995, p. 42) argues that institutions can make a difference when dealing with these power relations, where an important point is the role of information in international politics and the fact that institutions can provide and share it. Information-sharing reduces uncertainty between actors, and actions and interests become codified and more predictable (Peters, 2012, p. 155). The access and flow of information are improved, and the institution creates a possibility for discussion and negotiations. Transparency and openness are especially positive for small states if the organization is large and there are many states involved. If that is the case, small states do not need to accept decisions by larger states without question (Keohane, 1984, p. 101).

Institutions are not constant, and they develop and are affected by both internal and surrounding factors. Keohane and Martin (1995) characterize the relationship between the states and the institutions as both independent and dependent variables, “institutions change as a result of human action, and the changes in expectations and process that result can exert profound effects on state behavior” (Keohane & Martin, 1995, p. 46). Institutionalism

reminds us of the fact that the international arena is not a complete anarchy. There are formal and informal structures and processes that can shape interactions between actors, which can be seen in regional and international organizations (Peters, 2012, p. 139). The shaping might be easier for large and powerful nations (Peters, 2012, p. 149). However, sometimes we do see less powerful nations influence the structure and methods of international institutions like the Council. Keohane (2005) emphasizes that small states through membership in international institutions can affect powerful states despite their asymmetrical power relations. The institutions create a sense of mutual commitments and reciprocity.

One way an institution can facilitate leverage is through coordination of issues by setting the agenda. This is done through the establishment of focal points, to avoid free passing and mutually undesirable outcomes. Keohane & Martin (1995, p. 45) argue that “unless some coordinating mechanism exists, states may fail to capture the potential gains from cooperation”. Agenda-setting is often seen as a crucial tool within a state’s soft power behavior, as it creates the possibility for smaller states to highlight important issues in their interest.

### **2.2.1 Theoretical proposition**

To investigate the thesis’ research question, I need to deduce theoretical propositions I can use to explore the empirical material. A proposition of neoliberal institutionalism is that *small non-permanent members gain leverage in the UNSC because the Council functions as an arena for cooperation*. To make this proposition less elusive, I summarize and operationalize three institutional factors based on the theoretical framework in chapter 3.3.1. The factors are *self-interest, focal points, and transparency*. These can facilitate and affect states’ possibilities for cooperation and therefore constitute leverage in the UNSC.

By incorporating several of the neorealist assumptions, neoliberal institutionalism is able to capture both formal and informal power structures created by the organization of work in the UNSC, and still look for mechanisms that promotes cooperation. In another view, the theory narrows its own agenda by being rational state-centered (Lamy, 2014, p. 138). A critique of the neo-theories is that they do not take political culture, norms, identity, and social forces into account. Therefore, it leaves a far from full picture of the dynamics within institutions in international relations (Lamy, 2014, p. 135). In the following section emphasis is therefore

placed on the theoretical concept of soft power, which takes these issues into account, and how it incorporates ideas from social constructivism.

## 2.3 The concept of Soft Power

The theoretical concept of soft power is closely connected to the neoliberal institutionalist tradition. The concept complements the neoliberal institutionalism as it introduces a range of resources that can affect a state's attraction and standing in international politics and within international institutions, including the states' culture, foreign policy, and values. In other words, a state's identity. Soft power is "the power associated with attracting others and getting them to want what you want" (Nye, 2004, p. 5). The abstract concept is not new and was originally framed by Joseph S. Nye in his book *Bound to Lead* (1990). It was used to explain the future power situation of the US in international politics, and in his book, Nye argued that the US had soft power resources to adapt to the current and future challenges.

In Nye's view it is the power of attraction that constitutes leverage. Nye argues that in an increasingly globalized and interdependent world, the classical power resources like military, economy, and size have less utility than before, in line with the definition by Lukes in section 1.3 (Nye, 2011, Lock, 2010, p. 32). State power is not only dependent on size and military assets but the conservation of power, engagement, and the ability to persuade. The states that are likely to possess large soft power resources are the states with multiple channels of communication that help frame issues. In other words, large states like the US have a good starting point (Nye, 2004, p. 31). Soft power rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others. Nye (2004, p. 14) argues that,

The values a government champions in its behavior at home (for example, democracy), in international institutions (working with others) and in foreign policy (promoting peace and human rights) strongly affect the preferences of others. Governments can attract or repel others by the influence of their example.

Within the concept of soft power, leading by example is important to gain leverage. A state might possess a reputation as a forerunner or expert within a certain area of work, which can affect the weight of their saying in the matter. Attraction is in this way connected to the state's reputation in international politics.

Nye wrote about soft power with the role of the US in mind. However, the concept of soft power can be applied when studying small states. When discussing power, Nye demonstrates soft power with an example of Norway's efforts in peace negotiations. This shows that, according to Nye, soft power does not only apply for larger states with large resources (Nye, 2004, p. 11). Therefore, the concept of soft power is relevant as an explanation for the achieved leverage by small states in the UNSC. Even though the small states are not large powers like the P5, their identity might increase their leverage in the humanitarian case of Syria.

Even though the theoretical concept of soft power builds on the neoliberal tradition, Nye links his analytical concept to identity, legitimacy, and shared values, and in this way the concept of soft power is connected to the theory of social constructivism as well. Therefore, the concept is often characterized as placed between the neoliberal institutionalist approach and the social constructivist approach (Layne, 2010, p. 54). In this way it can help bridge the rational and social theories in the study of the UNSC. I choose to focus on how soft power can explain leverage through its focus on identity, and therefore emphasize the social constructivist part of the soft power concept.

Several scholars write within the discipline of social constructivism (Checkel, 1998; Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998; Risse, 2000; Wendt, 1994), but there is no clear description of the social constructivist theory (Hopf, 1998). Social constructivism sees the world as socially constructed and emphasizes the constitutive nature of norms and actor identity (Martin & Simmons, 1998). The ontological base of social constructivism is open to the effects of social forces. Regarding its epistemology, social constructivism is interested in both causal and softer mechanisms of inquiry. Qualitative data with the possibility of interpretation is preferred by the social constructivist scholars (Rieker, 2004).

The sociological approach to studying institutions is often counterposed to rationalistic theories and focus on the impact of norms, cultural practices, and values in contrast to calculations of self-interest and information (Keohane, 1994, p. 46). Wendt (1994, p. 80) is an advocate of the social approach, where identity is the foundation for an actor's interests. He criticizes the rational theories of neoliberal institutionalism and structural neorealism, and says, "actors do not have a "portfolio" of interests that they carry around independent of

social context; instead they define their interests in the process of defining situations...” (Wendt, 1994, p. 80). In other words, this means that interests can be affected through social process and by the concrete situation. This line of thought is supported by Guzzini (2005, p. 515), who emphasizes the constructivist concept of power and highlights how it only can be understood through the political context in which it takes place.

Small states often lack hard power resources but can still increase their soft power through niche expertise, knowledge, and alliances (Matlary, 2002). It is therefore interesting to investigate how small states use what resources they possess inside international institutions like the UNSC to create a position of power. “Sometimes countries enjoy political clout that is greater than their military and economic weight would suggest because they define their national interest to include attractive causes such as economic aid and peacekeeping” (Nye, 2004, p. 9). Matlary (2002) describes it as “value diplomacy”, which is a fitting description. In this way, small states sometimes have a combination of interests and values that match the values of the UN and can put forward compelling arguments based on these values. Reputation for respecting UN principles and norms in one's own foreign policy, might increase the trust of or respect for that state and its nationals inside the organization, making others more willing to follow their proposals (Barnett & Finnemore, 2008).

To understand the soft power possibilities of attraction, we need to investigate the state's image outside the institution and how this affects the state's role inside the institution. Attraction often has a diffuse effect, it does not produce an easily observed action, but rather a general sense of influence. However, this general standing can create great difference in negotiation situations. An important point is that soft power may be created not only by the state's government (Nye, 2004, p. 16). For example, Norway's image due to the Nobel Peace prize may increase the Norwegian standing among other states, but it has little to do with the formal government. It might even be at odds with Norwegian foreign policy, as was the case when the prize was given to the Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo.

Constructivists argue that, in contrast to rationalists, they see compliance as a result of moral obligations and appropriateness, and not self-interest and information sharing (Barnett & Finnemore, 2008). If you can influence others to see compliance as morally appropriate, you can affect originally asymmetrical power relationships. Hall (1997) argues that moral authority should be considered just as important as hard power resources. The importance

states put on the moral arguments could establish a form of authority among the other members of the UNSC, which provides them with the legitimacy to frame issues and affect decisions.

The point is not to undermine state power, but to open up for the possibilities of social forces within international organizations (Cox, 1986, p. 206). Through communication and intersubjective processes inside the UNSC, non-permanent states can establish common understandings and create a role for themselves. Preferences and interests are developed and changed in social and cultural contexts through socialization processes (Sjursen, 2006). Institutions can socialize states and state agents, leading them to internalize new roles and norms (Checkel, 2005).

### **2.3.1 Theoretical proposition**

The theoretical proposition derived from the soft power concept is that *small non-permanent members gain leverage in the UNSC if they have an attractive identity*. The argument of how a state's identity can contribute to leverage in the UNSC, will be explained through the theoretical factor of *attraction*. Attraction will be further developed and operationalized in chapter 3.3.2.

## 3 Research Design and Methods

This chapter presents the research design, methods, and data collection used to investigate the research question. First, I explain the case study approach and argue why I have chosen an explanatory multiple case study. Second, I describe my use of the congruence method and how I operationalize the theoretical propositions derived from the theories in chapter 2. Last, I evaluate the data collection, done through semi-structured interviews and document analysis.<sup>2</sup> The important four criteria for maintaining the quality and integrity of the case study's findings; construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability, will be discussed throughout the chapter.

### 3.1 Research design and case selection

To be able to collect and analyze data in a correct manner, a suitable research design is needed. The choice of research design depends in large part on the research question. Yin (2018, p. 4) argues that “the more your question seeks to explain some contemporary circumstance... the more that case study research will be relevant”. I argue that the research question in this thesis should be answered using an intensive qualitative research approach, more precisely by the use of an explanatory multiple case study. This is used when the research question seeks to explain something, often with a “how”-question, which is the case in this thesis (Yin, 2018, p. 4). The explanatory case study tries to show the causes behind the outcome (Hellevik, 2002, p. 88). When explaining leverage in the UNSC through an explanatory case study, the internal validity is important. Causality is difficult to establish in a case study of the UNSC, because you cannot control for spurious effects. Therefore, I use the congruence method to be able to gain strong control of within-case variance.

Evera (1997, p. 55) explains that there are two main objectives for the choice of the case study design: to test the theory and to explain a case with central importance. The purpose of this thesis fulfills both these objectives. The thesis aims to assess the strength of the theoretical framework, and at the same time draw attention to the case in question. The theoretical propositions will both help guide the analysis, but in addition become the basis for analytical

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<sup>2</sup> The interviews are approved by the Norwegian Centre of Research Data (reference number: 257972).

generalization. The theoretical framework is created through the use of two different theories and tries to incorporate both rational and social approaches. Furthermore, the second objective is fulfilled because the Syrian humanitarian track in the UNSC is a complex and rare phenomenon, where three small non-permanent members have taken much of the responsibility in a case with high tension between the other members of the Council.

Robert K. Yin (2018, p. 15) defines a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the “case”) in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident.” This means that you want to explain a real-world case and assume that the explanation likely will include contextual conditions. This definition is fitting when studying a case in the UNSC, because it is difficult to separate the case from its context. The action in the UNSC is not isolated from other cases in the UNSC, or events and tension outside the Council. In addition, it is appropriate to include the definition by John Gerring (2007, p. 19) that explains a case study as “a spatially delimited phenomenon (a unit) observed at a single point in time or over some period of time.” This fits with the research question. The chosen units in this thesis are three small states acting as non-permanent members of the UNSC; Luxembourg, New Zealand and Sweden. The time frame of this study is between the years 2013 and 2018. The reason behind this delimitation is the wish to study the three states’ involvement in the humanitarian case on Syria that were initiated by Luxembourg and Australia in 2013. The delimitation makes it easier to study the work of the non-permanent members in-depth and answer the research question.

The multiple case study is relevant in this thesis because I seek to explain leverage by non-permanent members in the UNSC through theoretical propositions. This is a complex topic and I would not be able to test all non-permanent members in the UNSC within the scope of this thesis. A good way of researching the topic is therefore to limit the selection to small states, and incorporate several cases when conducting the case study research (Yin, 2018, p. 57). This can in addition help blunt the criticism of the uniqueness of the single case study by adding a replication logic. Replication is often used in multiple case studies, and Yin (2018, p. 55) highlights literal replication, which is done with two or three similar cases. The cases need to be carefully selected so that the individual case studies predict similar results. This logic is the same logic applied in experiments, but different to the sampling logic used in surveys. Replication logic used in multiple case studies works to enhance the external validity, which



means that the case study can be generalized to other situations beyond the case in question. The case study design originally has low external validity, but the analytical conclusions are strengthened when you investigate several cases and achieve the same results (Yin, 2018, p. 43).

Case study research is thus often criticized because of their low external validity, and van Evera (1997, p. 53) claims, “case-study results cannot be generalized to other cases”. However, Yin (2018, p. 40) points out that there are two different types of generalization. These are statistical generalization and analytical generalization. The statistical generalization is generalization of empirical data to a larger empirical phenomenon, while analytical generalization is theoretical, which means that empirical patterns can be seen as representative for the theoretical patterns. Instead of looking at the case study as a sample used to generalize to a broader population, the case study could be an opportunity to shed light on theoretical concepts. The analytical generalization can be based on modifying, rejecting or advancing theoretical concepts during the completion of the case study. The empirical findings about Luxembourg, New Zealand, and Sweden’s work in the UNSC have low external validity and cannot necessarily be generalized to other cases of small states in the UNSC. Still, if the thesis shows congruence between the theoretical propositions and the empirical findings, the results will be relevant for future theoretical development and use of theory when studying small states in the UNSC.

### **3.1.1 Selection of cases**

The cases of analysis are the three small non-permanent members Luxembourg, New Zealand, and Sweden’s work on the humanitarian crisis in Syria in the UNSC. Luxembourg was involved in starting up the work on the topic in the Council in 2013-2014, New Zealand was involved between 2015-2016, and Sweden was involved between 2017-2018. The units are therefore not studied within the same period of time, but within the same area of work. These states can all be said to be cases of leverage by non-permanent members in the UNSC.

In case study research the selection procedure is purposive and rests on an analysis of a large amount of possible cases (Gerring, 2007, p. 88). During my initial research, I evaluated many different areas of work and many different non-permanent members in the UNSC. The choice of studying small Western non-permanent members’ involvement in the work on the

humanitarian crisis in Syria was made for several reasons. First, because it is difficult to separate the context from the units of analysis in the UNSC, the cases are selected within the same area of work. Even though the conflict has developed and escalated between 2013-2018, the context within the Council and between the permanent five members are approximately the same during this period. Second, the humanitarian situation in Syria is an area of work where the non-permanent members have taken the lead in the Council, and especially these small members. Therefore, the selected area of work helps fulfill the purpose of the study, to explain how leverage is achieved. Third, there are several other interesting states within different groups in the UNSC, but because I wished to create a replication logic, I chose states with similar backgrounds (Yin, 2018). The final reason why I focus on the humanitarian area of the conflict and not an area of high politics, is the possibility of access to good data. Therefore, it is important to be aware that it is most likely easier for the non-permanent members to achieve political results in the humanitarian, thematic, and normative cases in the UNSC, and this can affect the findings in this thesis. Nevertheless, according to Yin (2018, p. 26) you should choose the cases where you have access and that best can illuminate the research question.

## **3.2 Congruence method**

The congruence method is a within-case method, focusing on drawing inferences from congruence or non-congruence of concrete observations with theoretical predictions (Blatter & Blume, 2008; George & Bennett, 2005, p. 181; Trochim, 2017; Yin, 2018). The congruence method is also named pattern matching (Trochim, 2017, Yin, 2018). The method is theory-focused rather than variable-centered (Blatter & Blume, 2008, p. 316). The congruence method is rather about testing congruity, which means similarities in the relative strength and duration of the expected causes (institutional factors and identity) and the observed effects (leverage in the Syrian humanitarian track in the UNSC). The method is a deductive and inductive interaction between abstract concepts and concrete observations. First, I deductively derive certain theoretical propositions from the theories, and then I inductively assess the framework's ability to explain and understand the outcome in a particular case. These propositions predict certain patterns, and if the patterns match, the internal validity of the thesis will be strengthened and I might avoid spurious causal mechanisms (George & Bennett, 2005, p. 184; Van Evera, 1997, p. 56).

When the case is an explanatory study, the congruence is related to the question of “how” and concerns the internal validity of the thesis. When a proposed explanation finds evidence in the case study it strengthens the conclusions. If this is the case after a replication logic by using additional cases, the conclusions and their validity will be further strengthened, but it will still be difficult to draw absolute inferences. If the results fail to show congruence between the evidence and theory, the theoretical proposition needs to be questioned (Yin, 2018, p. 178). In this way, the congruence method is a process done both deductively and inductively. Inductively, I assess the different theoretical propositions and reflect on the strength of the theories.

When using two complimentary theories as done in this thesis, it is especially important to be aware of the possibility of both theories pointing in the direction of increased leverage. The congruence method might not be able to alone tell us which factors were primarily responsible for the outcome or if the result was driven by other factors (George & Bennett, 2005, p. 186). Blume and Blatter (2008, p. 325) argue that “the congruence method is much more open to a less strict understanding of congruence and coherence but uses a much broader set of predictions and observations”. However, this means that the congruence method often is criticized for its use of inconsistent and vague theories to predict outcomes, which weakens the internal validity. The critique is relevant regarding this case study, because the broad theories of neoliberal institutionalism and especially the social constructivist aspect of soft power lack internal consistency in their predictions. Still, the point is not to prove direct causal mechanisms, but to evaluate existing theories by using empirical data (Van Evera, 1997, p. 90). The theories are not to be verified or falsified, but rather assessed for their quality to generate correct predictions. By using the theories in a case study of the UNSC, the theories can be advanced and made better suited for future testing in such situations. In the next chapters, I will present how these theories’ propositions are broken down into factors and operationalized for the following analysis.

### **3.3 Operationalization and construct validity**

To evaluate the theoretical propositions derived from the theoretical framework, I need to establish an analytical framework through operationalization. The purpose is to link the theoretical arguments derived from theoretical concepts with indicators in order to derive explanations (Waltz, 1986, p. 44). Based on the two theoretical contributions discussed in

chapter 2, I derived two theoretical propositions. These propositions will now be broken down into four factors. I characterize them as factors and not mechanisms, because it might prove challenging to test for actual causal mechanisms. Nonetheless, these factors will function as the analytical framework used to investigate the research question of this thesis: *How can small non-permanent member's leverage in the UNSC be explained?*

The first three factors explained below (self-interest, focal points, and transparency) are derived from the theoretical proposition of neoliberal institutionalism (Haas, 1980; Keohane, 1984; Keohane & Martin, 1995) and focus on the institutional setting of the UNSC. The institutional factors at work might create room of action for the non-permanent members. The last factor (attraction) is derived from the theoretical proposition of soft power and its connection to social constructivism (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998; Nye, 2004; Wendt, 1994). It assesses how identity can affect the non-permanent members' leverage within the UNSC. To be able to measure these factors, they need to be operationalized. *Operationalization* is the specification of the theoretical framework that permits case-specific rather than general predictions of outcomes for the cases examined (George & Bennett, 2005, p. 203).

Construct validity is “identifying correct operational measures for the concepts being studied” and therefore connected to the operationalization (Yin, 2018, p. 42). The four factors this thesis is relying on guide the analysis and what findings I can achieve (Yin, 2018, p. 168). Therefore, the construct validity of the thesis depends on two steps. The first step is the correct and precise operationalization of the theoretical factors into an analytical framework. This is challenging because theoretical concepts are often abstract, but if I achieve a precise operationalization, the data will be more valid (Van Evera, 1997, p. 27). However, Blatter and Blume (2008, p. 326) stress that when applying abstract concepts on empirical data the focus should lie on interpretation rather than operationalization. This means that the boundaries of the concepts often are fuzzy, and the operationalization should not be done in a technical manner. I still have chosen to operationalize the four factors to make the analysis easier to follow, but I will apply the factors in an interpretative way. The second step was to make the questions in the semi-structured interviews measure the derived factors in a precise manner. Thus, it was important with careful preparation of the interviews.

### **3.3.1 Measuring leverage through institutional factors**

The theoretical proposition of neoliberal institutionalism is that *small non-permanent members gain leverage in the UNSC because the Council functions as an arena for cooperation*. This means that small states' leverage can be explained due to a careful and systematic exploitation of the institutional arrangements in the UNSC. It expects institutions to facilitate cooperation. The proposition is vague, but there are several factors which affects the possibilities of cooperation inside institutions. The proposition is broken down into three institutional factors based on the neoliberal institutionalist approach; *self-interest*, *focal points*, and *transparency*. I will now present how these factors will be measured in the following analysis.

### **1. Self-interest**

Keohane highlights the difficulty of cooperation between independent states, because they are motivated by their self-interest rather than the common good. "Institutions should persist as long as, but only as long as, their members have incentives to maintain them" (Keohane, 1994, p. 51). He argues that cooperation and agreements sometimes develop on the basis of mutual interests or when states see possibilities of absolute gains (Keohane 2005, p. 9). For example, supporting humanitarian causes often prevent suffering and lead to positive recognition for the state, which can be an absolute gain. Regarding Syria, the indicators of self-interests in the UNSC are comprehensive. Russia supports Bashar Al-Assad, while the US supports the moderate rebels. Due to the asymmetrical power structure of the UNSC, differences in self-interest of the permanent members could prevent cooperation and leverage by small non-permanent members. Therefore, small members might have a self-interest in pleasing the powerful P5 members to enhance their own leverage in the Council. Indicators of this would be small states aligning with bigger states to enhance their own position. However, small states also have self-interests of humanitarianism, empowering international institutions, and to get the permanent members to the negotiation table in the UNSC. Indicators of these interests would be states standing up for their principles inside the UNSC.

### **2. Focal points**

Another way which an institution can facilitate leverage is through the process of focal points of coordination. Through focal points of coordination, non-permanent members can take the lead on different issues in the UNSC and set the agenda. Focal points can follow both formal and informal structures of the Council. These provide the member state with possibilities to

highlight issues at stake and increase the available information. In the Council, indicators of focal points are tools like the penholdership, the presidency, subcommittees, informal groups and alliances.

### **3. Transparency**

When cooperation fails, the explanation is often that the interests of the states were incompatible, however states may not be able to cooperate even when their interests are alike. The existence of common interests is therefore often not enough. Reducing uncertainty and limit asymmetry in information are important aspects facilitating cooperation. In other words, transparency is essential to cooperation and productive outcomes (Keohane, 1986b). Through increased transparency it becomes easier for member states to recognize other member states' attitudes and actions. This is relevant for small states, who often take their commitments seriously. They are often better prepared in negotiations and in this way increase their prospects for leverage (Axelrod & Keohane, 1985). Indicators of increased transparency could be information-sharing between P5 and the group of elected members (E10), same access to information, open meetings, public statements, and increased media stakeouts.

#### **3.3.2 Measuring leverage through identity**

The theoretical proposition of soft power is that *small non-permanent members gain leverage in the UNSC if they have an attractive identity*. Obtaining leverage rests on the ability to *attract* others through their values, culture, and foreign policy. This concept is vague and needs further operationalization.

### **4. Attraction**

The concept of soft power argues that if a state's identity represents values, foreign policy, and culture other states find attractive, it increases the likelihood of reaching its desired outcomes. This means that much of the attraction will happen prior to the state becomes a member of the UNSC. The identity needs to be established before entering the Council, and needs to be consistent within the Council. The states need to lead by example and become a forerunner in a specific area. So-called "honest-brokers", whose interests are common knowledge, can often be considered trustworthy and get the authority to suggest issues and possible outcomes (Risse & Kleine, 2010). Indicators of attraction is therefore if the state's identity is consistent and honest.

As evaluated in the theoretical chapter 2, the leverage small states achieve is dependent on the context. In this thesis, I am investigating the humanitarian track and the indicators are therefore connected to values, culture, and foreign policies perceived as legitimate in this field. General indicators of attraction are values, foreign policy, and culture based on qualities like humanitarianism, neutrality, morality, objectiveness, honesty, cooperation, and trust (Nye, 2011, p. 92). These matters are often portrayed in the states’ national strategies, actions, campaign material, or UNSC statements, and make the indicators of values, foreign policy, and culture less elusive. However, the moral authority of a state’s foreign policy will be an especially important indicator. As Nye (2004, p. 15; 2011, p. 84) suggests, a foreign policy recognized as legitimate and having moral authority creates leverage and makes it easier for a state to promote its cases. In contrast, a foreign policy that seems hypocritical or only based on national interests may undermine a state’s soft power resources (Nye, 2004, p. 15).

**3.3.3 Summary of operationalization**

In the table below, the theoretical factors derived from the theoretical propositions are summarized. The table sums up the operationalization of the theoretical framework and sets the basis for the following analysis in chapter 4. An important step to ensure construct validity is to structure the questions of the semi-structured interviews so they measure the same factors (appendix 2 and 3).

**TABLE 2 SUMMARY OF THE OPERATIONALIZATION OF THE THEORETICAL FACTORS**

<b>Theoretical approach</b>	<b>Theoretical propositions</b>	<b>Theoretical factors</b>	<b>Empirical indicators</b>
<b>Neoliberal Institutionalism</b>	Leverage through the institutional factors	Self-interest	Mutual interests need to exist to create cooperation. Aligning yourself with a more powerful actor increases leverage.

		Focal points	Agenda-setting and coordination of efforts through different mechanisms in the UNSC.
		Transparency	Openness in meetings, information-sharing and media access.
<b>Soft Power</b>	Leverage through an attractive identity	Attraction	Foreign policy, culture, and political values are considered legitimate, consistent, and having moral authority.

The summarized factors above are used to structure the following data collection and empirical analysis. I have in the previous chapters established the research design and research methods of this thesis. I will next present the data collection methods, document analysis and semi-structured interviews.

### 3.4 Collection of data

The data collection methods follow four principles laid out by Yin (2014, p. 105). These are (1) using multiple sources of evidence, so called triangulation of sources; (2) creating a case study database; (3) maintaining a chain of evidence; and (4) exercising care when assessing the different sources and their origin. These steps are important to ensure the reliability of the thesis.

Case study evidence can come from different sources and methods, and in this thesis the evidence comes primarily from documentation and information collected through interviews of diplomats and experts of the UNSC. The data collection methods are therefore document analysis and semi-structured interviews (Yin, 2018, p. 114). Qualitative document analysis



relies on rich information and stresses words rather than numbers when collecting and analyzing data (Bryman, 2016, p. 380).

Triangulation of sources enhances the internal validity of the thesis. Triangulation is used to analyze the case from different angles and strengthen the ability to find causal relationships at play, or in this case congruence (Grønmo, 2004, p. 55). A challenge when collecting sources regarding the UNSC is that much of the national information is classified. Furthermore, the meetings in the UNSC are often done in closed consultations with Chatham House rules, only open to the fifteen member-states. Therefore, I rely on a thorough examination of different primary and secondary sources. In this way, I follow the first recommendation by Yin by triangulating different sources of evidence. Documents are considered as stable sources of evidence and can both give broad and specific information. In this thesis the documentation provides specific details of the events in the Syrian case, provided through UN meeting records and written statements. The secondary sources consist of supporting textbooks, articles, press releases, official statements, and existing literature. These sources can corroborate the findings from the semi-structured interviews, which contain subjective understandings of the case in question. By using multiple sources of evidence, I also reduce the danger of selection bias, which means when the collection of sources is incomplete (Yin, 2018, p. 114).

Reliability is worth mentioning regarding the data collection. Reliability means that if another researcher followed the same procedures as conducted in this study, the researcher would end up with the same findings. To achieve high reliability, it is important to minimize error and bias by doing a structured and explicit data collection. In addition, it is important to be honest about possible weaknesses of the analytical strategy (Yin, 2018, p. 46). To organize the different sources, I created a case study database. This was an overview of all the possible factors and indicators laid out by the theoretical framework, and I then placed relevant information into the different categories.<sup>3</sup> Another important point to enhance the reliability is to maintain a chain of evidence, which means to allow the reader to follow any evidence from the research question to the case study findings. Therefore, I have tried to make it possible to follow my steps from the research question, to questions in the interview guide, to the findings evaluated throughout the analysis. In this way, the reader can evaluate my

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<sup>3</sup> This database is not added into the appendix, because it entails personal information about the different informants.

interpretations when applying theory on the empirical material. A weakness is the informants being anonymous, making it difficult to follow the evidence in detail (Yin, 2018, p. 134). However, other researchers posing the same questions to UNSC diplomats regarding the Syrian conflict, should end up with similar findings.

The interviews are an important source of the case study evidence in this thesis and take the form as guided conversations. By using primary sources collected from semi-structured interviews, the internal validity is strengthened (Yin, 2018). Because interviews have been used as one of the main data collection methods, I use the following sections to evaluate the implementation of this methodological approach.

### **3.4.1 The semi-structured interview**

The interview is a good way of collecting data due to the insight and explanations it provides and especially when suggesting explanations of events. In addition, through interviews you are able to get insights reflecting the participants' relativist perspectives (Yin, 2018, p. 118). Interviews are used when information about the phenomenon studied is not easily found in other places. Beckmann and Hall (2013) emphasize that you should focus on information and elements impossible to collect through formal open channels or otherwise, and interviews are chosen as such channels are limited to investigate the research question in this thesis.

The interview as a research method has sometimes been considered a mistrusted source of evidence. Some fear that the interviews are biased and not representative, or that the information gathered and reported is imprecise (Bleich & Pekkanen, 2013, p. 84). To reduce the uncertainty and mistrust, the interviews done in this thesis followed a series of procedures for developing, completing, and reporting the interview data. In this way the interviews can form a valuable source of evidence and help explain leverage by small non-permanent members in the UNSC. Before finalizing the interview guide, I conducted two background interviews with relevant UNSC experts. These experts are listed in the interview guide, but not included in the empirical analysis. Rather they were used to increase my understanding of the topic.

A fundamental question when doing interview research is the choice of interview style. The degree of structure depends on the purpose of the thesis. When doing an explanatory case

study, the need for structure is low and you often get better information by posing open-ended questions. Still, the purpose of this thesis is to a certain extent to compare the actions by three different states, which creates a need for a certain degree of structure during the interview. I therefore chose the semi-structured interview as the data collecting method. The semi-structured interviews are more like guided conversations rather than structured questions and are often characterized by a high degree of flexibility (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). The semi-structured interview consists of a range of prepared questions, but they are often open-ended and general in form. This is a weighing between flexibility and structure, where my interviews are placed in between (Grønmo, 2004, p. 130). Regarding reliability, it is important that if the interview was repeated by someone else, they would generate the same information (Mosley, 2013, p. 25). The development of the interview questions and the final interview guide can be found in appendix 2 and 3.

### **3.4.2 Selection of interview objects**

During six months in 2018, I worked as an intern at the Norwegian Permanent Mission to the UN in New York, with the UNSC as part of my responsibilities. Through my work at the mission, I daily had the opportunity to observe the work in the UNSC. I observed the formal UNSC meetings, and I waited outside the closed consultations for informal information from the participants. During this time, I became acquainted with the diplomats working in the UNSC, which gave me the unique opportunity to interview several of the relevant people involved.

In this thesis, I wanted to explain small non-permanent members goals, strategies and success through an explanatory multiple case study. Therefore, the relevant informants needed to have information on the humanitarian work on Syria in the UNSC (Leech, Baumgartner, Berry, Hojnacki, & Kimball, 2013, p. 214). My informants were diplomats with managing roles in their national missions or oversaw the work on Syria between 2013 and 2018. In addition, I conducted a series of in-depth expert interviews to corroborate the findings. I wanted to get several perspectives, to avoid only getting information on non-permanent members' victories in the Council. In either situation, I conducted elite interviews, not in the sociopolitical sense, but because of the informants' knowledge on the topic (Leech et al., 2013, p. 210). I chose to interview people with similar positions in the different national missions, to increase the potential for comparison of the three cases (Gallagher, 2013, p. 194). The main informants

were selected through a strategic sampling and contacted directly. I also made use of the snowballing technique, which refers to “the process of seeking additional interview leads from one’s interviewees” (Bleich & Pekkanen, 2013, p. 87). This is an especially good technique when interviews are difficult to come by, but with the danger of being trapped in an interlinked network of similar respondents. To avoid only interviewing informants with the exact same world view, informants from other UNSC member states, both non-permanent and permanent members, were interviewed. The reason why I used the snowballing technique was that it is easier to contact informants in important positions through a shared reference (Beckmann & Hall, 2013, p. 203). Furthermore, if an original informant was a good source, it was likely he/she would refer me to another well-informed informant (Bleich & Pekkanen, 2013). I conducted interviews with four UN experts and seven UNSC diplomats. The list of the eleven informants interviewed is added in appendix 1.

### **3.4.3 Completion of interviews and ethical considerations**

I conducted in-depth interviews based on an interview guide with open-ended questions and a wide range of so-called probes (Devine, 2002). The questions and probes were created before the interviews, and formed a vague structure I could follow. The interview guide and the included questions were equal to all informants (Bryman, 2016, p. 486). The reason behind this choice was that the informants were elites and often had limited time for interviews. It was important to appear prepared and precise (Gallagher, 2013, p. 193). Still, a flexible interview situation creates the possibility to change the order of questions or remove a question if the informant already answered the topic earlier in the interview. The interview can retrieve the states’ opinions regarding the Syrian humanitarian case, and it was these views that were the center of the interviews (Bryman, 2016, p. 467).

The eleven interviews were conducted in New York, London, and Oslo, in addition to conversations on Skype during February and March 2019. I had to do several conversations over Skype, since the relevant experts had left New York for new diplomatic postings. The interviews lasted from 30 minutes to 3,5 hours and were not recorded. To record the interviews would have provided a more accurate interpretation of the conversations and enhanced the reliability, but as Yin (2018, p. 118) explains, a recording device should not be used if the informants feel uncomfortable in its presence. A positive element of the interview is that you can take sensibilities of the informants into consideration. It became clear during

my first interviews that the informants did not wish to speak while recorded, especially when they referred to national strategies or the actions by other members of the UNSC. In addition, the different missions to the UN had strict no-electronic regulations. Instead, I focused on listening closely and writing out my notes directly after the interviews to ensure precision.

Before I conducted the interviews, I made sure the project was approved by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD). This included making sure the informants were informed of the voluntary basis of the interviews. The informants got an email with information about consent and anonymity options. It was especially important to be aware of the sensitive data I collected through my conversations with the present and former UNSC members. The case of Syria is highly politicized, and it was important to treat all personal data carefully during my field work. I made sure the informants knew the data would be handled confidentially, and that they could withdraw at any time.

An important part of the preparations for the data collection is the development of an interview guide, especially to enhance the construct validity. The guide shows the topics of the interview and how the interviews were conducted (added in appendix 2). This guide was the basis for the interviews. It should both be precise enough to achieve the relevant answers, but still be flexible enough for me to be able to conduct the interviews (Grønmo, 2004, p. 161). To ensure good construct validity, the questions of the semi-structured interviews were created based on the operationalization of the theoretical framework in chapter 3.3 (Lund, 2002, p. 92). An explanation of the question structure is added in appendix 3.

## **4 Analysis Part I: Three cases of leverage**

The empirical analysis will explore how the three small non-permanent members achieved leverage in the UNSC. I apply congruence method to explore if there is congruence between the theoretical propositions and the empirical material. This part of the analysis is threefold and chronological in order. Luxembourg was a member of the UNSC between 2013-2014, New Zealand was a member between 2015-2016, and Sweden was a member between 2017-2018. First, I present the case of Luxembourg empirically, before I analyze the case in light of the two theoretical frameworks. Second, I present and analyze the case of New Zealand, and third, the case of Sweden. Even though the humanitarian track of the Syrian crisis is in focus, the analysis will draw on the chemical and political tracks to highlight how these issues are interlinked, and to demonstrate different possibilities of leverage by small non-permanent members.

### **4.1 Luxembourg in the UN Security Council**

On 18 October 2012 the UN General Assembly held elections for two seats in the Western European and others group (WEOG) for the 2013-2014 term in the Council. Three states were contesting the two seats, Luxembourg, Australia, and Finland (SCR, 2012). Australia and Luxembourg won the two seats and entered the UNSC in January 2013. When Luxembourg entered the UNSC, the Syrian civil war was ongoing, and it created a tense situation in the UNSC. China and Russia had already vetoed several resolution attempts on Syria. At the same time, the issue was not formally on the Council's agenda, but added as bullet points in the monthly program. This was an indication saying the issue might be added to the agenda if the situation should require it. The future continuous meeting tracks regarding the political, humanitarian, and chemical weapons situations every month were not yet established, and no states were penholders regarding the humanitarian situation in Syria.

During January 2013, the Council received briefings regarding the humanitarian situation in Syria in closed consultations, by the Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay and head of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Valerie Amos. This was the first time since July 2012 that Ms. Amos briefed the Council, and a sign that the situation in Syria was getting worse (SCR, 2017). During the next months of 2013 there were several

attempts of action by permanent Council members on the humanitarian situation in Syria. Russia issued a draft press statement regarding bombings in Damascus, which failed to achieve consensus, while France proposed a draft press statement on the humanitarian situation which was problematic for Russia (informant 1, 2019; SCR, 2017). The issue of the humanitarian situation in Syria was still only written in bullet points on the Council agenda, but the issue began to dominate the Council's work in April, May and June of 2013. During these months, the Council's work on Syria stalled completely, while the pressure from the media and UN agencies grew. In April, Ms. Amos and other UN commissioners wrote an appeal to all relevant parties in the New York Times saying "In the name of all those who have so suffered, and the many more whose futures hang in the balance: Enough! Summon and use your influence, now, to save the Syrian people and save the region from disaster" (Amos, Cousin, Guterres, Lake, & Chan, 2013).

Luxembourg saw this as an opportunity to take responsibility and started working on a presidential statement regarding the humanitarian situation, joined by Australia (informant 5, 2019). While Russia and the US were the unspoken penholders of the political situation, Luxembourg and Australia began to draft Council decisions jointly on the humanitarian issues (Security Council Report, 2016, p. 4). At the same time, there were high tension regarding the issue of chemical weapons in Syria. In late August 2013, attacks that killed hundreds of civilians occurred in Ghouta, a rebel-held area east of Damascus, and reportedly involved the use of chemical weapons. This created an atmosphere in the Council that was described as worse than during the Iraq war (Gowan, 2014, p. 8). Luxembourg requested a briefing on the topic together with the P3 regarding a UN investigation on the ground. On 28 August the P5 met to discuss a possible resolution but did not share their draft with other Council members, which was the usual procedure regarding the case of Syria (What's in Blue, 2013).

In September 2013, there was high diplomatic action outside the Council when the US and Russia tried to develop a framework for eliminating the Syrian chemical weapons stockpiles (informant 5, 2019). Australia held the presidency of the UNSC this month and helped facilitate the process within the Council together with Luxembourg. This was a case of high politics, and in late September the Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and US Secretary of State John Kerry met bilaterally in the UN to prepare a draft resolution on the Syrian chemical weapons elimination (SCR, 2017). The process was therefore handled informally by Russia and the US outside the Council, and formally by Australia inside the Council.

Australia and Luxembourg worked closely with the P5 during the month of September and tried to avoid issues that could upset Washington and Moscow. This upset several other UNSC members who thought the whole E10 should have been included in the process (Gowan, 2019). Still, the P5 process resulted in the first resolution on Syria in 2013 (resolution 2118), which included several political elements as well as verification of the destruction of chemical weapons in cooperation with the Organisation for the Prevention of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) (What's in Blue, 2013).

According to my informants, the actions by Luxembourg and Australia in September 2013 resulted in critique from the remaining E10. At the same time as negotiations were avoided inside the Council, Luxembourg and Australia worked on a different plan. They decided to table a new presidential statement, which the two states had worked on for months, in the immediate aftermath of the adoption of resolution 2118 (informant 6, 7, 2019). This statement was approved by all Council members and was the first statement regarding the humanitarian situation in Syria. As a result of this success, Luxembourg and Australia decided to continue the work on a formal draft resolution demanding cross-border aid delivery to Syria.

In the beginning of 2014, Luxembourg and Australia decided to add the incoming non-permanent member, Jordan, to the group of penholders. This decision would give the two penholders an Arab ally on the issue, as Jordan was representing the regional Arab group in the Council (What's in Blue, 2014b). Jordan was a state which had felt the direct consequences of the Syrian civil war, when they opened their borders to the Syrian refugees. As of 2014 Jordan had received close to half a million refugees (UNHCR, 2014).

The vote on resolution 2139 in February 2014 followed two weeks of negotiations and hard work by the three states together with OCHA and the P3. Some informants pointed out the critical role of OCHA in establishing the humanitarian track on Syria, and how OCHA can be defined as an “unspoken penholder” on the humanitarian track (Gowan, 2019, informants 7, 9, 2019). The final version of the resolution was drafted after several compromises, but it still included a demand for cross-border access, sanctions for non-compliance, and accountability (SCR, 2017; UN, 2014a). Luxembourg, Australia, and Jordan cooperated closely with the P3 and decided to put the draft to a vote, even though they were not sure of the Russian position (What's in Blue, 2014b). They used a lot of energy negotiating the text among the P5 (What's



in Blue, 2014a). The resolution was successfully adopted and established the penholdership on the Syrian humanitarian track in the UNSC.

The informants also pointed to a different event happening at the same time as the draft resolution by Luxembourg, Jordan, and Australia was circulated. The Sochi 2014 Winter Olympic Games in Russia took place on 7-23 February (informants 5, 6, 2019). The vote on resolution 2139 occurred on 22 February 2014, which means the negotiations of the text occurred during the Winter Olympics in Russia. One informant highlighted the work and pressure Luxembourg, Australia, and Jordan put on Russia at the same time as Russia was the host for the whole world (informant 5, 2019).

The resolution was a milestone in the Syria case in the UNSC, but it had little effect on the ground. In July, the three penholders put forward a strongly worded resolution after five intense weeks of negotiations with the P5. China was open to a deal this time, which did put Russia in a pressured position. After two more rounds of negotiations with the entire Council the UNSC adopted the strongly worded resolution 2165 unanimously (What's in Blue, 2014c). The resolution was revolutionary because it authorized the UN to deliver cross-border humanitarian aid without the need of state consent (UN, 2014b; UN Security Council, 2014). Within four months after the resolution was adopted, the UN had sent aid to several hard-to-reach locations in Syria (SCR, 2017).

#### **4.1.1 Institutional Leverage**

As mentioned in chapter 2, the theory of neoliberal institutionalism has a positive view of cooperation within institutions, and the facilitating role institutions can play in this regard. The permanent members of the UNSC need to cooperate with the non-permanent members to draft resolutions, as a resolution needs nine affirmative votes to be adopted. The theory therefore expects that in some instances, *small non-permanent members gain leverage in the UNSC because the Council functions as an arena for cooperation*. This happens when institutional factors facilitate cooperation, including shared *self-interests*, the creation of *focal points*, and increased *transparency*.

The starting point of the neoliberal institutionalist theory is rationality. Within the framework of the UNSC, *self-interests* of the permanent members will to some extent determine how

much leverage a small state like Luxembourg achieves (Keohane, 2005). When Luxembourg entered the UNSC in 2013, the case of Syria was contested, and both Russia and China had used their veto power to block several proposed resolutions. The interests of the P5 implied that there would be less space to act for Luxembourg regarding Syria. Nevertheless, the gradual establishment of the Syrian humanitarian track can be acknowledged as a clear instance of leverage by non-permanent members, despite the classical asymmetry of power in the UNSC. The resolutions 2139 and 2165 speak to the outcome achieved by Luxembourg, Australia, and Jordan. The different efforts by Luxembourg need to be evaluated to determine how these instances of leverage can be explained.

As the Syrian conflict grew worse and the humanitarian suffering increased during 2013, several permanent members were searching for a humanitarian option. They had a shared *self-interest* in establishing a humanitarian track, and as demonstrated in the empirical case, both Russia and France proposed Council action, but the P5 was not able to agree. Even though the shared interest was to create an outcome regarding the humanitarian situation in Syria, there was no shared opinion on which member should lead the effort. Allowing the non-permanent members to take the lead, was therefore a solution to their problem. The information provided by two of my informants implied that the permanent members allowed Luxembourg and Australia to take the lead, and in this way led them to believe they made a difference, when it actually was in the permanent members' shared interest (informants 6, 7, 2019).

Nevertheless, the role as penholder on the humanitarian track was not handed directly to the non-permanent members. The opinion of most of the informants was that Luxembourg and Australia created the opportunity through several proactive measures (informants 6, 7, 2019). This is in line with the former analysis by SCR (2016), which concluded that the penholder position was achieved by taking initiative and tactical thinking, rather than seeking prior consent. During its first year, Luxembourg formed an effective role as a non-permanent member and actively searched for ways to set the agenda. One way was to form a close relationship with Australia, which considered itself as a powerful non-permanent member of the UNSC. Some would even describe it as a P5+1 member, because it was perceived as a member on the level of the P5 (Gowan, 2019). As a non-permanent member, it seemed like Luxembourg left much of the proactive measures to Australia – a larger member state with close relations to the UK and the US (Gowan, 2014). This was underlined by several informants, but they also emphasized that Luxembourg achieved an effective role in the

background with its close relations with France (informant 6, 7, 2019). This seems like an indicator of the *self-interest* of Luxembourg of aligning itself with a more powerful non-permanent member and therefore gaining an indirectly close relationship with the UK and the US (Keohane, 2015). This further points to the argument that Luxembourg might not have been as successful establishing the humanitarian efforts without Australia being a skilled and proactive member of the Council.

The actions taken by Luxembourg and Australia after the chemical attack in Syria in August 2013 is an example of how aligning with and pleasing the permanent members of the Council can create leverage. Immediately after the chemical weapons attack in Syria, Australia held the presidency of the Council in September. The atmosphere in the UNSC was extremely tense, and based on information retrieved from my informants, I argue that Luxembourg and Australia understood two things. First, that an investigative mechanism regarding the chemical attack would probably not happen if the Council continued the accusations and tense negotiations within the frame of the UNSC. This was rather a case where the US and Russia needed to agree on capital level, due to the national self-interests involved (informants 4, 5, 7, 2019). This assessment shows pragmatism by the two states and leads to the second point. Luxembourg and Australia understood that in this situation they could possibly gain future leverage with the two important P5 members, Russia and the US. As presented in the empirical evidence, Australia and Luxembourg made sure the UNSC did not discuss any problematic issues to Russia and the US during the month of September, giving them space to reach a bilateral understanding. This was perceived as well-handled from a P5-perspective, which created incentives for Russia and the US to comply with the later demands of Luxembourg and Australia (informant 5, 6, 2019). This perception is corroborated by the empirical evidence that shortly after resolution 2218 on the chemical track was adopted, Luxembourg and Australia presented a presidential statement on the humanitarian situation in Syria with the support of the P5 (Gowan, 2019). Therefore, the situation above can be understood as Luxembourg aligned itself with the P5 in the chemical track to gain respect and leverage regarding the humanitarian issues in Syria.

Another less-documented argument of the importance of understanding the *self-interests* of the states involved, was demonstrated by Luxembourg, Jordan, and Australia when their first resolution on humanitarian matters coincided with the Winter Olympics in Russia in 2014. Several diplomats indicated how this was a highly skilled way of creating leverage with the

P5 member, Russia (informants 3, 5, 6, 2019). No matter if the timing was intended, it probably did create leverage when negotiating the humanitarian resolution. Russia would want to avoid negative press coverage on the humanitarian situation in Syria while the whole world was following the Olympics. This demonstrates how important it is to evaluate and understand what interests are at stake for the permanent and non-permanent members, and how you can turn it into your advantage.

A repeated issue during my interviews was the penholder practice as a general mechanism preventing leverage by non-permanent members in the UNSC, as it only was the P5 who were penholders prior to 2014 (informants, 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 2019). The position as penholder is a position of power in the Council, because all members need to consult you on the matter at hand (Ralph & Gifkins, 2017). During 2014, Luxembourg, Australia, and Jordan had established a firm Syrian humanitarian track by getting two important resolutions adopted. As they were able to establish the role as penholders on the Syrian humanitarian track, they changed the practice of penholding in favor of the E10. The creation of a humanitarian penholdership on Syria is a well-documented indicator of how non-permanent members can achieve leverage through the creation of *focal points*. By creating the position as penholders, the states were able to raise issues on the agenda, frame the negotiations and initiate different meetings. This was stated by almost all my UNSC informants, who underlined the great importance of the non-permanent penholder position (informants 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 2019).

Another important *focal point* in the establishment of the Syrian humanitarian track was the presidency of Australia. Several informants pointed to the possibilities for non-permanent members in this formal institutional position. It became clear that Australia and Luxembourg used the Australian presidency as a way of keeping issues off the agenda while the US and Russia had direct talks (Gowan, 2019). Thorhallsson (2012, p. 151) argues that the best opportunity for influence by non-permanent members is when they are holding the presidency, because they can use it to put items on the agenda or keep things off the agenda. The situation of keeping issues off the agenda in the UNSC during the chemical track negotiations, however, is an argument that speaks against the importance of *transparency* (Keohane & Martin, 1995).

*Transparency* did not seem as the most important focus of Luxembourg during its tenure. Information-sharing between the E10 members was low and much of the negotiations were

handled informally with the P5 members directly (informant 6, 7, 2019). However, information-sharing with UN agencies was high. Luxembourg cooperated closely with the head of OCHA, Valerie Amos, and other NGOs. As several informants emphasized, the close relationship between non-permanent penholders and the UN agencies sometimes provided increased information and therefore a better position in the negotiations (informant 1, 6, 8, 9, 2019).

#### **4.1.2 Leverage through Identity**

The concept of soft power argues that if a state's identity is *attractive* to other states, it increases the likelihood of reaching desired outcomes. In other words, the political values, culture, and foreign policy of Luxembourg could have affected its role and leverage within the UNSC (Nye, 2011, p. 92).

Luxembourg is a highly developed state, as number 21 on the UNDP Human Development Index (HDI). Furthermore, it contributes 1% of its GDP to humanitarian projects and is the second largest contributor to the UN per capita (Rønneberg, 2019; UN, 2017a). The state has no colonial ties and takes pride in being a multicultural society. This creates an image of an objective state concerned with humanitarian policies. During the campaign of Luxembourg, the Minister of Foreign affairs, Jean Asselborn, said "we're not burdened with a legacy of colonialism. When we make foreign policy, we're not pursuing any hidden agenda" (Schult, 2012). This is in line with the argument made by the interviewed diplomats, arguing that features like neutrality and objectiveness are often important to other states in the UN, especially states from the African and Asian continent (informant 5, 6, 2019). The identity of Luxembourg fits the argumentation by Nye (2011, p. 92) that states with a neutral, honest, and cooperative background seem *attractive* to other states.

Luxembourg is one of the founding members of the European Union and has a strong connection to Europe, bordering Germany, Belgium, and France. It presents its capital, Luxembourg City, as "one of the capitals of Europe" and the city houses several EU institutions (The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, 2018). Therefore, it seems like the image of Luxembourg is connected to its European identity and history. The state sees itself as speaking with a collective and European voice, and emphasizes its close relationships with Germany and France (Wurth, 2006). The foreign policy of Luxembourg seems highly affected

by this and has a strong focus on multilateralism and the values shared by Europeans (The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, 2018). Luxembourg portrays itself as a partner of the powerful members in the EU. Two important members of the EU, the UK and France are also permanent members of the UNSC, which could influence Luxembourg's role in the Council.<sup>4</sup> A former focus on neutrality in Luxembourg's foreign policy has clearly been replaced by a focus on cooperation, as the state is a member of NATO, OECD, OSCE, Council of Europe, in addition to being one of the financial centers of Europe (The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, 2012). This policy of cooperation was a priority during its campaign for a UNSC seat (Schult, 2012). Cooperation is key in the UNSC to reach results, and is therefore an *attractive* element for other states within the UN (Barnett & Duvall, 2005).

The background and identity of Luxembourg created an advantage regarding the establishment of the humanitarian track. Consequently, the state could fill a different position in the UNSC compared to the P5 (informants 5, 8, 9, 2019). When examining the Council during 2013, it becomes clear that several of the P5 tried to establish an outcome regarding the humanitarian situation in Syria without success. It seems like the situation required an impartial non-permanent member state to create the political space for negotiations. To be able to fill this role, the state had to be considered a legitimate actor by all Council members. Luxembourg, with its history of neutrality, no colonial ties, and a foreign policy based on cooperation and humanitarianism was an *attractive* candidate (informants 1, 3, 5, 6, 2019). Due to the state's low self-interest in the Syria case, it appears like the permanent members did not perceive Luxembourg as a threat to their own position in the case. I argue that they rather perceived Luxembourg as a responsible and transparent non-permanent member capable to take on the humanitarian issues of the Syrian crisis. Thus, Luxembourg could together with Australia take the role as a so-called "honest-broker" in the humanitarian track, which means to act as a facilitator to promote consensus, without any hidden agenda (Lahn & Rowe, 2015; Risse & Kleine, 2010). I argue that the *attractive* identity of Luxembourg provided the possibility to take the responsibility of this role without too much resistance from the P5.

During its time in the Council, Luxembourg had close relationships with its neighbor and fellow EU member France (informant 6, 2019). The focus on cooperation in Luxembourg's

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<sup>4</sup> The UK's exit from the EU is currently planned for October 2019. This could change the dynamic of the Council in several ways. For more information see Gowan (2018).

foreign policy and its role within the EU could help explain why Luxembourg became a close ally of the P3 members and Australia. Luxembourg is used to having powerful neighbors and allies within the EU, and I argue that the state took a similar approach within the UNSC. In this way, the identity of Luxembourg outside the UN was consistent with its identity inside the UNSC. The consistency of its positions made the state seem honest and trustworthy, and might have increased the standing and *attractiveness* of Luxembourg with the P5 members.

By studying the term of Luxembourg in the UNSC, I argue that the state gained the respect and trust of the P5 by its involvement in the resolution on the chemical track in September 2013. This was indicated both by several diplomats and was also substantiated by the timeline of the following events. By helping Russia and the US reach consensus, Luxembourg and Australia gained the trust of the P5. “The P5 understood that they could and would play the game” as one of my informants framed it (informant 7, 2019). Therefore, it seems like to gain the trust and respect of the permanent members of the Council, you need to demonstrate a high degree of diplomatic skills and knowledge of the unwritten rules of the Council. This proactive role does not fit the described identity of Luxembourg as a cooperative and aligning member, and seems more likely to be an effort initiated by Australia. An element underlining this argument is that the presidency in September 2013 was held by Australia, which to a large extent led the process in the UNSC. Australia perceived itself at the same level as the P5, and the proactiveness therefore seems to fit the identity of Australia better than Luxembourg (Gowan, 2019). These findings undermine the importance of Luxembourg as a non-permanent member in the Council.

However, even if the role of Luxembourg was not as strong as first suggested, several informants emphasized the importance of cooperative processes led by Luxembourg behind the scene, especially when negotiating with France (informants 5, 6, 7, 2019). This indicates that the cooperative identity of Luxembourg created leverage in the humanitarian track. However, it is difficult to determine if it would have been enough leverage to achieve resolution 2165, without the proactiveness of Australia.

Last, an important element adding moral authority to the two states’ standing in the humanitarian issues, was the decision of Luxembourg and Australia to add Jordan to the group of penholders in 2014. Jordan is a neighboring state of Syria and had felt the direct

consequences of the conflict. Therefore, the statements were credible and more powerful, as they were based on this state's own experiences (informant 6, 2019).

## **4.2 New Zealand in the UN Security Council**

New Zealand entered the UNSC in January 2015, after Turkey lost the election against New Zealand and Spain. The elected members this year were Chad, Nigeria, Jordan, Chile, Lithuania, Angola, Malaysia, Venezuela, Spain, and New Zealand (SCR, 2014). This was a varied group with different degrees of ambition. New Zealand had high ambitions and quickly took a leading role in the group of elected members (informant 1, 5, 2019).

When New Zealand entered the Council, the Syria case in the UNSC had regular scheduled briefings on the humanitarian track, the political track, and the chemical track (SCR, 2017). New Zealand became penholder of the Syrian humanitarian track together with Jordan and Spain, taking over the pen from Australia and Luxembourg. New Zealand chose to focus on the Middle East Peace Process and Syria as its prioritized cases. One reason behind this choice was the fact that these cases were in a standstill, and few other states wished to get involved (informant 5, 2019). Another reason was the fact that the Syrian humanitarian track was one of two possible cases where New Zealand could become penholder in the UNSC. Starting out as a penholder would provide New Zealand with a role in the UNSC from the outset, as the penholder position represented a possibility to get a voice in the issue (informant 5, 9, 2019).

In the humanitarian track there was not much happening during the first months of New Zealand's term, as the agenda was mainly set by the chemical track. New Zealand and the other penholders tried to keep the meetings on the humanitarian issues ad hoc and in closed consultations to avoid politicization of the issues (UN, 2015). This was necessary to avoid the open hearings becoming theatric, with ambassadors only reading prepared statements (informant 5, 2019). Even though there were few achievements in the humanitarian track on Syria, New Zealand was heavily involved in other cases in the UNSC.<sup>5</sup> During its first months

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<sup>5</sup> A highly influential effort by New Zealand was the work on resolution 2286 (2016) condemning attacks on medical facilities and personnel in conflict situations (UN, 2016).



in the Council, New Zealand often had standoffs against the UK in other cases. This was early in its term and several informants saw this as defining moments for New Zealand in the UNSC, also affecting its role in the Syrian case (informants 5, 6, 7, 2019).

In the political track on Syria most of the negotiations were happening at capital level outside the UNSC, often between Moscow and Washington (SCR, 2017). During New Zealand's term, there were two political resolutions adopted on Syria, both results of discussions between Moscow and Washington (SCR, 2019). In the humanitarian track, however, New Zealand had better opportunities to achieve leverage. New Zealand had one person covering all Syria tracks in the Council, which created a broad overview of all the available information on the topic. This was different from the permanent members, who often had different persons covering the different tracks. At times, New Zealand even possessed information not yet shared between the experts from the P5 states (informant 5, 2019). Together with the other penholders, New Zealand was able to renew the resolution on humanitarian cross-border aid in both December 2015 and December 2016. These were renewals of the resolution 2165 established by Luxembourg, Australia, and Jordan, and were important for the continued delivery of aid to challenged areas in Syria.

On the chemical track New Zealand was active in the run up to establishment of the OPCW Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) in resolution 2235 adopted in August 2015 (What's in Blue, 2015, 2016a). New Zealand held the presidency in July 2015 and tried to facilitate negotiations on the issue, while the US was hesitant to take any initiative due to the ongoing Iran nuclear talks (What's in Blue, 2015). Even though New Zealand did not affect the adoption of the resolution directly, it held a close relationship with the head of OPCW, Virginia Gamba, and gained access to information not shared with the whole Council. In this way, New Zealand was prepared in negotiations and was able to get language into the resolution on the chemical track that did not seem significant, but was important for the people working on the ground (informant 5, 2019).

In January 2016, Jordan was replaced by Egypt as co-penholder on the humanitarian track of Syria. Egypt was a powerful non-permanent member and a prominent member of the Group of 77 in the UN, which is a coalition of 134 states in the UN working on enhanced joint negotiation capacity (The Group of 77, 2019). Egypt had a close relationship with Russia, while Spain had a close relationship with France. This provided direct links between the

capitals and made negotiations in the Council effective (informant 5, 2019). The three penholder states soon formed a well-functioning team and cooperated on getting attention to the humanitarian situation.

In the summer of 2016, the battle of Aleppo was coming to an end. This meant heavy fighting and that parts of the city were besieged by either rebel forces or Syrian government forces. On 7 August 2016, New Zealand, France, Ukraine, the US and the UK hosted an informal “Arria” meeting on the siege of Aleppo, in addition to two formal meetings on the humanitarian situation in the Council.<sup>6</sup> In September 2016, New Zealand was president in the UNSC. Despite being warned against it by the P5, New Zealand decided to push for a High-level debate on Syria. New Zealand’s Prime Minister, John Key, spoke in the General Assembly and chaired the meeting in the UNSC. He was direct and highly critical of the handling of the humanitarian crisis in Syria and pointed fingers at both Russia and the US (Watkins, 2016). This was a unilateral attempt by New Zealand to create pressure, which did not amount to any direct outcome (informants 5, 8, 2019).

During the fall of 2016, the penholders worked effectively as a team and came up with a strongly worded draft resolution in December regarding a seven-day end to all attacks in Aleppo (What's in Blue, 2016b). The proposal was negotiated and adjusted between the penholders, the US, and Russia, and it seemed that New Zealand would get it adopted (informant 5, 9, 2019). However, two days before the vote, New Zealand got notice that Russia would veto the resolution, and the draft resolution ended with Russia’s sixth veto on a Syria resolution and China’s fifth (What's in Blue, 2016b). The Aleppo case was problematic due to the merging of political and humanitarian issues regarding Aleppo, even though New Zealand, Egypt, and Spain worked hard to keep political interests out of the humanitarian track at the time.

New Zealand often took clear positions on cases like Aleppo, even if it made the P3 annoyed (informant 5, 2019). The P3, and especially the UK, were critical of New Zealand for not taking a harder stance against Russia. Several informants confirmed that often the representatives from the E10 did not dare to propose language or break silence in negotiations due to the consequences they would face from the P5, both inside the Council and from the

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<sup>6</sup> Arria meetings are an informal meeting outside the UNSC chambers, often initiated by a UNSC member. The meeting can be open to the public, and it can invite different actors from civil society.

capitals (informants 1, 2, 5, 6, 2019). The permanent members of the UNSC play a negotiation game, and as an incoming non-permanent member you need to resist the pressure from the P5. As one informant presented it, “you need to be fluent in the language of diplomacy and be able to resist a lot of bullying” (informant 6, 2019). Experts from New Zealand often crossed the P3 and had full backing from the Mission in New York and the Ministry back home (informant 5, 2019).

#### **4.2.1 Institutional Leverage**

New Zealand’s term included twelve formal resolutions on Syria in the UNSC, however most of the outcomes were not reflected in the situation on the ground. Many of the resolutions were new efforts in the political and chemical tracks, while the focus in the humanitarian track was on renewing the existing resolutions on humanitarian cross-border access established by Luxembourg, Australia and Jordan. Because of the ongoing battle of Aleppo, the tension in the Council was high when New Zealand entered as a non-permanent member, which created a difficult starting position (informants 3, 5, 2019). Neoliberal institutionalism emphasizes that institutions are not constant but are affected by internal and surrounding factors (Axelrod & Keohane, 1985). Thus, even if renewal of resolutions could seem as an easier task than establishing new efforts, the tense circumstances made it harder to renew resolutions agreed upon in less challenging periods of time (informant 7, 2019). The penholders New Zealand, Spain, and Jordan (later Egypt) were able to renew the resolutions on cross-border humanitarian aid without government consent in 2015 (resolution 2258) and in 2016 (resolution 2332), and through this continued the position of penholdership by non-permanent members.

Neoliberal institutionalism expects states to be rational self-interested actors. Keohane and Martin (1995, p. 42) argue that institutions are primarily made up of the states involved, which means the asymmetrical power structure of the Council is problematic when the permanent members have *self-interests* involved. To get resolutions adopted the permanent states must believe there are absolute gains for cooperation to occur. As demonstrated in the case of Luxembourg, this occurred when negotiating humanitarian issues. These are supposed to be non-political and the UNSC members saw absolute gains in preventing civilian suffering. However, during New Zealand’s term, there are several examples of resolutions not getting adopted in the humanitarian track of Syria. New Zealand’s effort in the case of Aleppo

in the fall of 2016 was such a case, and it demonstrates how the lack of mutual *self-interest* between the permanent members in other tracks influenced the humanitarian track. It became clear for New Zealand that it would be difficult to bridge the situations between the P3 and Russia, and despite hard work by the penholders for several months, the efforts resulted in vetoes by Russia and China. This example illustrates that when the *self-interests* of the P5 become too strong, it was difficult to achieve actual leverage in the UNSC.

This was a negative development from the case of Luxembourg. Humanitarian aspects were usually something the UNSC could agree upon as it is not a political issue. In this case, the *self-interests* of the P5 evolved in line with the conflict. The P5 had strong interests concerning the political situation in Syria, especially Russia as an ally of the regime (informant 5, 2019). Several of the informants emphasized how these *self-interests* came to light in the Syrian humanitarian track and complicated the work of the non-permanent members. “Russia and the US were often seen hijacking the humanitarian track by presenting political issues and using the Council to blame each other” as one diplomat phrased it (informant 3, 2019). During New Zealand’s term there was rather a trend of negative spillovers, where the political tension was spilling into the humanitarian track and creating greater tension in the UNSC. These developments underline the rational argumentation of the neoliberal institutionalist approach.

Another theoretical assumption of the neoliberal institutionalist approach is that aligning with powerful actors could give you increased leverage in the UNSC. Aligning with the permanent members should be in the *self-interests* of smaller states to create a better foundation for getting your preferences heard. There are few indications of this in the case with New Zealand. As mentioned in the empirical evidence, New Zealand took an independent role in the Council from the outset and criticized its close allied partner the UK early in its term. Furthermore, the informants emphasized how this created respect and leverage with the P5 (informants 3, 5, 6, 7, 2019). This is surprising in light of the theoretical expectations. The findings indicate that New Zealand gained respect and a prominent role as bridge-builder because of their independent role. New Zealand seemed less interested in becoming a close ally to the permanent members than was observed with other larger non-permanent members like Australia, Spain, and Japan. Several diplomats emphasized that creating an independent position helped New Zealand be perceived as an objective honest-broker by Russia and China

(informant 1, 5, 7, 2019). This was different to the roles of the co-penholders Spain and Egypt, who were powerful states and often coincided with the P5.

Neoliberal institutionalism explains how there are both some formal and informal processes that shape interactions between actors (Peters, 2012, p. 139). This shaping is often easier for powerful states, which is normally the case with the P5 controlling the UNSC agenda through the penholder system and their substantial and procedural experience (Ralph & Gifkins, 2017; Security Council Report, 2016). New Zealand and the other co-penholders continued the work of Luxembourg, Jordan, and Australia in institutionalizing the non-permanent penholdership on the Syrian humanitarian track. In this way, the states were able to affect the agenda through this *focal point* of coordination and pressure the other members in the Council. Even though the procedure of penholding was an invention by the P5, it seemed like the only direct possibility for a non-permanent member state to set the agenda in the UNSC, except from holding the presidency (informant 5, 2019). By using the penholder seat like the P5 would have done, New Zealand used this *focal point* to highlight its opinions and set the agenda on humanitarian issues in Syria. This was especially demonstrated by its proactive role in the negotiations on continuing resolution 2165 through the two cross-border resolutions in 2015 and 2016 (informant 5, 6, 7, 2019). If New Zealand, Spain, and Jordan were not penholders, it would likely have been difficult to be included in the negotiations with the P5 (informant 5, 7, 2019). This is underlined by the contrast to other cases in the UNSC, where the negotiations normally first are handled between the P3, then the P5, before the E10 at last is included. The penholder role provided a possibility to gain a role in the negotiations.

Due to New Zealand's penholder role, it was often New Zealand that reached out to the other non-permanent members regarding Syria. The E10 group became a *focal point* of coordinating the Syria work, and New Zealand took a leading role and enhanced the collective voice of the group (informants 1, 5, 7, 2019). The members of the E10 are often different states with different interests and opinions. On substantial issues they often disagree and side with their P5 partners, but New Zealand was active in promoting their common interest of increased leverage for non-permanent members. During New Zealand's tenure, the group kept regular meetings and the information-sharing between the members increased. When united, the group could put increased pressure on the P5 and achieve results (informant 5, 2019).

As penholder of the Syria humanitarian track, New Zealand was active in coordinating the meetings with other relevant happenings within the UN. New Zealand used the institutional setting actively during its term. An example is when New Zealand as president of the Council in September 2016 decided to push for a debate on Syria at the same time as there would be a similar meeting on Syria in the General Assembly. As one informant framed it, “sometimes the events of the month in the UN coincide with your agenda and it can be used in your favor” (informant 8, 2019). In this way, New Zealand’s Prime Minister was able to present the issue in two arenas.

The initiative of joint meetings on Syria during New Zealand’s presidency was an important use of the presidency as a *focal point* to place Syria on the agenda. However, when studying the term of New Zealand, the empirical evidence suggests the continuing effort of pushing the agenda during their whole term was more important. By highlighting the issue regularly during its two year-term, New Zealand created a firm pressure on the issue. As one informant explained it,

The presidency is the opportunity to introduce two or three topics of your interest but do not abandon them the rest of the time. It is best to have a plan throughout the year that incorporates these interests in the Council (informant 8, 2019).

It appears as if the use of media to increase openness and *transparency* is not always successful. New Zealand’s efforts in the General Assembly did create attention on Syria but did not amount to any specific results (informant 5, 2, 7). As one informant said, “Publicity stunts to get your principles highlighted do not work and are rarely helpful” (informant 5, 2019). This is supported by the findings in the case of Luxembourg, where public meetings and official statements often conflicted with effective negotiations.

An argument by Keohane (1995, p. 42) is the role of information in international politics and the fact that institutions can provide and share it. In New Zealand’s campaign, openness and working methods were a high priority. This became evident during New Zealand’s time in the Council, but not always in the expected manner. I operationalized *transparency* as increased information-sharing, open meetings, and press statements from the UNSC. New Zealand did not push for open meetings and would rather prefer closed consultations. The reason seemed to be that the open meetings became staged performances by the P5, and New Zealand wanted

to avoid situations where Ambassadors only read prepared statements (informant 5, 2019). During New Zealand's term, I rather found a focus on internal information-sharing between the E10 within the Council and information-sharing with the UN agencies. New Zealand's close relationship with the OPCW on the JIM Mechanism in the chemical track is an example of increased leverage through information-sharing. Information shared between New Zealand and OPCW was implemented into resolutions to provide actual assistance on the ground.

#### **4.2.2 Leverage through Identity**

The values, culture, and foreign policy of New Zealand might have affected New Zealand's possibilities during its UNSC tenure. These three elements constituting the identity of New Zealand need to be evaluated to consider its *attraction* to other UNSC members (Nye, 2011, p. 92).

An argument in favor of how identity can create leverage within the UNSC is the focus of humanitarianism in New Zealand's foreign policy. According to Whitfield (2007) quoted in Thorhallsson (2012), New Zealand's opportunity to become penholder on the humanitarian track was due to its status as a small, neutral state, in addition to its diplomatic expertise and regional knowledge. New Zealand is a highly developed state as number 16 on the HDI. It internalized societal egalitarian values with the early establishment of a working welfare system and was the first state to institutionalize women's voting rights (UNDP, 2019). The state is one of the ten top donors of OCHA, and it works especially close with this UN agency to provide humanitarian assistance to states in need, including Syria (CERF, 2019). These elements are imbedded in the national identity of New Zealand. During its time in the UNSC, a survey revealed that 87 percent of the population approved New Zealand's role in the UN (Headley and Reitzig 2012, p. 81).

By focusing on two difficult areas of work inside the UNSC, Syria and Israel-Palestine, New Zealand seemed like an altruistic member, not interested in promoting its own interests (NZ Parliament, 2017). It can be argued that due to New Zealand's identity, it saw it as a responsibility to get involved, even though its action often did not amount to any direct outcome on the ground. This responsibility of action was often highlighted by the Ambassador, Gerard van Bohemen: "The aim on this one is to make a practical difference. We know resolution of themselves don't do that, but if it helps people make decisions to

change their behavior then it would be useful” (Nichols, 2016). The above argument was elaborated by several of the diplomats I interviewed, and made New Zealand an *attractive* candidate to continue the humanitarian penholdership (informants 2, 3, 5, 6, 2019). They emphasized how New Zealand pushed for action, also in situations where consensus seemed impossible. An example was the state’s effort in adopting a resolution regarding a seize fire in Aleppo in 2016. As one informant phrased it, “impact is not always formal outcomes like resolutions, but the process of negotiating itself” (informant 6, 2019).

An important focus of New Zealand’s campaign in the years leading up to 2016, was its independence in international politics, and the independent role it would embrace in the UNSC (Breach, 2017). This is part of the identity of New Zealand developed over decades. The state was a British colony from 1841 until it became a fully independent state in 1947, even though the British monarch remains the head of state and it is a member of the Commonwealth of Nations. Therefore, New Zealand has always had close ties to the UK, and often followed the UK in different international matters. The last decades there has been a decline in British influence in New Zealand, mainly because of a new generation creating its own identity (King, 2003). The image of independence, neutrality, and non-alignment has continued to challenge the historical image of colonial New Zealand, and has been evident in its foreign policy. In 2005, Prime Minister Helen Clark responded to how New Zealand deals with the challenges of the twenty-first century and said, “it is based on the belief that as a confident, diverse, inclusive Pacific nation, we can work together to find new opportunities and market our best ideas profitably to the world” quoted in Devetak & True (2006, p. 245).

Devetak and True (2006) concluded that New Zealand sees its size and location as an opportunity, rather than a constraint. This approach is in line with New Zealand’s arguments in the campaign running up to the election to the UNSC in 2014. In 2014, Prime Minister John Key expressed that New Zealand’s win was a win for small states in the UN, “we have worked very hard on the bid for close to a decade because we believe that New Zealand can make a positive difference to world affairs and provide a unique and independent voice at the world’s top table” (Trevett & Young, 2014). The state seems to have a consistent confidence and ambition in the role as a small state, wanting to be an independent and principled player. Several informants emphasized how this identity of being an important actor helped New Zealand fill the role as a proactive penholder (informants, 3, 5, 7, 2019).



The soft power concept suggests that to be able to attract other member states, you need to be considered as a legitimate actor (Nye, 2011). As New Zealand entered the Council, its identity as an independent and neutral state was consistent with the role it developed in the UNSC negotiations. New Zealand kept a hard line towards the P5, and especially the UK. By standing up to its ally, New Zealand was able to confirm its image as an independent state within the Council. New Zealand was clearly not afraid of the P3 and received criticism for not being harder on Russia (informant 5, 2019). This was surprising to many of the other members, and it made New Zealand seem as a legitimate actor by the rest of the P5 and among the E10 (informants 3, 5, 7, 2019). This was further demonstrated by the fact that New Zealand did not seek much advice from Australia before entering the Council. Australia finished its term in the UNSC the year before and could have provided much knowledge. However, it seemed like New Zealand wanted to create its own role (Gowan, 2019). An argument drawn from this is that a small state from the WEOG needs to show that it is able to hold a neutral position as a western state. A way of demonstrating this is to not side with the P3 on every matter. On the other hand, New Zealand was working with Spain, Jordan, and Egypt as co-penholders on the Syrian humanitarian track. Spain was a close ally of the P3, while Egypt had a close relationship with Russia (informant 7, 2019).

An element several informants emphasized as *attractive* was the effectiveness of New Zealand in negotiations (informants 3, 5, 6, 2019). Being an effective honest-broker was based on experience and knowledge, but also its background as a small state. New Zealand has a flat hierarchy in its Ministry and UN Mission, which makes the diplomats more independent in their efforts. One diplomat argued that to be effective in negotiations, you cannot be afraid of doing something wrong (informant 3, 2019). Another followed in the same line of argumentation, saying “you need to move quickly. You cannot always wait for capital to approve, and therefore you need their constant backing, or at least appear to have it” (informant 6, 2019). This was also confirmed by studies of the UNSC by Pouliot (2016) and Lupel & Mälksoo (2019) who found that small states are able to maneuver quickly and therefore achieve an advantage. Also, the former findings of Schia (2015) support this. He finds that the French delegation’s effectiveness and structure was the preferred model of the small state of Norway when it was a member of the UNSC. A central element was the full backing and seamless communication between Paris and New York. The US delegation on the other hand, is weighed down by their interagency process, which means that several ministries often need to agree in every matter. It creates a lot of bureaucracy and makes the

negotiations ineffective (informant 6, 2019). These contrasts demonstrate how the flat political structure of small states may be an advantage in the UNSC because other members perceive you as an effective and proactive member.

### **4.3 Sweden in the UN Security Council**

In June 2016 two seats in the WEOG-group, held by New Zealand and Spain, were contested by Sweden, Italy and the Netherlands (SCR, 2016). Sweden got 134 votes and was elected in the first round. Italy, and the Netherlands were not able to achieve the needed 129 votes and decided to share the UNSC-seat between them.

When Sweden entered the Council in 2017, it became penholder on the Syrian humanitarian track. The political backdrop was dramatic, with increased geopolitical tension and the Syrian conflict going on year six (UNHCR, 2018). In addition, the tension in the UNSC was high and there was uncertainty of what the Trump administration's UN policy would be (informant 4, 2019). Sweden had ambitions and was highly prepared for its term in the UNSC. Before entering the Council, Sweden prepared itself by creating case files on everything going on in the UNSC, deepening its contact with civil society, the incoming Secretary-General, and other UN agencies, in addition to creating a new UN department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Sveriges radio, 2016; What's in Blue, 2017a). Also, Sweden prepared for its penholdership on Syria by travelling to Damascus in October 2016 (informant 3, 2019). Sweden and Japan took over the penholder seats from New Zealand and Spain, while Egypt would sit for another year. The goals of Sweden as penholder was to depolarize the humanitarian meetings in the UNSC and improve the situation on the ground (informant 3, 2019).

The first months of Sweden's membership were characterized by the chemical track on Syria. On 4 April 2017 there was an attack in the Khan Shaykhoun area of Idlib, where at least 60 civilians were killed (What's in Blue, 2017b). The US, the UK, and France circulated a draft resolution the same day, while Russia presented a counter proposal the day after. These competing drafts were both put "in blue" on 5 April 2017 (formally put up for adoption), and it was clear that finding a compromise between the two proposals had failed. At the same time there were rumors of an impending attack on Syria by the US (informant 3, 2019). Due to the deadlock between the P5, Sweden decided to act proactively and gather the E10 group. They met in the afternoon on 5 April 2017, and the same evening Sweden circulated a draft

resolution on behalf of the E10 group to the entire Council. The reaction from the P5 was varied. China was supportive of the initiative, while the P3 accused Sweden of being disloyal (informant 3, 2019). On 7 April 2017 the UNSC met, and the US ambassador Nikki Haley was clearly frustrated by the E10 attempt, and especially by Sweden's actions (informant 3, 4, 7, 2019). The same night the US followed up with airstrikes in Syria (What's in Blue, 2017c). A few Council members reacted positively to the airstrikes, while Sweden, and several others, questioned the legal basis for the action and emphasized the importance of respecting international law (informant 3, 4, 2019). In the end, none of the resolutions were adopted, but the effort by Sweden was considered a successful uniting of the E10 group (UN, 2018).

During Sweden's term as penholder on the humanitarian track, the meetings on humanitarian issues were tenser and more polarized than in the meetings of the political track. The reason was that the political track was mainly dealt with outside the Council, while the developments on the ground often were discussed in the humanitarian track within the Council (informant 3, 2019). However, Sweden and the other penholders were able to renew the authorization for cross-border humanitarian access with resolution 2393 in December 2017, a continuation of the first resolution adopted when Luxembourg, Australia and Jordan were penholders (What's in Blue, 2017d). The work on this resolution began in the Swedish delegation in September 2017. At the same time, Russia had indicated during a UNSC meeting on 27 September that the resolution was supposed to be a temporary measure, and that it wanted a downgrading of the humanitarian cross-border resolution (UN, 2017c). It was therefore expected that Russia would like to roll back the authorization, and several rounds of negotiations were held. Japan was close to the P3 and wanted a technical roll-over, which is a technical replication of the previous resolution. However, Egypt and Sweden were open to evaluate the different suggestions from Russia and China to ensure renewal. The penholders had several bilateral meetings with the P3 and Russia (informant 3, 4, 2019), and due to the consistent efforts by the penholders the resolution was eventually renewed for 12 months.

As mentioned in chapter 1, on 21 February 2018, Sweden and the newly entered penholder Kuwait distributed a draft resolution on a cessation of hostilities in Eastern Ghouta outside of Damascus, after several weeks of negotiations and bilateral talks with Russia (What's in Blue, 2018b). The background was a statement from all UN chiefs in Damascus, who asked for a monthly cease fire (informant 3, 2019). At the same time, the pressure from the media and UN

agencies grew stronger. Reports of 1200 deaths in Eastern Ghouta in two weeks resulted in a statement from the High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein:

How much cruelty will it take before the international community can speak with one voice to say enough dead children, enough wrecked families, enough violence, and take resolute, concerted action to bring this monstrous campaign of annihilation to an end (What's in Blue, 2018b).

The draft resolution demanded “that all parties cease hostilities without delay”, but said little about the exact timing of the cease fire (UN Security Council, 2018). After several rounds of negotiations and bilateral meetings with Russia, China, and France the text was finally adopted unanimously on 24 February 2018. Sweden and Kuwait were praised by this outcome and their ability to gather the E10 members, but the warring parties on the ground decided to not follow the resolution and continued fighting (UN, 2018).

In April 2018, just two months after the unanimously adopted resolution, the atmosphere in the Council deteriorated due to new chemical attacks in Douma, Syria. Russia and the US put forward competing draft resolutions in the chemical track, while Sweden took a bridging role and tried to create a compromise with a third draft resolution. However, it was evident that there was no political will among the P5. A few days later, Sweden tried again with a new draft resolution, but got the message from the US, the UK, and France that an airstrike in Syria was already decided between the P3 (What's in Blue, 2018a, informant 5, 2019). During the weeks after the chemical attack in Douma, the tension in the UNSC grew. The Council did not agree on anything related to Syria, not even press points which is the least formal non-binding output from the Council. Russia and the US used the Council to blame each other for doing damage in Syria, and both media and diplomats at the UN said they had not seen a more divided Council since the Cold War (informant 7, 2019).

During this tense period Sweden decided to push for a visit by the UNSC, the Special Envoy to Syria, and the Secretary-General to the historical home of the former UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld in Backåkra, Sweden. The trip's agenda was primarily Syria, and the UNSC was able to present a common press statement at the end of the trip. This outcome did not formally change anything, but the atmosphere in the Council was less polarized when the UNSC arrived back in New York.

In September 2018 Sweden started working on the renewal of the cross-border humanitarian resolution. In its vote on the resolution in 2017, Russia made it clear that it was the last time there would be a renewal of the resolution (informant 3, 2019). Therefore, Sweden and Kuwait started working on a plan of action to keep the resolution alive in close collaboration with OCHA. The objective was a transparent negotiation with all E10 members and a technical roll-over of the resolution. During the negotiation process, several members had trouble with the text, including Russia, China, the Netherlands, the US, and Poland. The uncertainty of the adoption continued until the adoption meeting on 13 December 2018, where 13 members voted in favor while Russia and China abstained. Against all odds, the resolution was renewed for another year and three million Syrian civilians could still receive humanitarian aid (informant 3, 2019).

### **4.3.1 Institutional Leverage**

During the Swedish UNSC tenure, there were three resolutions adopted regarding Syria, all developed by Sweden as co-penholder for the humanitarian track. All resolutions considered the humanitarian aspects of the war, including two renewals of the cross-border aid resolution from 2014, and one regarding Eastern Ghouta. These outcomes formally demonstrate leverage by Sweden in the UNSC, regardless of the tense situation between the permanent members of the Council. However, we need to evaluate how these achievements can be explained. As the empirical evidence demonstrates, the Swedish term in the UNSC was characterized by the humanitarian and the chemical tracks on Syria. Sweden took an active role in both tracks, and I therefore assess both these efforts to show the full picture of how Sweden achieved leverage in the humanitarian track.

Sweden's tenure of 2017 and 2018 was dramatic. In 2017 five of six vetoes were regarding Syria, and in 2018 Syria was the most discussed topic in the Council with 34 open meetings and 33 closed (Halvorsen, 2018). The relationship between the two permanent members Russia and the US was difficult both inside and outside the UNSC (The Economist, 2017). Russia was heavily involved militarily in the support of Bashar al Assad at the time, while the US was supporting the opposition (Schmitt & Gibbons-Neff, 2018). Due to the high tension and strong national interests of Russia and the P3, and especially the US, the room of action seemed slim for a small non-permanent member. The rational basis of the neoliberal

institutionalist theory predicts that when no common *self-interests* are present, non-permanent members will not be able to create consensus (Keohane, 1994). However, even if the humanitarian track was heavily polarized, it can be argued that the humanitarian aspects provided a common ground for all states in the UNSC. A central task when Sweden entered the UNSC was therefore to create political space for objective non-political negotiations (informant 3, 2019).

The tension in the Council was evident with the negative outcomes in the chemical track. The lack of outcomes was not in line with the amount of effort and resources laid down by Sweden and other states in this track. This underlines the argument by Keohane and Martin (1995) that the outcome will vary depending on the nature of interests in the case. As the empirical case shows, Sweden took a strong bridging position in three heavily politicized cases in the chemical track, after the Khan Shaykhoun attack in April 2017, the attempted renewal of the JIM mechanism in October 2017, and after the Dhouma attack in April 2018. These efforts were costly to Sweden, both in resources and in political standing. The efforts were highly criticized by the US and the UK, and Sweden needed to withstand a great deal of political pressure (informant 3, 6, 9, 2019). These cases show how difficult it was to reach consensus when there was no overlap of *self-interests* among the central actors, and it stresses the rational argument of the neoliberal institutionalist theory. However, I argue that the efforts by Sweden in the chemical track had other spillover-effects regarding Sweden's position in the humanitarian track and in the UNSC in general.

Due to the penholdership on the Syria humanitarian track, Sweden achieved a central position in the negotiations with direct access to the two permanent members involved in the conflict, Russia and the US. The penholder position seemed to work as a *focal point* of coordination for Sweden. Almost all informants confirmed how the penholder position provided a formal reason to engage in the negotiations (informants 3, 4, 5, 7, 2019). As one informant framed it,

The politics in the Security Council are often governed from the P5 capitals and agreed upon in bilateral negotiations. Therefore, the penholder position is crucial to set the agenda. Even if the penholder procedure is not a formal institutionalized procedure, it's a practice everyone follows (informant 2, 2019).

This statement shows that several of the negotiations in the chemical track would probably not have been the case without Sweden's role as penholder. Sweden was only penholder in the humanitarian issues, but demanded a position in the negotiations in other tracks (informant 3, 2019). It seems that the Council functioned as an arena for cooperation because Sweden was able to create the space for negotiation in the issues by setting the agenda and proposing action. Even if the effort did not amount in any direct leverage or outcome in the chemical track, the focal point provided Sweden an important and visible position within the UNSC.

The Khan Shaykhoun attack in April 2017 was characterized as a defining moment in the Swedish membership, and demonstrated Sweden's political will to play an important role in the UNSC. Neoliberal institutionalism suggests that if you align yourself with a powerful member, it will often be easier to achieve leverage (Keohane & Martin, 1995). Sweden's efforts are not in line with this argument, as Sweden often took a hard position against the P3, who would otherwise be its natural allied partners. This is similar to the findings in the case of New Zealand. Several informants indicated that after the case of Khan Shaykhoun, Sweden disrupted the plan of the US, which was to get a Russian veto on its proposed resolution, and then follow up with military retaliation against the Syrian regime as a last resort (informant 3, 4, 2019). The bridging position by Sweden presented political space for negotiations with Russia and China, and therefore made the US look like they were not interested in finding a compromise. A less documented, but interesting argument, was that Sweden knew that the P3 would never veto a humanitarian resolution on Syria, while this could be a risk with Russia and China. Therefore, creating a bridging role for itself could be done by standing up to one of the P3 members. This action would then probably create *leverage* with Russia and China (informants 3, 6, 2019). This point is supported by the fact that the hard line against the US resulted in a clear support from China and a more cooperative Russia (informant 3, 6, 2019).

The chemical track on Syria illustrates the difficulties of achieving leverage in the UNSC. However, it also demonstrates how Sweden continued the effort by New Zealand of building a united E10 group. Several of the interviews emphasized the leading role of Sweden from the beginning of its term (informants 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 2019). Sweden's effort of gathering the E10 shows how the group was a *focal point* of coordination in the UNSC. This gave Sweden the opportunity to highlight issues and present alternative action. During the two years of the Swedish membership, the E10 became an institutionalized group with monthly meetings

among the Ambassadors and the Secretary-General. Furthermore, formalized communication on lower levels of diplomacy was established. In this way, Sweden and the other penholders could often present statements on behalf of the entire group, which increased their leverage by putting pressure on the P5 members, proving that the E10 can build pressure when united (informant 2, 7, 2019).

This became even more evident because the new Trump administration and the entrance of Sweden into the UNSC coincided in time. During 2017 it became clear that the US was not worried of looking obstructive in the Council, and several informants mentioned that it was not Russia who was the biggest challenge, but the US and its unpredictable behavior (informants 1, 2, 3, 2019). This uncertainty created a difficult working environment, but it did also provide increased possibilities for the E10 to play a bigger role.

The *focal point* of coordination presented by the united E10 group is closely connected to information-sharing and improving the communication between the non-permanent members (Sievers & Daws, 2019). While the group was varied and had different opinions on the substantial issues, they often agreed on the case of Syria and wanted to increase the leverage of the group (informant 3, 2019). The Swedish actions to gather the E10 and create a common ground within this group, could be seen as the first step in an attempt of bridging the Council divides. This was further underlined by two joint statements by the E10 in 2018, when the ten ambassadors appeared together at the media stake out for the first time (UN Web TV, 2018). In 2018 the group presented a ten point-list on how to increase non-permanent members' leverage, which is added as appendix 4. This underlines the effort by Sweden of creating an institutionalized group, which could increase their leverage not only in the humanitarian track, but in the UNSC in general.

Information-sharing can reduce uncertainty between the UNSC members as actions and interests become common knowledge (Peters, 2012, p. 155). Through the *focal point* of the E10 group, the flow of information and *transparency* was improved. The E10 meetings was an arena for information-sharing, which makes it easier for small states to navigate the negotiations inside the Council. In addition, Sweden had an important network, and worked closely with UN agencies, civil society and the Secretary-General.



Another example of how the penholdership worked as a focal point of coordination and agenda-setting, was resolution 2401 regarding a monthly seize fire in Eastern Ghouta in 2018. Sweden and Kuwait were able to persuade the P5 members to adopt a resolution, with pressure from the E10 group, OCHA, and people on the ground. It became clear from my interviews that the opinions of this diplomatic action were divided. Some saw it as an example of non-permanent members pushing for a resolution without any real content (informants 1, 4, 6, 2019), others saw it as the responsibility of the non-permanent members to try and bridge the situation between the P3 and Russia (informants 3, 5, 7, 2019). One informant (6, 2019) emphasized that the resolution had no real power behind it, only words. It is easy to criticize an effort in hindsight. However, the effort led to an increased cooperation between the penholders and the E10 group. Sweden was able to bridge the positions of the P5, and achieved attention. In this way, Sweden increased its status among the other members, which could help Sweden in other situations (informant 3, 2019).

### **4.3.2 Leverage through Identity**

As co-penholder on the Syrian humanitarian track, Sweden had a voice in the discussions, but it also came with a great responsibility in a conflict that grew worse every month. To understand the leverage achieved in the Syrian humanitarian track, it is crucial to understand the role Sweden had in the UNSC (Nye, 2011). Which political values, culture, and foreign policy are important to Sweden, and how did it affect its leverage during its UNSC term? Thorhallsson (2012, p. 144) emphasizes how the Nordic states often pursue their interests through the use of reputation, culture, and diplomatic skills, and often shape outcomes without hard power resources. If a state represents values, culture, and foreign policy other states find *attractive*, it increases the likelihood of leverage.

The history of Sweden's foreign policy is characterized by neutrality, no colonial ties, and good relations with other states. Today, a central aspect of the Swedish foreign policy is gender neutrality. Sweden characterizes its foreign policy as feminist and focuses on improving women's rights in all areas of work. During its campaign and preparation for its UNSC membership, Sweden focused on human rights, international law, and humanitarian issues, stressing its integrity-driven foreign policy (Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 2016). Haugvik and Sending (2019) argue how Sweden's image in international politics has been as the "moral superpower". The former policy of neutrality in Sweden has been replaced by a

policy of solidarity. These qualities are often characterized as *attractive* and matching the values and principles of the UN (Nye, 2004; Ulriksen, 2007).

Thorhallsson (2012, p. 148) argues that states that score high on HDI are more likely to be proactive within the UN system. The ranking provides prestige and adds to the image of the state among other members. Sweden has a high income per capita and is number seven on the HDI (UN, 2017a). It seemed like Sweden had great ambitions when entering the UNSC and believed it could make a difference (informant 3, 2019). Political will, a positive view of the UN, and ambition are important parts of the foreign policy of small states (Thorhallsson, 2012). Several informants emphasized how the diplomats working in the UNSC needed to believe in the ability to make a difference. When a state possesses the will and ambition to make a difference, it naturally tries to achieve a larger role within the institution (informants 3, 5, 6, 7, 2019).

Ulriksen (2007, p. 560) further argues that the Nordic states try to influence by active promoting humanitarianism. It is a form of “social power” in pursuit of a view of the “good society” and demonstrates that “creating a strong image of Sweden abroad is another means of promoting Sweden”. Sweden has a long history of supporting the UN and has e.g. since 1948 contributed more than 80 000 military and police personnel to UN peacekeeping missions. Moreover, Sweden has national unity evident in its inclusion of the UN in its foreign policy objectives and its long history of contribution and commitment to the UN. Thorhallsson (2012, p. 146) argues that longstanding values of equality might provide an ideological foundation for supporting humanitarian efforts, which seems to be confirmed in the case of Sweden. This is further underlined by the arguments by Swedish diplomats when entering the UNSC. Sweden highlighted its long tradition in UN peace operations and its experience in the Peacebuilding Commission, and the humanitarian aspects were in focus (Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 2016). Nye (2004, p. 9) argues how peacekeeping and humanitarian efforts are attractive causes.

However, according to Thorhallsson (2012, p. 151) a state’s values are not automatically transformed into international influence. It must be combined with image-building, knowledge, initiatives, and skills that show consistency. The features of being an attractive state needs to be transformed into legitimacy within the UNSC if it wants to achieve leverage. Sweden entered the UNSC as an *attractive* non-permanent member, becoming penholder of

the Syria humanitarian track. To create leverage in this field, Sweden took the role of penholder on the Syrian humanitarian track seriously, representing the values, culture, and foreign policy of Sweden consistently within the Council (informant 1, 3, 7, 2019). As mentioned, the preparation by Sweden was comprehensive. Sweden is one of the top ten economic contributors of OCHA, and it stayed in close contact with OCHA during its term (OCHA, 2019). Therefore, I argue that Sweden achieved leverage due to their image as a forerunner in the humanitarian area of work. The UNSC is a highly technical environment, and if you are skilled and has expertise in a specific area, you are often able to negotiate the matter in a successful way (informant 4, 2019).

Sweden focused on its knowledge and experience, both regarding the case file on Syria and procedural matters in the Council. Values are important, but it is just as important to understand how the UNSC works. As one informant framed it, “agility is key” (informant 4, 2019). Sweden had close contact with former UNSC members to understand the informal procedures of the Council and received advice from New Zealand. In addition, Sweden had experience from three former terms in the UNSC, the latest in 1997-1998 (informant 3, 2019). The informal procedures of the UNSC are complicated, and it often takes up to one year for new members to understand (Engell, 2018). Because the Council is “an unwritten world”, issues like timing of the draft resolutions, the order of circulation, and procedures as small as getting an early spot on the speakers list are important to gain leverage (informant 2, 2019). As one informant phrased it, “if you are number 14 on the list of speakers in the Council, half the Council will be asleep before you even say a word” (informant 3, 2019). This demonstrates the need for experience and knowledge of how the Council works, if you want to achieve a serious role and gain leverage in political processes. An aspect highlighted by the informants and corroborated by other sources was the flat hierarchy between the Swedish mission, the capital, and its network (informant 3, 4, 6, 2019). This is similar to the findings in the case of New Zealand and demonstrates a triangle of unity that needs to be present if the state wants to achieve results. It seems like both New Zealand and Sweden achieved an image as experienced and effective members, which were *attractive* to other Council members.

The role as honest-broker often gives the authority to propose issues for the agenda and alternative outcomes (Risse & Kleine, 2010). This is highlighted by the role Sweden had as penholder. Sweden, together with the other penholders, were able to get three resolutions on Syria adopted. The resolutions renewing the cross-border humanitarian aid to Syria in

December 2017 (resolution 2393) and 2018 (resolution 2449) were central in giving the UN access to civilians in difficult areas in Syria. Russia was skeptical each year and did not want to renew the resolutions. Through shuttle diplomacy and negotiations for several months, Sweden was able to convince all UNSC members to adopt the resolutions. This effort demonstrate the legitimate role Sweden had in the UNSC, and how the other members listened to their arguments and actions.

An interesting, but less documented, counterargument is that Russia was in close contact with Turkey at the time. Turkey was interested in the renewals of the cross-border resolution due to their own border issues towards Syria (informant 7, 2019). This fact might have affected the national *self-interest* of Russia and is an argument speaking in favor of the neoliberal institutionalist perspective. The efforts in the UNSC is not happening in a vacuum, and this might have given Russia a reason not to veto the resolutions. This further illustrates how it might be difficult to draw concrete causal links when studying the UNSC, as there are many factors influencing the outcomes within and outside the Council.

Neumann & Gstöhl (2004, p. 5) argue that Sweden is a strong state as it projects a strong persona externally and has a high degree of internal cohesion. It therefore has a strong sense of self. This is evident due to Sweden's attempts to stay consistent to its values and principles, no matter the case in question. "Be true to your principles but know your timing" was a mantra of Sweden in the UNSC (informant 4, 2019). An argument highlighted during several of my interviews was that building legitimacy can be done by showing independence and sticking to your principles. This is often politically costly but gives you authority and respect within the Council (informant 6, 2019). Several informants emphasized that it is especially important to gain respect in the beginning of the term (informants 3, 5, 2019).

An example of Sweden balancing the act of standing up for its principles and its procedural expertise, was the case of E10 cooperation after the chemical attacks on Khan Shaykhoun in Syria in April 2017. When the E10 were kept in the dark, Sweden decided to push for a bridging position despite the political cost. Furthermore, Sweden questioned the legal basis for the retaliatory attack by the US, which showed its consistency of its view of international law no matter the actor. Sweden evaluated the situation and created space for negotiations with the right timing of its actions. This is in line with previous findings by Engell (2018) and Schia (2013a, p. 143) of the importance of timing in the Council.

The principled initiatives by Sweden in the chemical track was perceived by the E10 as an act of independence. The consequence was that Sweden gained trust with the E10 group, Russia, and China by being a consistent member. Sweden proved that it did not just follow in the footsteps of the P3, as many expected Sweden to do, and Sweden gained respect with the P5 for being able to “play the game” (informants 3, 5, 2019). This indicates that being independent towards the P3 made Sweden look like a legitimate actor in the UNSC in several ways. It can be argued that due to the role Sweden created early in their term, it made them able to both take advantage of the penholder position and take on a leading role of the E10. Sweden was consequently able to create leverage in the humanitarian issues.

Even though Sweden was taking a hard line towards the P3 and receiving recognition, its co-penholders were not doing the same. Egypt had a close relationship with Russia, while Japan was close with the US (Gowan, 2019). Furthermore, several informants emphasized the importance of a good relationship with the P5 in negotiations to achieve effective results (informant 2, 5, 6, 2019).

Not all states are able to withstand the political pressure in the UNSC. Non-permanent members can play an important bridging role but can also hinder cooperation. One example during Sweden’s term was when Côte d’Ivoire had been an allied partner of the P3 regarding the human rights violations in Syria, and supported a planned briefing by the High Commissioner for Human Rights in the UNSC in 2018 (informant 3, 2019). France called the meeting, but moments before it was scheduled to begin, Russia asked for a procedural vote on the agenda item. Suddenly, France was missing one vote to achieve the nine votes in favor and the meeting could not proceed. Apparently, Côte d’Ivoire had received pressure from China at capital level, and therefore flipped its position on the matter (informant 7, 2019). This made Côte d’Ivoire look inconsistent and less trustworthy in the Council. If the state normally has clear opinions and principles, it seems strange if it suddenly changes its position (informant 4, 2019). This example shows that pressure on capitals are a common feature in the UNSC. As a non-permanent member, it is important to not fold if it wants to be perceived as a strong independent member.

Several informants highlighted how the states need consistency to build leverage, but how it needs to be done in a smart manner with good timing (informants, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 2019). One

diplomat phrased it as “you need a pragmatic approach to values. It is not enough to raise your voice, you need to see how you can make it a reality without being unrealistic” (informant 6, 2019). This argument was underlined by several informants with examples of how non-permanent members often fail at this point, without disclosing the concerned states’ identity. Several informants referenced actions by states with similar backgrounds as the case studies in this thesis, and how they on several occasions misused their position in the Council. They often highlighted their principles in a proactive way, but at the wrong moments (informant 3, 4, 7, 2019). This resulted in ineffective negotiations, and the example shows how timing is essential if the state wants to achieve leverage.

An example of Sweden timing its actions was the trip to Backåkra initiated by Sweden in April 2018. This illustrates initiative and diplomatic creativity, and even though the trip did not amount in any traceable leverage, the situation in the Council was improved when they arrived back in New York (informant 3, 2019). As one diplomat phrased it, “often the outcome is not the paper produced, but the process of negotiations and dialogue” (informant 6, 2019). The trip created a better atmosphere when Sweden started negotiations in the Syrian humanitarian track in the fall.

Last, it is worth pointing to the weight of normative arguments and moral authority. The social constructivist aspects of soft power put emphasis on the moral persuasive characteristics in norms and ideas, making the state *attractive* to a certain audience (Bjørkdahl, 2008). By working closely with the humanitarian agencies, OCHA, and the humanitarian coordinators on the ground, Sweden was able to highlight the suffering of civilians in Syria (informant 3, 2019). It is easier to find common ground when the objective is to avoid human suffering, rather than achieving a political win (informant 3, 2019). It was evident that humanitarian arguments had a stronger effect than accountability, political solutions, and investigations into chemical weapons (informants 3, 5, 2019). Sweden was able to make the vote on the humanitarian resolutions seem morally appropriate.

## **5 Analysis Part II: Discussion of findings**

The previous chapter examined the empirical data of the three chosen small non-permanent members in the case of Syria in the UNSC, and explained their effort through the two theoretical perspectives, neoliberal institutionalism and the concept of soft power. This chapter evaluates and compares the case studies and discusses the empirical findings of the case study.

### **5.1 Comparison of empirical findings**

Luxembourg, New Zealand, and Sweden were non-permanent members of the UNSC and penholders on the Syrian humanitarian track in different time periods, which means the context changed. The situation in the Council became gradually tenser from 2013-2018 as the conflict in Syria escalated, and there were major political changes, namely the election of Trump as the US President.

When Luxembourg established the effort on the humanitarian track, there was some tension within the Council, but the atmosphere was still open-minded. Russia had yet to deploy its military support to Bashar al Assad, and the US was not involved in Syria (informant 7, 2019). When New Zealand started its term in the Council, the situation was different. The role of Luxembourg was the establishment of the humanitarian track, while New Zealand worked on keeping it alive. During the term of New Zealand, the Council adopted several resolutions. Still, there was escalating tension as its tenure coincided with the battle of Aleppo in Syria. When Sweden entered the Council in 2017, the Syrian regime was making progress, and Russia wanted to scale down existing initiatives regarding Syria in the Council. This meant that introducing new initiatives in the humanitarian track was more difficult than before, and it seemed that renewing existing resolutions would prove hard (informant 3, 5, 7, 2019). On this background, how can leverage by small non-permanent members in political processes in the UNSC be explained? The empirical data suggest that a combination of the two theoretical frameworks has high explanatory power.

#### **5.1.1 Institutional Leverage**

The proposition by the theory of neoliberal institutionalism in chapter 2.2.1 expected that *non-permanent members gain leverage in the UNSC because the Council functions as an arena for cooperation*. However, three institutional factors help facilitate this cooperation, and I evaluated *self-interest, focal points, and transparency*, to see if the empirical findings supported the neoliberal institutionalist proposition.

The findings indicate that the asymmetrical power structure in the Council had an impact in all three case studies. The rational basis of neoliberal institutionalism predicts that all states in the Council are partly driven by national self-interest and rationality. This means there needs to be some congruence of *self-interests* in a case if consensus can be achievable (Keohane, 2005). The analysis of the three case studies supports this claim, especially when I assess the different Syria tracks. The *chemical track* shows clear signs of the lack of congruence of interests between the P5 members. In this track, Luxembourg, New Zealand, and Sweden were, to some extent, able to create a role in the negotiations, but they were not able to achieve any direct outcomes. In the *political track* most of the negotiations were ongoing outside of the frame of the UNSC, and there was no leverage by the non-permanent members. However, in the *humanitarian track* there are evidence of leverage in all three cases. The three tracks show the contrast between issues with and without mutual self-interests within the P5, which is demonstrated by the summary of leverage in table 3.

**TABLE 3 SUMMARY OF LEVERAGE**

State Track	<b>Luxembourg</b> 2013-2014	<b>New Zealand</b> 2015-2016	<b>Sweden</b> 2017-2018	<b>Total</b> 6 years
<b>Humanitarian</b>	Establishment of Resolution 2139 and 2165 on Cross-Border Aid in 2014.	Renewal of Cross-Border Resolution in 2015 and 2016 (resolution 2258 and resolution 2332).	Renewal of Cross-Border Resolution in 2017 and 2018 (resolution 2393 and resolution 2449).	The non-permanent members have established and maintained a humanitarian track on Syria.
<b>Chemical</b>	Helpful by indirectly bridging the	Helped with the establishment of the JIM	Critical attempts to prevent	Several important attempts by the



	US/Russia deadlock in September 2013.	mechanism in 2015.	escalations, no direct outcomes. JIM mechanism was not renewed.	three members, but negative result in the end.
<b>Political</b>	No leverage.	No leverage.	No leverage.	No leverage.
<b>Other Impact</b>	Establishing a focal point for non-permanent members with the penholdership.	Institutionalizing the penholdership and the E10.	Institutionalizing the penholdership and the E10.	Institutionalizing the possibility of non-permanent penholdership. Increased leverage of the E10.

An argument by some informants was that the penholder role of non-permanent members in the Syrian humanitarian track was only possible because the P5 members allowed the non-permanent members to play a role (informant 1, 6, 2019). Therefore, the asymmetry of the Council was not reduced, but rather concealed by making the non-permanent members feel important. This point demonstrates the rational argument by neoliberal institutionalism, as the P5 cooperate because they have a mutual *self-interest* in making the E10 feel important. In this way, they keep their power position in the UNSC (informant 6, 2019). The rationality argument seems to find evidence in the case of Luxembourg, where it seemed like the P5 allowed the non-permanent members to take on the humanitarian track. Several of the permanent members were positive to the developments, but they needed a neutral member to lead the effort. In other words, they found a least common multiple of interests in the humanitarian track. Less evidence is found in the cases of New Zealand and Sweden, who kept the humanitarian track active despite several attempts of downgrading the cross-border resolution by Russia. In addition, during Sweden’s tenure there was pressure from the UK of taking over the penholder position from the non-permanent members without success. These findings speak of the possibility that the *humanitarian track* was established because the P5 let the E10 get access. However, they do not clarify how the non-permanent members kept the resolutions renewed in the following six years.

During 2013 it seemed like a strategy of Luxembourg was to align itself with other powerful members, as it worked closely with Australia on helping the US and Russia in the chemical track. This might have created incentives for the US and Russia to comply with their demands regarding the humanitarian situation in Syria. It implies that by aligning with the self-interests of the powerful players in the UNSC, you create an effective and more central role for yourself in the Council (informants 1, 2, 9, 2019). However, the neoliberal institutionalist argument of how small states have a *self-interest* in aligning with more powerful states is not supported in the following two case studies of New Zealand and Sweden. These states both took a more independent role towards the P3. The thesis, therefore, finds congruence between the requirement of mutual *self-interests* and results in the UNSC in the case of Luxembourg. I argue that the congruence between *self-interests* and results in the cases of New Zealand and Sweden is not as strong, but not absent. Even though New Zealand and Sweden embraced the independent role, they still worked effectively with all permanent members and had close bonds with the P3 indirectly through the other penholders.

The empirical findings highlight the importance of the penholder position in all three cases. In the case of Syria this arrangement created the possibility for the three states to become proactive members of the Council. The penholder position worked as a *focal point*, both in the Syrian humanitarian track, but also as a way of increasing the consistency of the E10 group. New Zealand and Sweden took a leading role among the E10 and institutionalized the group during their tenures. Between 2013 and 2018 there has been a drastic development in the E10 group, and several members from the group have now become more proactive and demanded a seat in negotiations. The cases of Afghanistan, Liberia, Guinea-Bissau and several thematic issues are now led by non-permanent members as penholders. Even though this work has been underway since 2010, it is only in the past few years we have really seen a difference (SCR, 2016). This could point to the importance of the penholdership as a *focal point* of coordination since 2013. The work by the penholders on Syria has been a catalysator in the process of gathering the E10 members. Because of the deadlock in the UNSC regarding Syria, non-permanent members felt a responsibility of action. Therefore, they seem to have created increased future leverage for incoming non-permanent members of the Council. It can be argued that the penholdership initially was a hindrance for non-permanent members, but when accessing the penholder role themselves on the Syria humanitarian track, it created room for the non-permanent members to achieve results. This shows that taking a role in negotiations

in the humanitarian track both created leverage in the humanitarian issues, and in addition promoted a more prominent role for the E10 in the UNSC.

The empirical evidence illustrates how the penholders on the Syrian humanitarian track also took a prominent role in the negotiations on the *chemical track*. These efforts did not lead to much results, except New Zealand's efforts in establishing the JIM mechanism in 2015. The initial conclusion is that using large resources in areas where there are no mutual *self-interests* detected between the P5 is a waste of energy. However, a point emphasized by several informants was how the proactive role of New Zealand and Sweden created respect among the other members (informants 3, 5, 7, 2019). The proactive role in other tracks might therefore have an impact, even though we cannot measure the direct outcome in the humanitarian track. This argument is vague but is further demonstrated by the prominent roles of New Zealand and Sweden in the UNSC. It shows how the *focal point* of the penholder procedure made it possible to highlight issues and set the agenda in other areas of work, which again created enhanced respect and authority.

Using the neoliberal institutionalist framework, I expected that *transparency* would be of high importance when explaining leverage by non-permanent members. The findings in the three cases suggest that transparency in the form of openness to the public and open public meetings did not create leverage or efficiency within the political processes in the Council. It rather seems like effectiveness and openness are in conflict, and do not increase the possibilities for results. Open meetings in the Council are highlighted as turning into political shows and do often escalate into shaming of other states (informant 5, 2019). The example of Luxembourg and Australia's cooperation with the US and Russia on the chemical track, shows that leverage was achieved by keeping the negotiations efficient with only a few parties involved. This was also evident when New Zealand and Sweden proposed closed consultations for meetings on Syria during their terms. Furthermore, the example of New Zealand using the presidency to shame Russia and the US publicly in the General Assembly and the UNSC did not amount in any direct leverage.

Still, New Zealand and Sweden placed high importance on *transparency* and openness in regard of involving UN agencies and civil society. All three states had close contact with UN OCHA, while New Zealand and Sweden also had a close contact with the OPCW on the chemical track. Furthermore, New Zealand and Sweden focused on sharing information

among the E10 members, which seemed to increase the consistency of the E10 as a group. Most of the informants highlighted how the E10 became more influential when united (informants 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 2019). *Transparency* regarding information-sharing among the E10 and with UN agencies seemed to increase the leverage of New Zealand and Sweden, while this was not as strong a factor during Luxembourg's tenure.

Even though there are some differences in how much institutional leverage the states possessed in the UNSC, they all acted as effective members and penholders on the Syrian humanitarian track. Therefore, the neoliberal institutionalist theory seems to explain how these three non-permanent members achieved leverage because the UNSC worked as an arena for cooperation in the humanitarian track. The findings especially emphasized mutual *self-interests* and the *focal points* of the penholdership and the E10 group as necessary factors to achieve cooperation. The factor of *transparency*, as measured in this thesis, finds less strength in the empirical evidence when explaining leverage by small non-permanent members.

### **5.1.2 Leverage through Identity**

The argument derived from the concept soft power and its focus on identity, is that *small non-permanent members gain leverage in the UNSC if they have an attractive identity*. The state's identity outside the Council is made up of the foreign policy, culture and values of the state, which can translate into leverage inside the Council. The evidence implies that there is congruence between the theoretical proposition and the empirical findings.

The permanent members are often seen as "bad", while the non-permanent members are seen as "good". This is a simplistic view of the Council, but a common image portrayed (informant 6, 2019). This thesis illustrates how the three small states investigated are in a unique position. Their national self-interests do, to a large extent, overlap with values and principles of the UN at large. Small states often build their international image and recognition by supporting humanitarianism and just causes, which portray them as "good". Furthermore, it is in the interest of small states to uphold an international institutional order, because they are too small to matter on their own (Nye, 2004; Thorhallsson, 2012).

The three case studies demonstrate that Luxembourg, New Zealand, and Sweden all possessed similar values, culture and foreign policy, especially regarding humanitarian issues. I argue

that this made all three states *attractive* candidates for the role as penholder of the Syrian humanitarian track. All three states were seen as objective with no hidden agenda, and with international rule of law and humanitarianism in the core of their foreign policy. They all have an egalitarian system and a flat political structure. In addition, none of the three states had any direct national interest in the conflict in Syria. All three states are highly developed and have a history of being firm supporters of the UN and UN OCHA. This is a unique situation as not many members of the UNSC have this kind of background (informant 4, 2019). The similar background of the three states is an argument speaking in favor of the soft power concept, which predicts that being an *attractive* state creates leverage. The three states were “leading by example” in terms of humanitarian efforts, which also made them able to take the lead in this area of work inside the UNSC. However, even though the three states had a similar background when entering the Council, there are still some differences in how they became legitimate actors within the UNSC.

The three states embraced quite different roles within the UNSC, which can be traced back to small differences in their identities. Luxembourg’s foreign policy was characterized by the state being an EU member and highly focused on cooperation. New Zealand’s foreign policy was characterized by a focus on independence, which is deeply imbedded in their national identity, while Sweden had changed its former neutrality position with a focus on morality, exemplified by its feminist and humanitarian policies. As such, Luxembourg can be characterized as the cooperative member, New Zealand as the independent member, and Sweden as the moral member.

Almost all informants emphasized the importance of being a legitimate and consistent actor in the Council. By becoming a legitimate actor, the non-permanent members had an opportunity to act as an honest-broker and create space for negotiations. The empirical findings suggest that knowledge was a central factor in creating leverage in all cases. Knowledge of the procedures and experience to show that you can “play the game” was essential (informant 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 2019). Luxembourg did to a large extent follow Australia’s lead in most issues, while New Zealand and Sweden took a more independent role towards the P3, mainly to show that they knew how to achieve a voice in the negotiations and that they were independent actors in the Council. This is illustrated in table 4.

**TABLE 4. DEMONSTRATION OF DIFFERENT ROLES IN THE UNSC**

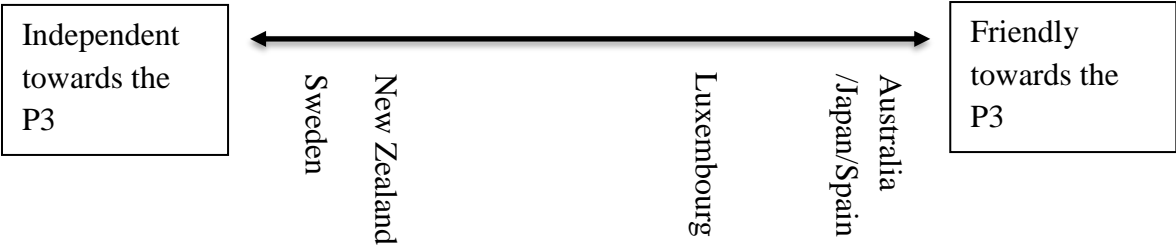


Table 4 illustrates how New Zealand and Sweden embraced a different role than Luxembourg in the Council. This difference was indicated due to the variations in the states’ background. Luxembourg’s background was as an EU member and neighboring state of France, Belgium, and Germany, three powerful states in the EU. This means it might have been natural for Luxembourg to embrace a highly cooperative and aligning role within the Council. Luxembourg was a close ally to both EU members in the Council, and even though the state was knowledgeable and skilled, it still let Australia take the lead among the penholders in the humanitarian track. In contrast, table 4 illustrates how New Zealand and Sweden created an independent role in the Council by being independent towards the P3, which might have provided increased leverage for these two states. I argue that we might see a pattern in how Australia, Japan, and Spain embraced different roles in the UNSC, as closer allied to the P3. These were all larger states with identities based on hard power resources when entering the Council. A small state like Luxembourg, New Zealand, or Sweden are more easily perceived to tag along the P3 than a large economic power like Japan, and therefore need to present a more independent role to achieve respect. As one informant phrased it, “small members need to be difficult, they need to find their leverage on the P5, because the P5 need them more often than you think” (informant 6, 2019).

Nevertheless, the three states all had close ties to the P5 before entering the Council. No matter how independent roles New Zealand and Sweden gained, they would never vote against the P3 group (informant 6, 7, 2019). New Zealand and Sweden were indirectly close with the P3 through the work by the penholders Spain and Japan respectively. This counterargument underlines the importance of strong allies, and speaks in favor of the rational basis of the neoliberal institutionalist perspective. However, because of the fact that western small non-permanent members are expected to follow the western P3 group, it makes it important to show resistance to gain the confidence and respect of other members. The

evidence demonstrates how New Zealand and Sweden gained leverage with Russia and China by becoming consistent honest-brokers in the humanitarian track.

Consistency of the states' values and principles is highlighted through the empirical findings, but not without pragmatism. The empirical findings suggest that the three states in the case study were consistent with their image outside and inside the Council. However, the timing of standing up for your values was essential. The informants emphasized how these states were able to include their values into the resolutions without always speaking up. In a few examples the states did speak up, without any leverage achieved. This was for example the case when New Zealand hosted a high-level meeting in the General Assembly coinciding with their presidency in the UNSC. The effort did not amount to any direct leverage, illustrated by one of the informants (6, 2019), "It is not enough to raise your voice, you need to see how you can make it a reality".

To summarize, the theoretical proposition derived from the concept soft power and its focus on identity, was that *small non-permanent members gain leverage in the UNSC if they have an attractive identity*. This proposition finds congruence with the empirical data, especially when it comes to achieving a role in the humanitarian track of the Syrian case. Luxembourg, New Zealand, and Sweden all had backgrounds that made them *attractive* in the eyes of the other members of the UNSC, and this attraction helped the three states achieve results on the Syrian humanitarian track.

## 6 Conclusion

The ambition of this thesis has been to investigate how small non-permanent members can impact decisions and processes in the UNSC, and to get a deeper understanding of what role small states can achieve in the Council. I have addressed this issue by investigating three small non-permanent members in the case of Syria between 2013-2018, including Luxembourg (2013-2014), New Zealand (2015-2016), and Sweden (2017-2018). The thesis has been guided by the theory of neoliberal institutionalism and the concept of soft power to explain leverage by small states in the UNSC. I have conducted an explanatory case study design, with the use of congruence method to deductively connect the theoretical propositions with the empirical evidence.

The final step is to summarize the main findings, present theoretical and methodological implications, and provide suggestions for further research.

### 6.1 Main findings

The Syrian conflict is often highlighted as a difficult case in the UNSC, where non-permanent members cannot impact decisions (UN, 2017d). The Syrian conflict has been described as the worst humanitarian catastrophe in contemporary international affairs, with a deadlocked UNSC unable to help civilians on the ground. An informant described the current situation as “a movie frozen five minutes before the end. Everyone knows how it is going to end, but no one wishes to see the ending” (informant 7, 2019). The importance of small states in the Syrian case must therefore not be exaggerated, and to a large extent, my analysis confirms previous conclusions of the asymmetrical power situation in the UNSC (Schia, 2013a, Bosco, 2009, Thompson, 2010). The thesis illustrates how it was almost impossible to gain any leverage in the political and chemical tracks of the Syrian crisis, due to the lack of mutual *self-interests* among the permanent members. The humanitarian track, however, is a softer area of politics, where the three small states gained leverage by establishing and continuing resolution 2165 during their UNSC tenures. Therefore, this thesis illustrates how the UNSC is not only governed by the five permanent members without any impact from the non-permanent members.



The first important finding is the congruence between the empirical data and the factor of *focal points* of coordination. The factor is derived from the proposition of the neoliberal institutionalist approach, that *small non-permanent members gain leverage in the UNSC because the Council functions as an arena for cooperation*. The empirical data suggests that the position enhanced the states' leverage in the humanitarian track, because it provided a central role in the negotiations. The penholder procedure, previously exclusively held by permanent members, was turned into an advantage of the small non-permanent members. By developing this role and formalizing the cooperation within the E10, the small non-permanent members could naturally engage with the P5 and set the agenda for the humanitarian issues on Syria. However, a non-discovery worth mentioning is that the factor of *transparency* found less strength in the empirical evidence when explaining leverage by small non-permanent members, as it was often in conflict with effectiveness.

The soft power concept provided a proposition that small non-permanent members *gain leverage in the UNSC if they have an attractive identity*. The second key finding is that there is congruence between the proposition and the empirical data in all three case studies. The unique position as penholder obtained by the small non-permanent members was to a large extent achieved due to their neutral background, egalitarian values, and former humanitarian efforts in their foreign policy. These aspects made the states *attractive* to other UNSC members, because they were not perceived as rivals or competitors to the P5. However, even though the three states achieved the penholder position because of their similar attractive background, variations exist in the roles the states achieved in the UNSC.

Luxembourg established the humanitarian effort by aligning itself with the more powerful permanent and non-permanent members. Luxembourg was an effective member in the humanitarian track, but it did not achieve a prominent role in the UNSC in general. I argue that even though Luxembourg helped establish the effort, the result was to a large extent due to Australia's proactive role. The identity of Luxembourg fits this position, as the state perceived itself as a European ally cooperating with its powerful neighbors. I argue that the empirical data suggests that Luxembourg embraced a similar role within the Council. However, the empirical material was stronger in the cases of New Zealand and Sweden, than of Luxembourg. Therefore, the empirical findings of Luxembourg need further corroborations.

New Zealand and Sweden developed similar roles within the UNSC, as proactive and independent penholders. This was consistent with their independent and moral identities outside the Council. The two states often took an independent approach towards the P3. This stance portrayed both states as objective and impartial actors, which again was instrumental in the successive role as honest-brokers in the negotiations. Both states used this position to enhance their leverage in both the humanitarian and chemical tracks of the Syrian case, and they provided a legitimate voice to the issues. I argue that by taking a leading role in the negotiations, they helped institutionalize and enhance the leverage of the E10. New Zealand and Sweden were perceived as leading members in the group and helped the group coordinate its efforts. In this way, the E10 group became a *focal point* of coordination and their corporation was formalized during New Zealand and Sweden's tenures.

The final finding is how the empirical pattern contributes to knowledge on the broader thematic phenomenon studied, which is small states' endless quest for status and influence in international politics. This thesis indicates that the small states in the case study achieved a role in the UNSC not possible to achieve for the permanent members or larger non-permanent members. Their identity and proactiveness make them unique in the setting of the UNSC, with no hidden agendas or obstructive self-interests. I argue that when small states are recognized as important actors in an issue-specific area, it strengthens their general position in the UNSC. Their position in the humanitarian track is therefore an example of how small states sometimes can "punch above their weight" in an issue-specific area, due to their reputation as honest-brokers and their expertise. This role presents a window of opportunity for small states to enhance their position in other negotiations and areas of work. This finding is in line with former studies of small states and illustrated by this quote,

For small states, taking responsibility for international peace and security beyond what other states could have expected on the basis of size and military resources is one way of gaining recognition as a good power. This status can in turn make it possible for such states to enter arenas from which they are otherwise precluded (Carvalho & Lie, 2015, p. 59).

An example is how New Zealand and Sweden achieved a central position in the chemical track after their excessive efforts in the humanitarian track, and after acting surprisingly independent of the P3. This empirical argument can be transferred to further studies of soft

issue-specific areas in other international organizations, where small states can achieve a prominent role, for example regarding climate change or conflict mediation.

Finally, I revert to the research question of the thesis: *How can small non-permanent members' leverage in the UNSC be explained?* The answer to this question is that leverage by small non-permanent members can be explained by a complementary use of the neoliberal institutionalist approach and the concept of soft power. However, when combining the explanatory power of these theoretical frameworks, it appears that *leverage through identity* happens before *institutional leverage* in time. The states achieved leverage by their attractive identity established before entering the Council, while *institutional leverage* occurred when the states took advantage of the different institutional arrangements inside the Council.

## 6.2 Just a coincidence?

This thesis started in chapter 1 with a question on the adoption of resolution 2401 regarding a seize fire in Eastern Ghouta in the UNSC in April 2018. By applying the frameworks of neoliberal institutionalism and soft power, it is possible to provide an answer to the question of why Russia changed its previous firm position. This thesis indicates that Russia's vote in favor of resolution 2401 was not a coincidence, but rather a result of insistent negotiation by the penholders, Sweden and Kuwait. Sweden worked as an honest-broker and was open to Russia's different proposals. The example shows how a small state like Sweden can impact the position of a permanent member like Russia, by taking an independent and proactive role as penholder, bridging positions, and raising the moral obligation. However, the example also demonstrates the difficulty of creating actual impact on the ground when the P5 have national interests involved in the conflict. Resolution 2401 was perceived as a success in the UNSC, but it did not have any impact on the ground as Russia continued its involvement (What's in Blue, 2018a).

The example illustrates the high explanatory power of the theories when used in combination. The neoliberal institutionalist approach helps explain how the states got access to a position in the negotiations through the informal procedure of penholding. This provided a *focal point* of coordination for Sweden. The rationality of the theory further explains why the resolution failed in the end when the *self-interests* of the states involved became too strong. The concept of soft power tells us why the other members felt inclined to follow the Swedish proposal, due

to Sweden's *attractive* standing as an honest-broker and respected actor in the Council. Furthermore, soft power implies how raising the moral obligation helped achieve leverage. Through their unique position in the UNSC and their institutional efforts, Sweden and Kuwait were able to change the initial position of the permanent members, but sadly without the same change on the ground in Syria.

### **6.3 Theoretical and methodological implications**

To present the empirical findings of the thesis with confidence, it is important to evaluate the strength of the theoretical framework. In this section, I evaluate strengths and weaknesses of the thesis' methodological and theoretical choices. The thesis applied the theories *neoliberal institutionalism* and the concept of *soft power* in the study of small states in the UNSC. As the previous chapter 6.1. illustrated, the empirical findings were, to a large extent, in alignment with the theoretical propositions. This reinforces the theories and their explanatory power.

It is, however, important to remember that theories are not descriptions of reality, but analytical tools used to simplify the understanding of processes in the UNSC, in order to analyze the complex interactions systematically to avoid spurious mechanisms. Vaughan (2016, p. 195) emphasized that, "The paradox of theory is that at the same time it tells us where to look, it can keep us from seeing." Other theoretical approaches might have provided significant knowledge into the analysis of political processes within the UNSC. Realist explanations could have explained the power structures in-depth, while practice theory could have provided insights into the importance of diplomats and the culture of the UNSC. I chose to focus on the institutional setting and the identities of the states within the Council. Even if the theories only showed certain aspects of the reality of the UNSC, they provided interesting insights.

However, both theories are vague in nature, and therefore might sacrifice detailed explanatory power (Evera, 1994). In other words, factors important to leverage by small states in the UNSC might have been overlooked. This demonstrates the need of further research to elaborate my findings. Furthermore, both theories are state-centered, which open them up for criticism. During my interviews with diplomats working in the UNSC, I understood that personal relationships, diplomatic struggles, and personality are factors that could affect a state's leverage, however this was outside the scope of this thesis.

In academic research the strength of the inferences drawn need to be evaluated. One weakness of the thesis is that the external validity is low, and it is difficult to draw inferences to other cases of small states in international institutions. However, the study uses a replication logic and finds similar patterns in all three cases, which enhances the credibility of the inferences drawn. Furthermore, the findings match the findings of former studies of small states' search for influence in international politics. The findings are in line with the findings of Bjørkdahl (2008), Jacobsen (2009), and Romsloe (2004) of small states in the EU, and Thorhallsson (2006), Pouliot (2016), and Lupel and Mälksoo's (2019) studies from the UN, who all found that small states can create space for negotiations despite their scarce hard power resources. This academic agreement strengthens the explanatory power of the theoretical framework and the findings of this thesis.

The internal validity of in-depth case studies is often considered high due to its thickness. However, this multiple case study of the Syrian crisis could be affected by a broad number of factors outside the frame of UNSC, and it was difficult to control for possible spurious mechanisms. Another weakness is the issue of reliability. It will not be possible for future researchers to replicate my study completely, as the informants have been made anonymous. The findings would have been more precise if I could have referred to the states and diplomats behind the different statements.

However, a methodological strength of the thesis is the in-depth information available about the inner circle of the UNSC. During my research, I was able to speak to people with knowledge and experience of negotiations and the specific case in question. This was information not available any other place, and I would not have gained access if the informants were made public. The detailed information strengthens the internal validity and relevance of the thesis, and it creates the possibility of filling a gap in the literature on small states' possibilities within the UNSC. Furthermore, it contributes to the broader literature on small states seeking influence in international politics, and illustrates how the UNSC is still relevant in this regard.

## **6.4 Further research**

In the introduction chapter, I highlighted the lack of literature contributions regarding small states in the UNSC. This thesis helps to fill this gap, because the theories I utilized provide a broad assessment of leverage by small states in the UNSC. The thesis helps explain the possibilities created by the institutional setting, and by the attractive identity of the small states involved. In this way, the theoretical framework provides analytical generalization and can be applied on other similar cases of other small states. The theories do not provide insights into the diplomatic practice and culture of the UNSC, which could be interesting areas to research further. Such research could also help bridge the theoretical branches of rational and social theories.

The findings indicate that multilateral platforms like the UNSC provide an opportunity for small states to play a role in international affairs. The institution of the UNSC is still relevant, and small states can achieve a position disproportionate to their size. However, to strengthen the findings of this thesis, further studies into efforts by other small states and other non-permanent members are needed. The relationship between UNSC non-permanent members and the UN agencies, NGOs, and actors on the ground would especially help enlighten the important work done behind the scenes of the UNSC.

Another interesting avenue for further research is the dynamic inside the E10 group. The thesis found that the dynamic inside the E10 was strengthened and formalized during the past six years, and it would be interesting to study the ongoing and future developments of this group.

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# Appendix

## Appendix 1: List of informants

Informant	Background	Interview style	Location	Duration	Time	Quality
Ian Martin	Former UN envoy and leader of Security Council Report	Background talk Unstructured	London	1 hour	February 2019	High
Richard Gowan	Senior Researcher at ECFR, UN Director at the International Crisis Group	Background talk Unstructured	New York	1 hour	March 2019	High
Informant 1	UNSC non-permanent member	Semi-structured	New York	1 hour	March 2019	Medium
Informant 2	UNSC non-permanent member	Semi-structured	New York	1 hour	March 2019	Low
Informant 3	UNSC non-permanent member	Semi-structured	New York	2,5 hours	March 2019	High
Informant 4	UNSC expert	Semi-structured	Oslo	1 hour	February 2019	High
Informant 5	UNSC non-permanent member	Semi-structured	By phone	1,5 hours	March 2019	High
Informant 6	UNSC former permanent member	Semi-structured	New York	3,5 hours	March 2019	High

Informant 7	UNSC observer	Semi-structured	By phone	50 minutes	March 2019	High
Informant 8	UNSC non-permanent member	Written material and unofficial documents	By E-mail		March 2019	Medium
Informant 9	UNSC permanent member	Semi-structured	By phone	30 minutes	February 2019	Medium

## **Appendix 2: Interview Guide**

### **Interview guide**

#### **Introduction**

*Thank you for making time to talk to me about [state] work and experiences regarding your membership in the UN Security Council. As previously mentioned in mail/over telephone, I am a student of political science at the University of Oslo and I am writing my master's thesis in collaboration with the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs. In that regard, I am interested in your work, goals, and experiences in the Council during the period of [years], and your work regarding the case of Syria. I am interested in your methods, and if they worked to promote your goals. This work is part of my master's thesis and the information obtained will only be used in this regard. The Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) has approved the questions. It is voluntary to participate in the interview and all information from this interview will be made anonymous if you wish. You can at any time withdraw from the interview.*

*[If the interview object (IO) is busy, remind the person quickly about the information sent by mail, and then inform about confidentiality and voluntary participation. Bring a document with information and a consent declaration]*

#### **Formal information**

Name:

Profession:

Duration of interview:

Anonymous/Public:

Quality of information:

#### **General questions**

Question 1: I have closely followed the formal process of the case of Syria in the UN Security Council, especially the humanitarian track. What I need from you is insight into (state name) work in this regard. It is interesting to understand the processes that do not appear in formal public documents and the media. First, I would like to start with your membership in the UNSC. Could you start by telling me about your time in the Council? What did [state name] like to achieve regarding the Syrian case, and how did you work to achieve your objectives?

*[In-depth questions (probes): only included if the IO has difficulties starting the conversation]*

*Probe on the formal reasons for entering the Council.*

*Probe on national focus areas and priorities.*

*[Pay attention to the answers on the first question and adapt the following questions if necessary]*

Question 2: How would you define success for a non-permanent member in the UNSC?

Question 3: What did (state name) want to achieve in the case of Syria?

### **Background and identity**

Question 4: How prepared would you say (state name) was before entering the Council?

*Probe on national measures to prepare.*

*Probe on formal arrangements in the UNSC to prepare the incoming states.*

*Probe on number of people working on the campaign and later within the UNSC.*

*Probe on special expertise and knowledge.*

*Probe on strengths and weaknesses of the state.*

Question 5: How would you describe (state name) role in the UN Security Council?

*Probe on changes during the two-year tenure.*

*Probe on relationship with other members.*

*Probe on role within the E10.*

### **Institutional processes**

Question 7: How would you describe the dynamic in the Council?

*Probe on dynamic between the P5.*

*Probe on dynamic between the E10.*

Question 8: Can you explain the process of drafting a resolution in the UNSC? Take me through the different steps.

*Probe on the most important mechanisms.*

*Probe on how to negotiate with the P5.*

*Probe on how to negotiate with the E10.*

Question 9: Can you describe the formal and informal procedures that helped you/prevented you to achieve objectives in the UNSC?

*Probe on different formal procedures, for example “voting procedures”.*

*Probe on different informal procedures, for example the “penholder system”.*

*Probe on contact with the Secretary-General and the Secretariat.*

*Probe contact with other states/groups within the UN.*

*Probe on contact with the media.*

*[Introduce that you would like to discuss (state name) work on the Syria case in the UNSC]*

### **The case of Syria**

Question 10: The case of Syria has different tracks, humanitarian, chemical weapons, and political. How would you describe (state name) role within these different tracks?

*Probe on interaction with other members.*

Question 11: (state name) was involved in several resolutions regarding Syria. Can you take me through the process of drafting the resolution (number)?

*Probe on what they found challenging.*

Question 12: To what degree did (state name) achieve your objectives in the Syria humanitarian track?

*Probe on other states’ achievements.*

Question 13: We are now approaching the end of the interview. Is there anything you wish to add regarding your achievements in the Syrian case or regarding the UNSC in general? Are there any actors you worked closely with, or any procedures we have not discussed? Any other comments?

*[If the IO has mentioned any relevant persons or documents during the interview, ask if you can possibly get access. Remember to thank the IO for the interview and for their time].*



### **Appendix 3: The construction of the interview guide**

Since the thesis investigates leverage in the UNSC, it might give the informant incentives to provide subjective opinions of their work. Beckmann and Hall (2013, p. 198) emphasizes how subjective answers should be avoided when conducting interview research. It is better to ask questions of actual proceedings and processes. The questions regarding the success of the states' work in the Council are connected to their objectives stated in the beginning of the interviews. In this way, we can measure the distance between the wanted objectives and the actual results achieved.

The questions are formulated quite open, due to the high degree of interpretation in this thesis. Still, the same questions were asked of all informants to ensure the possibility to compare the findings. 13 questions are quite many if you are interviewing diplomats with a heavy workload and a busy schedule. Even so, I prepared 13 questions and if I got the sense that the informant had little time to spare, I focused on the questions regarding Syria.

Question 1 is an open *grand tour-question*, included to start the conversation in a relaxed way and to remind the informant of the topic in question. The reason is to let the informant gather his/her thoughts and to create a good dialogue (Mosley, 2013, p. 21). This gives you the possibility to get in-depth information on the specific strategy. If the informant answered complementary on the grand tour-question, the later questions would need to be dropped or altered during the interview. Therefore, the list of questions is considered a guide and not a complete list. The flexibility is an advantage but is also demanding for the person doing the interviews (Leech et al., 2013, p. 217).

To be able to achieve good interview results, it was important for me to have good information about the case and a clear picture of what I needed information on (Leech et al., 2013, p. 217). This is shown by telling the informants what information I already had before the questions were asked. In this way, the asymmetry between me being a student and the informants being "elite" informants was reduced (Beyers, Braun, Marshall, & Bruycker, 2014, p. 178). Because of the asymmetry in the interview situation, the interview guide contains several probes. The probes help compare the findings, but also made it easier for me to steer the interviews (Fink, 2003, p. 36).

Question 2 measures what the state wanted to achieve. The definition of *leverage* is the ability get other states to do what you want (Cambridge Dictionary, 2018). Thus, it is important to understand their goals to be able to access their achievements. I tried to avoid «why»-questions to avoid subjective opinions. I wanted the informant to describe the processes, not analyze it themselves (Leech et al., 2013, p. 219). I did not directly ask of the national interests of the state, as the term could bring a negative atmosphere, especially with the permanent members of the UNSC. Therefore, I rather chose to probe on national focus areas.

Questions 4 and 5 relate to soft power theory and its assumptions of leverage through the states' identities. Questions 7-9 relate to the institutional arrangements in the UNSC, and how these can be used to achieve or reduce leverage. The questions 10-12 are focusing on the humanitarian track of Syria and what the states did to achieve results regarding this topic. The success of the states can then be compared to the objectives from the start of the interview. When interviewing other non-permanent members than the three cases in question, the questions were changed to how these states perceived the three case studies. The last question is a summary question. The reason to include such a question is to avoid missing important aspects or elements by not asking the correct questions. There might be details that have not been discussed, and a summary question gives the informant the possibility to include information not previously discussed (Bryman, 2016, p. 475).

## **Appendix 4: Formal document on Enhanced E10 Coordination**

### TEN ELEMENTS FOR ENHANCED E10 COORDINATION AND JOINT ACTION

#### **Procedural aspects**

1. Institutionalization: The E10 will hold at least one meeting per month at the PR level and one at PC level, to be convened by the rotating monthly coordinator. Periodicity should be established & meetings are to be convened preferably in the first or last week of the month, conditions permitting. Coordination rotates monthly following the alphabetical order. Special arrangements could be considered to accommodate exceptional circumstances.
2. Inclusion of SC elected members: Upon their election, upcoming members may be invited as observers to the E10 meetings, as appropriate. During their observer period in the SC (October-December), they should have the same level of information that the rest of members including access to informal negotiations.
3. E10 sponsorship: E10 members commit to sharing their draft proposals for resolutions and presidential statements at an early stage with a view to presenting them with the support and/or sponsorship of all members of the group, as appropriate.
4. Coordination with the SG and USGs: The E10 intend to enhance informal interaction of the group with the SG and USGs, through periodical and extraordinary meetings, as appropriate.
5. Informal permanent contact: The E10 shall maintain a WhatsApp group at the PR, DPR and PC levels.

#### **Substantive aspects**

6. Dialogue and coordination: E10 members are committed to holding timely meetings to consider ways and means of enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the Council, inter alia, contributing new and innovative ideas to the improvement of its working methods & expanding on its note S/2017/507. Notwithstanding their respective national positions, E10 members will continue to contribute to building the unity and cohesion of the Security Council in addressing pressing issues of international peace and security and play a meaningful and constructive role.
7. E10 communication: Joint E10 statements may be delivered in writing or orally on specific outcomes, junctures & agenda items, as agreed upon through timely consultations.
8. Evolution of the co-penholders system: The E10 advocate for a fair & equitable division of labor within the Council & burden sharing by all its members. They reiterate the right of all members to pursue initiatives on meetings, outcomes and missions and also reiterate that any member of the Security Council may be a penholder as stipulated in note S/2017/507. The E10 agree that the chair of a subsidiary organ is, by default, co-penholder of the SC agenda item and can choose to exercise this right on a voluntary basis.
9. Equitable and transparent distribution of responsibilities on subsidiary bodies: Timely consultations with the incumbent Chairs of all subsidiary bodies should be undertaken prior to future decisions on chairmanships in accordance with note S/2017/507. E10 countries should not chair more than two subsidiary bodies.
10. Efficiency and transparency: The E10 promote the full implementation of the SC provisional rules of procedure and Note S/2017/507.