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0521563143 - Identity, Interest and Action: A Cultural Explanation of Sweden's
Intervention in the Thirty Years War - Erik Ringmar

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This book offers an original combination of culture and narrative theory with an empirical study of identity and political action. It is at once a powerful critique of rational choice theories of action and a solution to the historiographical puzzle of why Sweden went to war in 1630. Erik Ringmar argues that people act not only for reasons of interest, but also for reasons of identity, and that the latter are, in fact, more fundamental. Deploying his alternative, non-rational theory of action in his account of the Swedish intervention in the Thirty Years War, he shows it to have been an attempt on behalf of the Swedish leaders to gain recognition for themselves and their country. Further to this, he demonstrates the importance of questions of identity to the study of war and of narrative theories of action to the social sciences in general.

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Erik Ringmar

London School of Economics and Political Science



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This book is dedicated to Aurora, Sylvester, Jebedaiiah
Smith, Squidhead, Saga, Bertha, Avril, the Little One,
Quintus, Jamaica, Brytte, Knoppe and his/her
wonderful, wonderful mother.

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Frontmatter/Prelims

[More information](#)

Contents

| | |
|--|---------------|
| <i>List of illustrations</i> | <i>page</i> x |
| <i>Acknowledgements</i> | xi |
| Introduction: the beginning of the story | 1 |
| Part I A narrative theory of action | 17 |
| 1 Historical and scientific explanations | 19 |
| 2 The modern orthodoxy | 44 |
| 3 A narrative theory of action | 66 |
| Part II Why did Sweden go to war in 1630? | 93 |
| 4 Historical and cultural preliminaries | 95 |
| 5 Fighting for a national interest | 110 |
| 6 Fighting for a national identity | 145 |
| Conclusion: the end of the story? | 187 |
| <i>Notes</i> | 194 |
| <i>Bibliography</i> | 221 |
| <i>Index</i> | 234 |

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Intervention in the Thirty Years War - Erik Ringmar

Frontmatter/Prelims

[More information](#)

Figures

| | | |
|---|----------------------------------|---------------|
| 1 | The Swedish intervention, 1630–2 | <i>page</i> 7 |
| 2 | Swedish kings, 1523–1632 | 98 |
| 3 | Sweden, 1630 | 100 |

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[More information](#)

Acknowledgements

This book discusses, among other things, how we go about making sense of the worlds in which we live. As I will argue, the senses we make are always made together with others. This conclusion, naturally, applies also to this book itself. The senses I make in the pages that follow were originally made in conversation with a number of colleagues and friends. I hereby acknowledge my intellectual debts to Jeffrey Alexander, Jens Bartelson, Ragnar Björk, Stefan Björklund, Walter Carlsnaes, Sverker Gustavsson, Michael Halberstam, Jörgen Hermansson, Èva Hoòs, Kurt Johannesson, Charles Lindblom, Veronica Muños Dardé, Sverker Oredsson, Alessandro Pizzorno, Diane Pranzo, Peter Rinderle, Bruce Russett, James Scott, Peggy Somers, Alexander Wendt and Björn Wittrock. I am particularly grateful to Jeff Alexander and to my teachers – Alex Wendt and Jim Scott at Yale, Alessandro Pizzorno in Florence – for recognising me as the kind of scholar which this study also introduces. Recognition, as we are about to see, is something for which we must sometimes be prepared to fight.