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# Military strategic aspects of Nordic security environment changes

– identifying common Nordic strategic challenges

Tore Nyhamar



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– identifying common Nordic strategic challenges**

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## Summary

The study compares the strategic military challenges of the Nordic countries. The challenges identified by the Nordic states are remarkably similar – among the most similar of any given group in the world. First, the security situation has deteriorated. The possibility of a military attack has increased, and no country is longer willing to rule out that possibility. Second, the more challenging security environment includes a greater risk of military pressure to influence the policies of the Nordic countries. Third, all Nordic countries believe that the security environment has become more complex. In addition to conventional military threats, all believe that cyber-attacks against infrastructure and information operations against society now have become a part of the security environment. All identify Russia and Russian actions since 2014 as the driver of their more demanding security environment.

All Nordic states currently aim to increase deterrence, and see more Nordic military cooperation as a useful, feasible way to do so. Nordic cooperation will increase deterrence by (1) increasing *political fall-out* for a potential aggressor; (2) forcing the aggressor to face *larger numbers of weapons* in the air, at sea or on land; (3) pose the additional challenge of *different weapons systems* and (4) *differences within the same weapons systems*.

The report supports the explanation that Nordic cooperation has moved from being driven by economics to be driven by security. The shift from economics to security also implies a shift from a top-down approach to a bottom-up approach between the armed forces of the respective states. NORDEFECO has benefitted. The report concludes that the bottom-up approach is successful because it is helpful in building security, and argues that NORDEFECO therefore should continue to assist all cooperative efforts.

Finally, the report turns to potential weaknesses with the bottom-up approach. First, it does not address the need to develop large-scale capacity to receive allied military reinforcements for the Nordic region as a single strategic space. The Nordic countries all recognize the need to develop host nation capacity that match their strategic needs, but at the practical level relatively little happens. The report thus set forth a scenario – receiving an American Marine Expeditionary Force – to fill this lacuna. Note, however, that this scenario demands capabilities that generally deter and aid in warfighting outside the scenario as well. Developing these capabilities are useful for all common Nordic strategic challenges in the current security environment, and not limited to the specifics of the proposed scenario.

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## Sammendrag

Studien sammenligner de militær-strategiske utfordringene for de nordiske land. Utfordringene landene står overfor er bemerkelsesverdig like – blant de mest like for noen gitt gruppe av land i verden. For det første mener alle at sikkerhetssituasjonen har forverret seg. Muligheten for et militært angrep har økt, og ikke noe nordisk land er lenger villig til å utelukke det. For det andre inkluderer den forverrede situasjonen en større risiko for at de nordiske land kan bli satt under militært press for å påvirke politikken de fører. For det tredje mener alle nordiske land at sikkerhetssituasjonen har blitt mer kompleks. I tillegg til konvensjonelle militære trusler tror de alle at cyberangrep mot infrastruktur og påvirkningsoperasjoner mot samfunnet nå har blitt en del av de nye sikkerhetsomgivelsene. Alle regner Russland og russiske handlinger siden 2014 som årsaken til at omgivelsene har blitt vanskeligere.

Alle nordiske stater prøver nå å øke sin evne til militær avskrekking, og ser mer omfattende nordisk militært samarbeid som en mulig farbar vei til målet. Nordisk samarbeid vil forsterke evnen til militær avskrekking ved (1) å øke de politiske kostnadene for en potensiell militær aggressor; (2) tvinge aggressoren til å møte større antall våpen i lufta, til sjøs og til lands; (3) gi en ekstra utfordring ved muligheten for å støte på ulike våpensystem og (4) støte på ulikheter innen samme våpensystem.

Rapporten finner støtte for forklaringen om at drivkraften i nordisk militært samarbeid har forandret seg fra økonomi til sikkerhet. Dette skiftet innebærer også et skifte fra en ovenfra-og-ned-tilnærming til en nedenfra-og-opp-tilnærming mellom de væpnede styrker til de ulike nordiske land. NORDEFECO har nytt godt av denne endringen. Rapporten konkluderer med at nedenfra-og-opp-tilnærmingen er så vellykket fordi den forbedrer sikkerheten, og tar til orde for at NORDEFECO burde fortsette å støtte alle nordiske militære samarbeidsanstrengelser.

Til slutt tar rapporten for seg mulige svakheter ved nedenfra-og-opp-tilnærmingen. For det første utelater den behovet for å utvikle kapasiteter for å ta imot alliert støtte i stor målestokk for det nordiske område som ett sammenhengende strategisk rom. Alle nordiske land ser behovet for å utvikle vertslandskapasiteter tilpasset også dette strategiske behovet, men på det praktiske plan skjer alt på nasjonalt nivå. Rapporten skisserer derfor et scenario – å ta imot en amerikansk Marine Expeditionary Force – for å bøte på denne mangelen i planleggingen. Rapporten understreker at de kapasiteter som dette scenarioet krever, uansett er nyttige for å møte alle nåværende fellesnordiske militære utfordringer, og ikke er begrenset bare til behovene i det foreslåtte scenarioet.

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## Preface

This report is written for NORDEF CO CAPA WG. I thank Col Nyland (Norway) for his able leadership of the research and writing that went into it. His timely reminders greatly helped the progress of the work. He alone found and recruited the able POCs who were a great resource for work, Steffen Horsmann (Denmark), Asko Toivanen (Finland) and Marcus Mohlin (Sweden). As a Norwegian, I had the audacity to believe that I would be able to cover Norway unassisted. However, my colleagues at the FFI, Alf Cristian Hennum and Mona Sagsveen Guttelvik proved me wrong by improving on the Norwegian parts as well as the whole. I thank them all. Remaining inaccuracies are my responsibility.

Oslo, 9 July 2021

Tore Nyhamar



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# 1 Introduction and outline

The purpose of this study is to identify shared or common strategic challenges for the Armed Forces of the Nordic countries. To identify common challenges is not an end in itself, rather, it is a first step towards Nordic countries cooperating to solve those challenges. Establishing genuinely shared interests would mean that there is an unexploited potential for cooperation beneficial to all Nordic countries. Thus, the following three strategic factors are shared: (1) All Nordic states view Russia as their most serious security challenge, and believe that it has worsened in recent years; (2) The Nordic states are small states compared to Russia, thus, cooperation with others is desirable and indeed necessary; (3) All Nordic states believe they face a more complex security challenge, primarily because hybrid threats have become more prominent. The remainder of the introduction will briefly elaborate these three ideas, before pointing out how these common challenges may vary across the Nordic countries. The objective is to establish the key questions concerning strategic challenges. These question will be asked each country and the answers will identify common ground.

All Nordic states covered in this study – Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden – believe that their security environment has worsened in recent years, particularly from 2014. They all put Russia on the top of their list of concerns. Moreover, all Nordic states are small compared to Russia, particularly in military terms. The common security challenge the Nordic states perceive is Russia. Although all Nordic states share security concerns about Russia, these concerns are coloured by geography and allies. The size and nature of the threats from Russia vary according to their location, and, in turn, what allies they have to counter that threat. Thus, the question is whether the Nordic countries share sufficient interests to act together, when they take location and alignments into consideration.

They all see new, unconventional threats in their security environment from hybrid threats: All kinds of electronic sabotage against civilian and military systems, and, most importantly information warfare aimed at the population and military, to divide and confuse. However, the responsibility of Department of defense in the Nordic countries remain the Armed Forces. Their analysis therefore mainly look at how developments in the digital and information domain affects military operations. They analyze hybrid threats, how to operate military forces in an environment with an ongoing information war.

As the Nordic countries all are small states, lacking the means to solve their security challenges solely by own means, looking for assistance or allies as part of the solution comes naturally for them. Historically, choice and necessity led the Nordic countries to different solutions. Denmark and Norway joined NATO and remain members. Finland and Sweden never joined the main Western defense organization. However, the NATO membership distinction has become less clear-cut. NATO has moved from a security guarantee towards being an arena for finding allies with mutual interests, making it possible for Denmark and Norway to cooperate with non-members Finland and Sweden.

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Furthermore, in 2014 both Finland and Sweden obtained Enhanced Opportunities Partnership (EOP). The Partnership Interoperability Initiative (PII) maintain and deepen the interoperability developed with partners during NATO-led operations and missions over the last decades. The PII underlined the importance of interoperability for all its partnerships and proposed new means to deepen cooperation with those partners that wished to be more interoperable with NATO. The PII enabled NATO to grant tailor-made “enhanced opportunities” for deeper cooperation with six partners: Australia, Finland, Georgia, Jordan, Sweden and Ukraine. For example, NATO and Sweden detail areas of cooperation and timelines in Sweden’s Individual Partnership Cooperation Programme (IPCP), which has been jointly agreed for two-year periods since 2004. Together, EOP and PII have removed many previous (Cold War) obstacles for Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden to operate military forces together.

In sum, the Nordic countries are now in a position to develop far-reaching security arrangements among themselves when mutual interests exist. This report aim to explore what is feasible based on mutual interests. The report answers the following five questions for each country:

- (1) What conventional military threats do each Nordic country believe exist? All Nordic countries view Russia as the only real military threat, but the beliefs about the nature of the threat may vary. Is it an existential threat or a more limited threat? If the latter, what are the Russian objectives? Under what circumstances may they be triggered?
- (2) All Nordic threat assessments now include an evaluation of hybrid threats. How do they describe hybrid threats, particularly the relationship with conventional military means?
- (3) How do they describe potential allies, if any, in their security surroundings? Under what circumstances do they believe that external assistance might be available, or under what circumstances would allies find it challenging to assist or indeed thwart allied help altogether.
- (4) What beliefs do each Nordic country hold about the security concerns and interest in a deepening of security cooperation? What do they believe about under what circumstances their own interest is in allying with the other Nordics? Conversely, what do they believe are the interests of the other Nordic countries in Nordic security cooperation?
- (5) As stated above, the Nordic countries perceive similar overarching threats against their security, although differing geographical locations shape the threat differently. Political-military surroundings also differ – membership in NATO and the EU vary across the Nordic region. The final question is thus how their geographical-political view influences their views on NORDEFECO cooperation.

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## 2 Norway

The most recent Norwegian security assessment of the country's environment states that the situation is more serious than it was at the previous assessment in 2016, for three reasons.<sup>1</sup> First, the international rule-based order – Norway's first line of defense – is currently under more pressure than at any time since it was established in 1945. Second, Norway faces more complex threats than only a few years ago. The blurring of the boundary between threats against society and the state, challenges the military to react to a wider range of events. The military depends more on civilian infrastructure than previously, and Russia and China has proved adept at influencing and exploiting fissures in western societies in their national interest.<sup>2</sup> The election of Donald Trump and the advent of Brexit are the two main examples. The final reason is the changing global military strategic environment. Great power relations have become more conflictual, less governed by rules and hence less predictable. The use of force between great powers, especially at the threshold below full-scale war, can no longer be ruled out. Russia's use of military force in Crimea and Donbas remains a reminder. The rise of China as a global economic and increasingly military competitor to the United States changes international politics from hegemony to rivalry.

The overall objective for Norwegian security and defense policy is to protect and defend Norwegian sovereignty, territorial integrity, democratic institutions and freedom of action against political, military and other pressure. Norway's response to challenges of the international security environment have three main lines: National capacity, collective through NATO, and bilateral with close allies. The Norwegian Armed Forces has nine main tasks. They are credibly to deter attack, to defend against threats, intrusions and attack, to avert incidents and crisis, to secure a basis for national decision-making, to secure sovereignty and sovereign rights, to exercise authority in selected areas, to participate in international security policy and defense policy, and to participate in international operations.<sup>3</sup> The list is so long that the need for NATO and bilateral cooperation is obvious. Indeed, since 1949, the cornerstone of Norway's security strategy has been NATO. The third main line is bilateral cooperation with close allies. In practice this means the US and the UK, and to some extent, the Netherlands. The Nordic countries, the EU and other regional mechanisms such as the UK-led Northern group constitute a final, less formalized, line of Norwegian response.

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<sup>1</sup> Prop. 14 S (2020–2021) Evne til forsvar – vilje til beredskap. Langtidsplan for forsvarssektoren. <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/prop.-14-s-20202021/id2770783/?ch=2> Fokus 2021, Etterretningstjenestens vurdering av aktuelle sikkerhetsutfordringer <https://www.forsvaret.no/aktuelt-og-presse/publikasjoner/fokus/rapporter/Fokus2021-web.pdf> /attachment/inline/b9d52b53-0abe-4d1c-9c51-bf95796560bf:8dd66029b7efb38aab37d13e8b387d2e6ed0bd05/Fokus2021-web.pdf

<sup>2</sup> Diesen, Sverre, FFI-rapport 18/00080 Lavintensivt angrep på Norge i en fremtidig konflikt <https://publications.ffi.no/nb/item/asset/dspace:4175/18-00080.pdf>, p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> The defence of Norway Capability and readiness Long Term Defence Plan 2020 <https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/3a2d2a3cfb694aa3ab4c6cb5649448d4/long-term-defence-plan-norway-2020---english-summary.pdf> p. 6.

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## 2.1 Norwegian challenges with Nordic potential

The first Norwegian security challenge is simply to produce a sufficiently large military deterrent, primarily vis-à-vis Russia. It is a question of more military units on the Norwegian side, but not only that. As Norway views a limited military threat against its territory, motivated by a desire to influence Norwegian decision-making by limiting its freedom of action, cooperation that ensure allied support is helpful in itself. Military infringement by Russia resisted by Finland and Sweden is valuable, even if the military effort may be largely symbolical, because a conflict involving three Western countries is more serious than a conflict with a single country. Moreover, allies remove the narrative that the neighboring countries approve or acquiesce in the political subjugation. It is politically harmful for the Nordic countries to appear divided in a political-military crisis. Conversely, it is politically beneficial for the Nordic countries to be seen to act together. Moreover, the tighter the military cooperation, the more the Nordic countries actually do together in concert, the larger the political effect.

Military cooperation with other Nordic countries will provide real help in military terms. To defend Northern Norway if Russian forces can use Swedish and Finnish territory freely will be more difficult, and indeed impossible if the Norwegian forces are alone. For example, any friendly air defense systems, also when deployed on Swedish and Finnish territory, will be a help for the Norwegian Armed Forces' operations.

Let us list the most prominent military tasks where help would be useful:

- Secure sea lanes of communication in the North Atlantic
- Land forces in northern Norway
- Air defense in Northern Norway (land-based and in the air)

Anything that increase situational awareness in and around Norwegian territory Norwegian security concerns primarily revolve around smaller threats than existential war, although it could certainly involve forces larger than the Norwegian Armed Forces. The common denominator is the concern that military means can be used to encroach on Norwegian political objectives. First, the Russian assets employed may be too small to trigger a Article 5 response from NATO. Second, there is the possibility that the measures directed towards Norwegian interests may be such that it is even difficult to verify that an attack has indeed taken place. Finally, there may be a severe attribution problem. An attack has indeed occurred, but the problem of attributing it to someone remain.

Table 2.1 Summary of Norwegian security views.

	<b>Summary of Norwegian security views</b>
Conventional military threats	Limited attack on territory, political-military pressure and threats. Need to deter attack on territory and freedom of action to make political choices
Hybrid threats	A big new concern on its own and combined with conventional military forces
Beliefs about allies	<b>NATO</b> is primary, other allies are welcome, especially if they assist NATO
Deeper Nordic ties	Desirable, additional bonus if it assists NATO
Nordic strategic space	Focuses North - North-Atlantic and the High North

### 3 Denmark

In recent years, in response to a deteriorating world order and a more assertive and militarily stronger Russia, the Danish Armed Forces has reoriented from expeditionary international operations to national defense and regional operations. From 2001 to 2014, Denmark's focus was on contributing to far-flung international operations, primarily in Iraq and Afghanistan. Transforming its armed forces to deploy out of area permitted Denmark to deploy larger number of troops relative to the size and cost of its armed forces than other countries could. The increased importance of how and where the troops deployed also allowed Denmark to contribute significantly, in spite of limited defense spending. By dismantling capabilities – for example ground based air defense, artillery, submarines and most armor – irrelevant to forces fighting an irregular war, the Danish Armed Forces strategy of 'commit more, not spend more' successfully protected Denmark's position as a core-member state in NATO with a defense spending of little over 1% of GDP per year. A novelty is that cyber threats creates a more complex security environment. The Armed Forces demands new capacities to protect and fight cyber-attacks. Danish threat assessments also notes that disinformation is a new societal challenge. However, this falls outside the primary tasks of the Armed forces. Their capacities may of course assist civilian authorities.

The Danish Armed forces did retain national capabilities such as assisting with environmental disasters, Search and Rescue (SAR) and air policing. The SAR capability enables Denmark to exercise sovereignty under special circumstances, whilst air policing enables exercising it on a

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daily basis. Contributing to NATO's Baltic Air policing was the main Danish regional contribution, an exception to Danish deployments out of area. Since 2004, Denmark has participated five times. Denmark's support of the Baltic States is a continuation of Danish political support from the early 1990s. During those years, Denmark was the first, and for a long time only, NATO member in favor of Baltic NATO membership. Finally, the list of challenges suggest a more complex security environment, both nationally and internationally. Therefore, the Danish armed forces needs additional equipment for electronic warfare, and the doctrine for national defense needs to include cyber threats and information warfare.<sup>4</sup>

Today, Denmark still tries to implement 'commit more, not spend more' strategy with new objectives appropriate for a new security environment. It includes, however, also an increase in defense expenditure, albeit short of the 2% of GDP mark that NATO decided in 2014. The Danish Armed Forces now focus on conventional war fighting capabilities again. In concrete terms, the Defense compromise from 2017 decided on the following:<sup>5</sup>

- Re-equip 1. Brigade to make it deployable for modern, conventional warfighting against near peer rival:
  - Add more tanks
  - Additional artillery
  - Add anti-armor system
  - Add land based anti-aircraft system
  - Additional reconnaissance squadron
  - Equipment for electronic warfare
- Add a light infantry battalion the 2. Brigade
- Partner a Baltic headquarter in Adizi, Latvia
- Participation in NATO's Enhanced forward Presence (EfP) in the Baltic states
- Participation in NATO's Rapid Deployment Force (NRF)
- Navy with 3 frigates with ASuW and anti-aircraft capability
- Air Force with 27 F-35A

These measures would give the Danish Armed Forces a structure with sufficient capabilities to enable it to preserve its status as a core member of NATO. The structure still mainly aims to deliver in an expeditionary role but now against a near peer military force in conventional combat. Danish security evaluations no longer rules out an attack on Danish territory, including

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<sup>4</sup> Danish Defence Agreement, <https://fmn.dk/en/topics/agreements-and-economi/agreement-for-danish-defence-2018--2023/>

<sup>5</sup> Danish Defence Agreement. <https://fmn.dk/en/topics/agreements-and-economi/agreement-for-danish-defence-2018--2023/>

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Bornholm, although still seen as unlikely.<sup>6</sup> The new light infantry battalion's primary tasks will be participation in NATO's collective defense, whilst its national tasks will be to support the police. The most likely deployment is in the Baltic but it could easily deploy elsewhere close to Denmark. The Danish threat perception is that terrorism is the main threat within its territory. The Armed Forces may assist in countering this threat, particularly the new light infantry battalion.

NATO remains the cornerstone of Danish defense and security policy, and the Danish armed forces aim to enable Denmark as a core member state to meet NATO's requirements and it force goals for Denmark to take part in collective defense. Collective defense requires Denmark together with NATO allies to be able to support and defend for instance the Baltic countries. The Baltic Sea area dominates Denmark's military thinking. International law is seen as its first line of defense. Danish security policy seek to uphold an international order that preserve the integrity and freedom of action of all states. NATO's collective defense is Denmark's second line of defense. Should any of these two lines of defense be breached – and they are inextricably connected – Denmark's security situation would significantly have worsened.<sup>7</sup>

While the previous emphasis on expeditionary missions, focused primarily on land forces, the new threat perception after 2014 make naval forces, especially, more relevant again. The current military build-up therefore include new anti-aircraft capability on the three Danish frigates as well as systems to detect and combat submarines. The Danish navy is currently implementing necessary elements for an ASuW and air-defense role capacity. Danish Special Forces will also increase its number of frogmen by 50%, rebuilding an old Danish specialty. In short, the Danish Armed Forces are building a joint force to fight in the Baltic Sea (and Kattegat and Skagerak). Its Armed Forces aim to deliver air-defense at sea and in coastal areas, especially around the Baltic Sea, and the ability to track and destroy submarines, securing sea lanes both east and west of Denmark.

NORDEFECO is integrated to Danish cooperative efforts in the Baltic Sea. As the Baltic Sea area now is at the forefront of Denmark's security thinking, the importance of NORDEFECO has increased. Moreover, the Danish perception of the importance and effect of NORDEFECO would increase in tandem with the importance and effort that the US attach to it.

Greenland also makes Denmark an arctic state. The deterioration of international order and increased great power competition is another challenge to Denmark. Denmark thus tries to step up its surveillance and presence in the Arctic. Climate change enhances the strategic importance of the Arctic by opening new shipping lanes and opening new areas for commercial activity. It is a Danish national interest to preserve the Arctic as the low tension area that it has remained so far. If Denmark can control its Arctic territory in a transparent and comprehensive manner, no great power would have an incentive to intervene to deny other great powers. To ensure that is a

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<sup>6</sup> Danish Defence Agreement <https://fmn.dk/en/topics/agreements-and-economi/agreement-for-danish-defence-2018--2023/>

<sup>7</sup> This paragraph is based on <https://fmn.dk/globalassets/fmn/dokumenter/forlig/-danish-defence-agreement-2018-2023-pdfa-2018.pdf>

task for the Danish Armed Forces. The Danish navy thus needs to have ocean going vessels capable of operating around Greenland, supported by the necessary logistics.<sup>8</sup>

Tabell 3.1 Summary of Danish security views.

	Summary of Danish security views
Conventional military threats	No longer rule out military means used against Danish territory.
Hybrid threats	A big new concern on its own and combined with conventional military forces
Beliefs about allies	<b>NATO</b> is primary, other allies are welcome, especially if they assist NATO
Deeper Nordic ties	Desirable, additional bonus if it assists NATO
Nordic strategic space	Yes, setbacks elsewhere will significantly negatively impact Danish security

## 4 Sweden

Sweden sees a deteriorating security environment, in its vicinity and generally in Europe. An armed attack on Sweden to occupy parts of its territory cannot be ruled out. Military instruments may be used, or threats thereof. The threat is linked to Russian actions. Hybrid threats – cyber-attacks and information warfare – may precede or coincide with the use of military force against Sweden. Sweden is today experiencing various types of antagonistic pressure from information operations and cyber-attacks.<sup>9</sup> This fact has shaped Swedish views on the seriousness of these threats and urgency of addressing them. Sweden is today in the process of rebuilding its Armed Forces. The Swedish Armed forces seek to secure its interests on Swedish territory and beyond by preempting threats and to prepare for conflict and war, and to protect society and its ability to act.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Forsvarsförslag 2018–2023 <https://fmn.dk/globalassets/fmn/dokumenter/forlig/-forsvarsforlig-2018-2023-2018.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.regeringen.se/49f10c/globalassets/regeringen/dokument/forsvarsdepartementet/forsvarsberedningen/slutrapport-14-maj/ds-20198-varnkraft---inriktningen-av-sakerhetspolitiken-och-utformningen-av-det-militara-forsvaret-2021-2025.pdf> p. 108.

<sup>10</sup> Regeringens proposition 2020/21:30. Totalförsvaret 2021–2025, p. 87.

<https://www.regeringen.se/4a965d/globalassets/regeringen/dokument/forsvarsdepartementet/forsvarsproposition-2021-2025/totalforsvaret-2021-2025-prop.-20202130.pdf>



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Any security crisis or armed conflict in Sweden's vicinity will inevitably affect it. In line with the unilateral declaration of solidarity, Sweden views its security environment as a single strategic space. Interruptions of the sea-lanes in the North Atlantic or the encroachment on any NATO military facilities will worsen Sweden's military-strategic situation. It will make it more difficult for the US to deploy troops, it might cause local US allies to fall and make their territory available to Russian forces.<sup>11</sup>

To Sweden's surroundings and to Sweden's own ability to withstand a military attack, the connections over Swedish territory are important. There are two axes. The southern one goes from the Swedish west coast and Gothenburg, via western Svealand to Oslo. The northern one goes over Jämtland and Norrbotten to the Norwegian harbors at Trondheim and Narvik. Areas of Sweden's territory that are particularly important for its security are the Stockholm area (political and economic center), the island of Gotland (almost in the middle of the Baltic Sea), South East Sweden (vulnerable to attack across the Baltic Sea), the Öresund region (controlling access to the Baltic Sea), and Swedish West Coast with the important port of Gothenburg and western Svealand (axis to Oslo and the important transport route for Norway, Sweden and Finland), and Jämtland and Norrbotten to Trondheim and Narvik (transport of goods and troops across Sweden into the Baltics).<sup>12</sup>

Conventional military means may be accompanied by hybrid threats.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, the strengthening of the Swedish Total defense capabilities, herein the capabilities of the Armed Forces that began in 2014 needs to continue.<sup>14</sup> Sweden has increased its defense expenditure recently and plan further increases towards 2025, totaling a 40% increase. The target for the war organization is too long to reiterate here but the army aim to have three brigades in 2030.<sup>15</sup> Sweden's tradition of total defense, integrating civilian support and measures to protect the population in its defense posture present a venue for including cyber threats and information warfare in its total defense efforts.

The ability to operate with other countries and organizations should be strengthened. Joint military exercises with countries in the Baltic Sea region as well as those with interests in the

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<sup>11</sup> Regeringens proposition 2020/21:30. Totalförsvaret 2021–2025, p. 58.  
<https://www.regeringen.se/4a965d/globalassets/regeringen/dokument/forsvarsdepartementet/forsvarsproposition-2021-2025/totalforsvaret-2021-2025-prop.-20202130.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> Regeringens proposition 2020/21:30. Totalförsvaret 2021–2025, p. 60, 72, 112 and 119.  
<https://www.regeringen.se/4a965d/globalassets/regeringen/dokument/forsvarsdepartementet/forsvarsproposition-2021-2025/totalforsvaret-2021-2025-prop.-20202130.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Hybrid threats are outlined in Regeringens proposition 2020/21:30. Totalförsvaret 2021–2025, p. 61–64.  
<https://www.regeringen.se/4a965d/globalassets/regeringen/dokument/forsvarsdepartementet/forsvarsproposition-2021-2025/totalforsvaret-2021-2025-prop.-20202130.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> Regeringens proposition 2020/21:30. Totalförsvaret 2021–2025, p. 26.  
<https://www.regeringen.se/4a965d/globalassets/regeringen/dokument/forsvarsdepartementet/forsvarsproposition-2021-2025/totalforsvaret-2021-2025-prop.-20202130.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> Regeringens proposition 2020/21:30. Totalförsvaret 2021–2025, p. 100–101.  
<https://www.regeringen.se/4a965d/globalassets/regeringen/dokument/forsvarsdepartementet/forsvarsproposition-2021-2025/totalforsvaret-2021-2025-prop.-20202130.pdf>

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region is important to Sweden. The cooperation between Swedish and Finnish units are particularly important.

#### 4.1 Sweden and allies

Sweden has as a non-aligned stayed out of armed conflict for over 200 years. In 2009, in line with the Lisbon Treaty chapter 47.2, Sweden issued a solidarity declaration, stating that in case of an attack on any EU member or Norway and Iceland, Sweden would offer assistance. It has remained official Swedish policy since. Sweden cooperates with the EU, with NATO as an EOP, and bilaterally with many countries. Two notable targets for Swedish military cooperation are Finland and the US.

At the practical level, the military cooperation with Finland is the most important. The Swedish-Finnish defense cooperation is close, comprehensive and the most important external measure for both countries. The purpose is to strengthen the military capabilities of both countries by having operated jointly.<sup>16</sup> This will strengthen both deterrence and warfighting capability. Increased operational capacities were to be achieved by joint use of military resources, interoperability and joint ability to act together. The Swedish-Finnish military cooperation included joint operational planning, joint military exercises, joint units, joint secure communication, joint use of maritime infrastructure, and cooperation on procurement.<sup>17</sup>

Swedish-Finnish military cooperation is the widest and deepest in the Nordic region making it the current Nordic gold standard for regional cooperation. Interestingly, the foundation is not a security guarantee. Neither country has said that it will give assistance in the event of an attack. Instead, Sweden and Finland have focused on developing stronger ability to act together. They have worked to give decision-makers a wider set of options they can use in the event of an acute military crisis. Sweden and Finland have a long history of security and military cooperation, but the relationship has become a lot closer after 2014, when both countries felt a renewed urgency to boost their defense capacity after the Russian annexation of Crimea and incursion into eastern Ukraine. In 2018 Sweden passed a law that greatly facilitate the deployment of Finnish troops on Swedish territory. It has continued unabated since and there are further ambitious plans for the 2021-2030 period.

The expressed intent on both sides is to enhance their deterrent of military attack. There are two important learning points. The first is that it has proved possible to develop a very far-reaching and deep defense cooperation without any issuing a political guarantee of mutual military assistance. The second is that the expressed intent of enhancing deterrence of a military attack is

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<sup>16</sup> Försvarsberedningen Värnkraft (2019) <https://www.regeringen.se/rattsliga-dokument/departementsserien-och-promemorior/2019/05/ds-20198/> Regeringens proposition 2020/21:30.Totalförsvaret 2021-2025, p. 100–101 <https://www.regeringen.se/4a965d/globalassets/regeringen/dokument/forsvarsdepartementet/forsvarsproposition-2021-2025/totalforsvaret-2021-2025-prop.-20202130.pdf>.

<sup>17</sup> Magnus Petersson Svensk-finskt försvarssamarbete då och nu FOI MEMO (2020) p. 3 <https://www.foi.se/rapporter/rapportsammanfattning.html?reportNo=FOI+Memo+7501>

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working also without a formal guarantee. It is well worth to pause and consider why this might be so.

Obviously, the combined Armed Force of Sweden and Finland are larger than any of them in isolation, and they may be able to provide capabilities that the other lack altogether. For example, Sweden has submarines, a capability that Finland does not have. However, it appears that the mere possibility of meeting the military forces of two countries rather than one represent an increased deterrence. Simply put, there is a political significance added to the calculations of potential aggressor. This is particularly true if the aggressor threatens to use or actually use military instruments for limited political objectives, typically to influence decisions made by Swedish and Finnish political decision-makers. In this case, there might be considerable political gain from being two, in addition to having a bigger stick. During the Cold War, the security thinking was dominated by the prospect of the big war, and then the total military capacity that decide the outcome of the war is what mattered. Today, there is an added interest in the political use of military power and small states can enhance deterrence by having allies and a demonstrated ability to maneuver forces together with them. Sweden and Finland are now able to act jointly in some areas. In September 2020, Norway joined the idea of joint operational planning with Finland and Sweden in a trilateral declaration. The declaration states that: “A possible outcome is operations planning for areas of common concern, for example the northern parts of Finland, Norway and Sweden (North Calotte and expand to other areas as required) and improved interoperability between our armed forces that enable common military action if decided”.<sup>18</sup>

The Swedish Armed Forces primary objective is – alone or together with others – to defend Sweden. Therefore, to give and receive military assistance in case of a conflict in its vicinity needs to be planned and coordinated «to the largest extent possible» with other countries. The US is potentially the most important military ally. Sweden has concluded a number of bilateral agreements with the US. For the first time American troops have participated in military exercises in Sweden. The Swedish policy is to maintain and deepen bilateral defense relations with the US. Cooperation has mainly taken place in the following prioritized areas from the 2016 declaration of intent. They are (1) Interoperability (2) Exercises and education (3) Materiel (4) Research and development.

The procurement of the Patriot air defense system establishes another important long-term defense policy link between Sweden and the US, with defense policy implications. Cooperation between the Swedish Armed Forces and USA’s European Command (USEUCOM) has been formalized. In May 2018, a new trilateral declaration of intent followed between Finland, Sweden and USA about further deepening of defense cooperation. This initiative aims to complement bilateral cooperation between the three states and create synergies. Interoperability is a necessity in order to act together in a crisis but is not enough. The military exercises need

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<sup>18</sup> Magnus Petersson <https://www.foi.se/rapporter/rapportsammanfattning.html?reportNo=FOI+Memo+7501>

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support both from well-established channels of communication at the government and military channels of communication.<sup>19</sup>

Swedish (and Finnish) military cooperation with the USA takes place in a NATO framework. NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) Planning and Review Process (PARP) is the principal PfP tool to promote interoperability. The PARP lays out interoperability and capability requirements for participants to attain and includes an extensive review process to measure progress. Sweden and Finland are among the six nations that have been granted the EOP, tailor-made "enhanced opportunities". PARP is an important tool for Swedish Armed forces in developing military capabilities and interoperability not only with NATO itself but bilaterally. Not only does it facilitate Swedish bilateral cooperation with NATO members Denmark, Norway and the USA, but cooperation with Finland as well.<sup>20</sup>

NATO is the only multi-national organization with a command and planning structure capable of handling large and demanding military operations. Pivotal for Swedish security, Swedish participation in NATO exercises demonstrate Sweden's commitment to regional security and, at the same time, develop the war-fighting capabilities of its Armed Forces.

The above-mentioned trilateral declaration of intent between Norway, Finland and Sweden from in September 2020, mark the final transformation of economy-driven trilateral cooperation from 2007–2008 into a geopolitically driven defense cooperation preparing for a joint defense of their region against shared threats. Unlike the interwar period, the Swedish government now believes that Sweden (and Finland) are part of a unified military geographical area, with little hope of remaining outside a major regional conflict.

This is perhaps the biggest novel development in Swedish security thinking. Therefore, in a Western perspective, and in their own view, Sweden (and Finland) are an important and natural part of the deterrent against Russia and the Defense of the Baltic Sea.

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<sup>19</sup> Proposition 2020/21:30 Totalförsvaret 2021–2015.  
<https://www.regeringen.se/4a965d/globalassets/regeringen/dokument/forsvarsdepartementet/forsvarsproposition-2021-2025/totalforsvaret-2021-2025-prop.-20202130.pdf> p. 69, p. 76.

<sup>20</sup> Proposition 2020/21:30 Totalförsvaret 2021–2015.  
<https://www.regeringen.se/4a965d/globalassets/regeringen/dokument/forsvarsdepartementet/forsvarsproposition-2021-2025/totalforsvaret-2021-2025-prop.-20202130.pdf> p. 78.

Tabell 4.1 Summary of Swedish security view.

	Summary of Swedish security views
Conventional military threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An attack on Swedish territory is possible, both as a means and as end in itself</li> <li>• Swedish security will be affected by all military action in Northern Europe</li> </ul>
Hybrid threats	A big new concern on its own and combined with conventional military means
Beliefs about allies	<b>Finland</b> is primary. All other allies are welcome, including NATO
Deeper Nordic ties	Desirable, additional bonus if it assists NATO
Nordic strategic space	Centrally located Sweden clearly believes that all military activity will impact Swedish security, Sweden focuses on the Baltic Sea

## 5 Finland

Finland is perhaps the European country that has retained most of the Cold War features of the Armed Forces during the Post-Cold war period. It relies on general male conscription to have an army sufficiently large to maintain territorial defense against potential large-scale military attack. It does not mean that it has not changed, but Finnish defense planning exhibit more continuity than change. Understanding this continuity is important when analyzing defense policy decisions by the Finnish Government in response to security environment changes.<sup>21</sup>

The 2017 Government Defense report<sup>22</sup> is the official document that has guided Finnish defense policy in recent years and will continue do so into the future. For the first time in the post-Cold War period, the document notes a deterioration in the security environment and increasing military tensions in the vicinity of Finland. With commendable clarity, it set forth the factors that affect the Finnish Armed Forces:

<sup>21</sup> Jyri Raitasalo, The Finnish Defence Planning Problematique Strategic outlook 7, p. 103 <https://www.foi.se/report-summary?reportNo=FOI-R--4456--SE>

<sup>22</sup> [https://www.defmin.fi/files/3684/JO6\\_2017\\_Statsradets\\_forsvarpolitiska\\_redogorelse\\_ruotsi\\_PLM.pdf](https://www.defmin.fi/files/3684/JO6_2017_Statsradets_forsvarpolitiska_redogorelse_ruotsi_PLM.pdf).

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- The early-warning period for military crises has shortened and the threshold for using force has become lower. At the same time, society's vulnerability has increased.
  - Military activity has intensified in the Baltic Sea region. A conflict in the Baltic Sea region would inevitably affect Finland's security.
  - It is questionable whether access to the airspace and sea area of the Baltic Sea region would be free during a potential crisis. Interference of shipping and blocking of Finland's sea lines of communication to the west would affect the whole of society.
  - The use or threat of use of military force against Finland cannot be excluded. As the nature of war is becoming more complex, the range of instruments employed against Finland would be wide and include both military and non-military means.
  - The defense of Finland calls for the ability to carry out land, maritime, air and cyberspace operations. The requirements imposed by the operating environment highlight, among other things, intelligence capability, agility from different administrative branches in rapidly developing situations, defense against long-range weapon systems and a cyber-defense capability.<sup>23</sup>

To sum up, in Finnish security thinking the threat of a full-scale military attack still looms large. The source would be Russia. However, such an attack could now use surprise and exploit the Russian local superiority to deploy forces rapidly rather than mobilizing large forces in a war of attrition. In addition, there is the threat of limited military incursions and the threat of the use of force to limit Finnish political freedom of action.<sup>24</sup>

How does Finland aim to respond to the deteriorating security picture and the increased threat of a military attack? First, the Finnish response is to improve operational capabilities and to improve readiness, especially for its land forces. The work to develop Rapid Reactions Units with their land units is the most important new element. Second, Finland seeks military cooperation with other countries. Finland works as a member state to improve the military and societal capabilities of the EU and to fill the Lisbon Treaty's paragraph 42.7 with real content. Finland has obtained and utilizes its EOP to participate in NATO exercises and cooperate with NATO countries bilaterally, including the US, Denmark and Norway. It has explicitly not ruled out NATO membership. It participates and supports the Northern group and Baltic defense cooperation. Finland tries to support and be part of a web of Western security organizations. The most important defense partner, however, is Sweden.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Prime Minister's Office Publications 7/2017 Prime Ministers's Office, Government's Defence Report, Helsinki 2017 p. 10. [https://www.defmin.fi/files/3688/J07\\_2017\\_Governments\\_Defence\\_Report\\_Eng\\_PLM\\_160217.pdf](https://www.defmin.fi/files/3688/J07_2017_Governments_Defence_Report_Eng_PLM_160217.pdf).

<sup>24</sup> Prime Minister's Office Publications 7/2017 Prime Ministers's Office, Government's Defence Report, Helsinki 2017 [https://www.defmin.fi/files/3688/J07\\_2017\\_Governments\\_Defence\\_Report\\_Eng\\_PLM\\_160217.pdf](https://www.defmin.fi/files/3688/J07_2017_Governments_Defence_Report_Eng_PLM_160217.pdf).

<sup>25</sup> Prime Minister's Office Publications 7/2017 Prime Ministers's Office, Government's Defence Report, Helsinki 2017 p. 15-18 [https://www.defmin.fi/files/3688/J07\\_2017\\_Governments\\_Defence\\_Report\\_Eng\\_PLM\\_160217.pdf](https://www.defmin.fi/files/3688/J07_2017_Governments_Defence_Report_Eng_PLM_160217.pdf).

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The pivotal objective in Finnish-Swedish military cooperation is increased joint operational capability. The close military relationship with Sweden has, interestingly, been developed without a mutual security guarantee. The objective is to enhance operational planning. In turn, joint operational planning removes many obstacles and paves the way for joint operative action if the political level decides it. The decision that has been made is to plan for cooperation in peace, crisis and beyond. The cooperation is open ended. There is no preset limit for how far it can go; it is for the political level to decide. The Armed Forces of Sweden and Finland conduct exercises together that include war fighting. The purpose of cooperation is to enhance deterrence. If Russia cannot know for sure the number of countries and troops it will have to fight when contemplating an armed attack it may be deterred from doing so. Not only will it face larger military forces but also a bigger political fallout.

In addition to facilitating cooperation militarily, Finland and Sweden have also undertaken political measures to facilitate joint military action. Finland passed into law a bill that now authorizes Finnish authorities to receive military support from Sweden and to send military forces to Sweden without asking Parliament beforehand. Sweden passed a similar law in 2018, giving the cabinet authority to receive military forces from Finland onto Swedish territory, and to send Swedish forces to Finland without the consent of the Riksdagen. This is a practical measure to remove obstacles that would have delayed joint action. The political and military planning aim to give the decision-makers more feasible actions to choose from.

One way to look at this combination of goals and limitations is through the lens of freedom of action. First, the two countries have preserved their freedom of action by not committing to come to each other's defense. Second, the two countries have a wider range of feasible military options than they otherwise would have. If military cooperation in crisis and warlike conditions is going to happen, it needs to be prepared beforehand.

In September 2020, Norway joined Finnish-Swedish operational planning in a trilateral declaration of intent to advance the common goal to achieve the capability and readiness to conduct joint military operations. It also stated clearly what has been agreed upon: "Any military action will be subject to separate national political decision-making processes. This trilateral Statement of Intent does not entail any mutual defense obligations".<sup>26</sup> The intent is the same, but practical measures facilitating military operations together are fewer with Norway.

Military cooperation enhances deterrence in all the ways discussed above. Then there are the military aspects of deterrence. Finnish-Swedish cooperation is between the small Armed Forces of two small countries, but they are larger together. When Finland and Sweden began operational planning for crisis and war, it had the qualitative aspect of increasing credibility of deterrence by demonstrating a shared will to cooperate. In addition, it obviously yielded the practical ability to combine their Armed Forces to one larger force at the higher end of the conflict scale. The expressed intent with Swedish-Finnish air forces cooperating is to present a

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<sup>26</sup> Statement of intent on the enhanced operational cooperation among the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Finland and the Ministry of defence of the Kingdom of Norway and the Ministry of Defence of the the Kingdom of Sweden <https://www.regeringen.se/4a7675/globalassets/regeringen/dokument/forsvarsdepartementet/soi/trilateral-statement-of-intent-on-enhanced-operational-cooperation-200923.pdf>.



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potential aggressor with the risk of encountering the Finnish and the Swedish working together. In order to reach that ambition, the air forces need to be interoperable and be able to operate together. This can take place either through the coordination of national operations or in joint units. The latter demand that both countries are able to give the other host nation support, and a common operational picture (COP).<sup>27</sup>

However, as weapons systems, and what they can do, vary between the two countries, the scope of the combined capacity increase. For example, cooperation between Finnish and Swedish Air Force would give Sweden Finland's F-18 Hornet with AGM-158 JASSM with a 370 km range against ground targets whilst Finland would gain JAS-39 Gripen's missiles against targets at sea and sensors to detect aircraft. On the navy side, Sweden has submarines that Finland simply do not have. Finland could strengthen its surveillance capacity, especially a capacity for early warning. Swedish submarines could assist Finland in the event of an attack from sea. Even the joint Swedish-Finnish Amphibious Force consists of units with different weapons system, yielding potential gains at the operational and tactical level. Combining navies would yield a combined array of corvettes, patrol boats, and counter mine vessels have a potential for increased capability.<sup>28</sup>

Finnish-Swedish defense cooperation is the deepest and most comprehensive among the NORDEF members. Therefore, it is of considerable interest to understand what its enablers and drivers were. After initial contact in 2013, the Armed Forces of the two countries presented a joint action plan for developing cooperation in early 2014. The report proposed measures to increase cooperation, including creating a joint maritime battle group, the Swedish-Finnish Naval Task Group (SFNTG), and a joint amphibious force, the Swedish Finnish Amphibious Task Unit (SWEFIN ATU). Clearly, these are elements of bottom-up process driving development. Operating these two joint forces and operating the two air forces jointly had legal and political implications.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Johan Engvall, Eva Hagström Frisell, Madelene Lindström Nordiskt operativt försvarssamarbete Nuläge och framtida utvecklingsmöjligheter FOI p. 38. <https://www.foi.se/nyheter-och-press/nyheter/2018-11-13-okat-nordiskt-forsvarssamarbete.html>

<sup>28</sup> Johan Engvall, Eva Hagström Frisell, Madelene Lindström Nordiskt operativt försvarssamarbete Nuläge och framtida utvecklingsmöjligheter FOI p. 71 <https://www.foi.se/nyheter-och-press/nyheter/2018-11-13-okat-nordiskt-forsvarssamarbete.html>

<sup>29</sup> Johan Engvall, Eva Hagström Frisell, Madelene Lindström Nordiskt operativt försvarssamarbete Nuläge och framtida utvecklingsmöjligheter FOI p. 19–20 <https://www.foi.se/nyheter-och-press/nyheter/2018-11-13-okat-nordiskt-forsvarssamarbete.html>



Tabell 5.1 Summary of Finnish security views.

	<b>Summary of Finnish security views</b>
Conventional military threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large scale attack on whole territory</li> <li>• Armed incursions and threats of armed incursion to limit freedom of action</li> </ul>
Hybrid threats	A big new concern on its own and combined with conventional military means
Beliefs about allies	<b>Sweden</b> is the primary ally, but all allies that strengthen the web of security institutions are welcome and supported
Deeper Nordic ties	The countries with the interests and outlook most similar to Finland
Nordic strategic space	Having one eye on the north and one on the west, Finland plans for a connected Battle space

## 6 Comparative Concluding Analysis

This section identifies three common Nordic strategic challenges. First, the need to generate more military power, increased national defense efforts are necessary but likely insufficient. Second, there is a need for developing ties with allies. Third, the need to develop a capacity to fight hybrid threats.

The report identifies the following shared, key beliefs among the Nordic countries about the security situation in the region. These are the beliefs that underpin their policies to meet their strategic challenges. First, having and deepening military cooperation with allies deter politically from military pressure independent of, and in addition to, purely military benefits. Second, there is no contradiction between military capacities that increase deterrence and fighting a full-scale conventional war. Third, open-ended, security-driven bottom-up development is likely to be more effective than politically decided, top-down decisions.<sup>30</sup>

The final section is an attempt to identify factors easily overlooked in tactical short-term processes. First, the implications of a single strategic space needs considering. Practical,

<sup>30</sup> Nordiskt operativt försvarssamarbejde, FOI p. 3, p. 36 <https://www.foi.se/rapportsammanfattning?reportNo=FOI-R--4628--SE>.

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bottom-up military cooperation cannot find those implications. Second, necessary new capacities will fall by the wayside in this practical approach. All Nordic MoDs suggest action that address the need for hybrid warfare capacities, and they identify the need to develop capacity to receive allied military assistance. However, they do not address the need to develop large-scale capacity to receive allied military reinforcements for the region as a single strategic space. The Nordic countries all recognize the need to develop host nation capacity that match their strategic needs but at the practical level relatively little happens. The report thus set forth a scenario – receiving an American MEF – to fill this lacuna. However, note that this scenario raises the demand to develop capabilities that generally helps to deter and aid in warfighting outside the scenario as well. The demands of the scenario points to developing capabilities that are generally useful for the common Nordic strategic challenges in the current security environment.

The dominant, striking feature of this analysis is how uncannily similar the Nordic states now assess their security situations. All emphasize all of the following points. First, the security situation has deteriorated. The possibility of a military attack has increased, and no country is longer willing to rule out the possibility of a military attack altogether. Arguably, both Denmark and Sweden did so prior to 2014. Second, the more challenging security environment encompasses a great risk of the use of military instruments to influence the policies of the Nordic countries. Third, all Nordic countries believe that the security environment has become more complex. In addition to conventional military threats, all believe that cyber-attacks against infrastructure and information operations against society now have become a part of the security environment. All identify Russia and Russian actions since 2014 as the driver that caused their security environment to become more demanding.

All speak of increasing deterrence. The first of nine objectives for the Norwegian Armed Forces is to “ensure credible deterrence, based on NATO’s collective defense”. In addition, there are several tasks addressing how national capabilities need to contribute to deterrence.<sup>31</sup> The first objective of the Danish Armed Forces is to contribute to “defence and deterrence of NATO”.<sup>32</sup> The Swedish Armed Forces are to contribute “to deter those who might want to attack Sweden or use military means to pressure Sweden.”<sup>33</sup> Finnish foreign and security policy aim to prevent that Finland becomes part of a military conflict by an active stabilization policy. Maintaining a national defense capability supports this policy.<sup>34</sup> The Finnish policy of leaving NATO membership on the table is arguably deterrence: If Russia exerts unwanted pressure on Finland, Finland has an option that lead to an outcome Russia does not want. All Nordic states want to deter against outright military attack, but also against military pressure for limited political objectives.

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<sup>31</sup> Prop. 14 S (2020–2021) Evne til forsvar – vilje til beredskap. <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/prop.-14-s-20202021/id2770783/?ch=1>.

<sup>32</sup> <https://fmn.dk/globalassets/fmn/dokumenter/forlig/-forsvarsforlig-2018-2023-2018.pdf> p. 1.

<sup>33</sup> Proposition 2020/21:30 Totalförsvaret 2021–2015. <https://www.regeringen.se/4a965d/globalassets/regeringen/dokument/forsvarsdepartementet/forsvarsproposition-2021-2025/totalforsvaret-2021-2025-prop.-20202130.pdf> p. 68-69.

<sup>34</sup> Statsrådets försvarpolitiska redogörelse 6/2017. [https://www.defmin.fi/files/3684/JO6\\_2017\\_Statsradets\\_forsvarpolitiska\\_redogorelse\\_ruotsi\\_PLM.pdf](https://www.defmin.fi/files/3684/JO6_2017_Statsradets_forsvarpolitiska_redogorelse_ruotsi_PLM.pdf) p. 15–18.

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All Nordic states are small states, and too small to handle what they perceive as the primary threat alone. Thus, they all seek allies. To Denmark and Norway, the obvious answer is NATO, the security organization they have always relied on. To Finland and Sweden, it is everyone that have similar interests, and above all, each other. All Nordic countries express willingness and indeed interest in NORDEFECO and other forms of Nordic cooperation, be it all together or bilaterally with each other.<sup>35</sup>

The security challenges described above have also inserted dynamism in the security thinking in Nordic states. The relative weakening of the US as an upholder of the international order, weakening of international norms and increased great power competition, are all factors that alter the context for NATO's collective security in three interrelated ways. First, it makes the security guarantee more ambiguous because pressure with the employment of military instruments may come in many forms and interpretations may vary. Second, this creates incentives to seek out allies and partners with a commonality of interests within and outside the alliance. In this perspective, Sweden and Finland are much more natural partners for Norway and Denmark than, say, Portugal and Greece. Third, the only peer great power competitor to the United States is China, straining American resources and interest in Europe.

The combined effects are visible in many ways. Finland and Sweden have obtained Enhanced Partnership status, lowering the threshold between members and non-members and removing practical obstacles for joint military action. There is a plethora of new initiatives for security cooperation in Northern Europe and they reflect both the possibility for new alliances and the need for them.

Håkon Lunde Saxi, perceptively notes that the explanation for this is that Nordic cooperation has moved from being driven by economics to be driven by security.<sup>36</sup> NORDEFECO has benefitted. The shift from economics to security also implies a shift from a top-down approach to a bottom-up approach with direct contact between the armed forces of the respective states. The armed forces suggest projects that enhance cooperation and increase operational effectiveness, and the political level determines which ideas should move forwards. Now, new NORDEFECO projects can quickly be incorporated in the daily routine activities. In addition, the political level will have to find appropriate mechanisms to handle new activities and adapt the legal frameworks.<sup>37</sup>

All Nordic countries now express an interest in a continuation and deepening of this Nordic cooperation. The amount of military cooperation between the NORDEFECO members has

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<sup>35</sup> See Sagsveen Guttelvik, Mona and Alf Christian Hennem FFI-rapport 19/00403 Prinsipper for norsk avskrekking – en operasjonsanalytisk tilnærming. <https://www.ffi.no/publikasjoner/arkiv/prinsipper-for-norsk-avskrekking-en-operasjonsanalytisk-tilnaerming> for a general model that demonstrates the importance of allies for the deterrence of small states.

<sup>36</sup> Saxi, Håkon Lunde (2016). "Hvordan revitalisere NORDEFECO? En statusrapport og noen konkrete tiltak for å styrke samarbeidet i hverdagen". In Mikkel Storm Jensen (ed.) Nordisk forsvarssamarbejde, København: Forsvarsakademiet p. 84.

<sup>37</sup> Nordisk operativt forsvarssamarbet FOI (2018) <https://www.foi.se/rapportsammanfattning?reportNo=FOI-R--4628--SE> p. 19.

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increased, especially after 2014. The success of the bottom-up approach that has benefitted NORDEFECO is based on the fact that it enhances deterrence, see box.

### **Effect of military cooperation on the calculus of a potential aggressor**

*Political fall-out.* If states operate their Armed Forces together, a potential aggressor will face greater political reactions as other states will perceive it as a more aggressive action.

*Larger numbers.* The combined armed forces of two states are larger than any one of them on their own. For example, the Swedish air force and the Finnish air force together operate more aircraft, add the Norwegian are there are even more.

*Different weapons system.* The armed forces of two or more countries usually have some complimentary units. For example, Sweden and Norway have submarines whilst Finland and Denmark do not. Norway will soon have P-8A Poseidon that can track submarines from the air.

*Differences within the same weapons system.* All have fighter jets: Finland F-18, Sweden JAS 39 and Norway and Denmark F-35A. Different tactics are optimal against different aircraft. Moreover, the Hornets are equipped with missiles for land targets, the Gripen with missiles against sea targets and the F-35As have stealth capability. From an operational perspective, different planes are an obstacle. From a political deterrence perspective, it may heighten the threshold for war.

Let us have a closer look at the drivers, interests, possibilities and possible obstacles and limitations that shape the future NORDEFECO.

The first is that all Nordic countries are concerned about Russia using military instruments to exert pressure to obtain political concessions. The Nordic countries' shared interest in avoiding that has an individual side and a societal component. The individual is to avoid it happening to them, and the other's self-interest in upholding their neighbor's freedom of action. This will vary somewhat from country to country, although much will be similar even viewed through the lens of narrow self-interest. The societal is their shared interest in upholding the international order that protect them. This interest is genuinely the same for all Nordic countries. In practical terms, it means successfully to push back the view that great powers can divide the world into spheres of interests around them. Russia should not be allowed to dominate the Baltic and Nordic region without interference from other great powers, notably the US. The distinction between the individual and societal component is largely analytical, i.e. it breaks down in practice. They are inexorably linked: Any successful attempt to dominate any Nordic country will negatively affect the freedom of action of the others.

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Nordic military cooperation thus heighten the threshold that deter war. If deepened further, it has the potential to build a higher threshold against the use of military power. Even if Russia does not fully share this view, Nordic military cooperation offers them two benefits. The first is stability and predictability. One important concern to Russia is simply to know what to expect. A limitation is that no security guarantee exists in the event of war, and many have attributed the recent successes of Nordic military cooperation to the fact that they have avoided political promises. The second is that Nordic military cooperation – especially between Finland and Sweden – is preferable to them joining a Western alliance, notably NATO. This echoes Norway’s argument that it is better for Russia that we do surveillance in the High North. If not, Russia will get NATO or the US instead. The argument gives space to expand Nordic cooperation encompassing all countries.

It has been argued that the recent successes have been achieved because the Nordic countries have avoided an attempt to define political agreement. Instead, the cooperation has aimed to build real, useable military capacities. Decision-makers gain freedom of action because they now have new military options. First, the discussion of each Nordic country above, concluded that each feared Russian military pressure to try to influence their political decisions. With the exception of Finland, their primary concern was not a full-scale military invasion to take over the country. Instead, they, Finland included, feared military pressure of a limited military attack, motivated by gaining political concessions and increased influence. Thus, for the current primary security concern, shared by all Nordic countries, Nordic military cooperation offer a relevant alternative that is not limited.

Second, the security environment of the Nordic region, and its four major countries, has changed. They and their region is an integrated part of a complex web of security institutions: the EU, NATO, Northern Group, Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) and Framework Nation Concept (FNC), and indeed NORDEF and more. The overall political effect is to integrate Northern Europe in a way that ensures that a military attack on one country will have severe repercussions for Russia’s relations with all of them. Consider how the annexation of Crimea and the occupation of Donbas, both a part of the Soviet Union, has worsened relations with the West, and a similar attack will impact Russia’s relations with the West even more. To conclude, building increased military capacity, bilaterally, trilaterally or with all four countries, has potential to be relevant to the current primary security challenge.

Third, the web of security institutions will influence the differing geographical focus of the core national interests. Denmark looks to its immediate surroundings and east to the Baltic states. Finland looks east to its long border with Russia and, to some extent, north. Sweden looks east into the Baltic Sea. Norway looks to the High North but do have interests in Skagerrak/Kattegat and the straits into the Baltic Sea.

The differing geographical outlook raises the question whether the Nordic region really is a *single strategic space* or has *two focal areas, one in the North and one in the Baltic Sea* and its surroundings. One important argument for treating it as a single geographical space is that the region’s two greatest military powers, the US and Russia, treat it as such. This has too many implications to explore, indeed Major General (r) Karlis Neretnieks has suggested a joint

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Nordic General's course to understand the geographic, operational and strategic factors shaping the defense of the Nordic region.<sup>38</sup> Let us take a closer look at some possible implications. There has been comparatively little Nordic thinking about the Nordic region as a joint operational theatre, so any exercise is likely to yield new insights.

## 6.1 The Nordic States and the US

One corollary of the web of security institutions described above is that it explains the joint interest in keeping the US in the region.<sup>39</sup> One implication is that receiving military reinforcements becomes a key capability for the Armed forces of all Nordic countries. What general military capacities are relevant?<sup>40</sup> It will be general, as many measures are part of operational planning and hence classified. Anyway, the purpose is to note the need and briefly address what is done, if anything. Let us turn to three prerequisites for receiving allied military forces.

The first is *interoperability* with the arriving forces and with any cooperating host forces. For NATO members Norway and Denmark this has always been a requirement and a goal, and interoperability with NATO and US forces has now been an objective for the Armed Forces of Finland and Sweden for some time. Norway has had specific Host Nation capacities as a longstanding goal for its defense planning. In Denmark, receiving military assistance has returned as a task for the Danish Armed Forces, as the country has returned to a regional role for its military. Finland and Sweden both emphasize interoperability as goal for their armed forces. The Enhanced Partnership Opportunities status embodies both a result and an opportunity for further progress. Progress has been made on information sharing, a prerequisite for interoperability but, seemingly, few efforts directly aimed at receiving foreign military forces. They do, however practice on operating their mutual forces together.

The second is all the practical measures to have American Forces operate on their territory. Norway has had prepositioned material since the 1980s and currently have American soldiers permanently rotating in and out of the country. There is a doctrine for Host Nation support and a great deal of thinking how to deal with the practical issues involved. Norway tend to plan for receiving a MEB (Marine Expeditionary Brigade), around 5,000 troops. Denmark has again tasked its military to prepare for allied reinforcements and the development of practical capabilities to do so is work in progress. Finland and Sweden have far-reaching legal arrangements on operating their armed forces on each other's territory, and even bilateral and trilateral agreements with the US.

The third is the ability to fight until assistance arrives and offer assistance in protecting arriving forces, including the sea-lanes necessary and from the air. Planning for receiving assistance is a

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<sup>38</sup> Major General (r) Karlies Neretnieks Norden; ett gemensamt operationsområde, Luftled nr 1, 2020.

<sup>39</sup> Nordisk operativt försvarssamarbet FOI (2018) <https://www.foi.se/rapportsammanfattning?reportNo=FOI-R--4628--SE> p. 76. The argument why the possibility allied assistance matter so much for the deterrence of small states is explained in Prinsipper for norsk avskrekking – en operasjonsanalytisk tilnærming, FFI-rapport 19/00403 (2019).

<sup>40</sup> Nordic Operational Defence Cooperation: Current Status and Future p. 76.

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national task. However, an enhanced Nordic cooperation would also help national efforts. Moreover, a larger US military deployment would in the US perspective necessitate that the Nordic region is viewed a joint operational theatre. Let us briefly, for illustrative purposes, consider the deployment of an American Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) 50 000–60 000 troops in Denmark, southern Norway and Sweden.<sup>41</sup> It is a force that any one Nordic country would find demanding to host. However, a force that large would be able to employ overwhelming force, an American way of military thinking. Additionally, a force overwhelmingly strong is a strong deterrent that could avoid war altogether.

Deploying a MEF would accomplish three things for the US: (1) Provide a safe entry for the MEF. Initial entry is a concern in northern Norway and Sweden and very much a concern in the Baltic States. (2) Deter attacks both to the north and to the east with one force, saving personnel and having to fight a war with certainty. (3) Wrest the initiative from the Russians. Instead of the Americans reacting to counter Russian moves, the Russians now have to react to two possible American responses.

From a Nordic perspective, preparing to receive a MEF would be aligned with the following points that all NORDEF states as goals:

- Develop Host Nation capabilities
- Achieve the strategic objective of securing the US as ally
- Treat the Nordic region as a single strategic space

Let us move on to some Nordic observations about this scenario. The first observation is that military reinforcements this large would provide a push towards Nordic military cooperation. Any Nordic country would find it difficult to handle the practicalities of receiving it alone. Trident Juncture 2018 involved 50.000 soldiers, but Navy and Air Force personnel is included. The deployment phase started in August for a field exercise that began 25 October. The second observation is that all the Nordics now have an incentive to handle it. Norway, Sweden and Denmark will have their territory as well as their supply lines protected. However, Finland will also benefit. The tension that brought the American MEF might have interrupted supply lines in the Baltic Sea, and now the MEF has secured the alternative route over Gothenburg and over land through Sweden. This preserves the ability of the Finnish Armed Forces to fight. If the Russians do move in the east, American military assistance is readily available. This fact is readily and credibly observable, yielding a strong deterrent against an attack on Finland.

The next observation is that most of the necessary measures will also serve other purposes than receiving a MEF. They will include almost all kinds of cooperation NORDEF has facilitated to date: (1) Establishing contacts and secure communications (2) Simplify access and alternative

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<sup>41</sup> The US Armed Forces has three MEFs: MEF I in California with 53,000 troops in, MEF II in North Carolina with 47,000 troops and MEF III 27,000 with troops in Okinawa <https://www.iimef.marines.mil/About/What-is-II-MEF/>

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bases (3) Joint exercises (4) Exchange of surveillance, and even (5) operating forces together.<sup>42</sup> As far as simplifying access and alternative bases are concerned, one notable Nordic achievement has been Cross Border Training (CBT). It is divided into three geographical areas CBT North, CBT Middle and CBT South. Among these three, CBT North among Finland, Norway and Sweden is by far the most developed. There is more cooperation around activity, exercises and agreements in the North area.<sup>43</sup> Arguably, it is because there is more air activity in the north than in two other areas. In the era of bottom-up cooperation, this is exactly as expected. Preparing to receive a MEF in this area only involves doing what is already being done elsewhere, utilizing an existing agreement. It can also be done by extending current agreements, for example, implementing something like the Danish *Easy Access* proposal. The point is that although the idea may seem radical, it consists of concrete steps that is already being taken or can be put to good use for other objectives.

Briefly, the Nordic countries need to coordinate air traffic and provide effective air defense. This requires the sharing of the situational picture, leading to joint situational awareness. The Danish, Norwegian and Swedish air force need to be able to operate together. Their air defenses, mainly the Swedish Patriot system, both covers and shields parts of southern Norway. The Danish frigates can provide protection from air attack at sea. Both Norway and Sweden have submarines and anti-mine capacity, and they provide more support together.<sup>44</sup> Finally, the main challenge with an American force this size may be logistical. There are obviously more air strips, harbors, personnel and space combined in the three countries than each of them have.

The scenario would be helpful to building Nordic military capability also if it does not occur. The many military tasks that needs to be carried out builds capacities that are readily available for other purposes.

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<sup>42</sup> Engvall, Johan, Eva Hagström Frisell, Madelene Lindström (2018) Nordiskt operativt försvarssamarbete Nuläge och framtida utvecklingsmöjligheter Rapport FOI-R--4628—SE, p. 3.

<https://www.foi.se/rapportsammanfattning?reportNo=FOI-R--4628--SE>

<sup>43</sup> Engvall, Johan, Eva Hagström Frisell, Madelene Lindström (2018) Nordiskt operativt försvarssamarbete Nuläge och framtida utvecklingsmöjligheter Rapport FOI-R--4628—SE, p. 35.

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<sup>44</sup> This draws on Major General (r) Karlies Neretnieks Norden; ett gemensamt operationsområde, Luftled nr 1, 2020.



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## 7 Concluding Remarks: Strategic short term high impact measures

This report argues first that Western military cooperation is good because it at the same time *increases both deterrence to avoid war and the ability to fight one* if necessary. It found that the Nordic states are well suited to cooperate because their view of the threats are remarkably similar. All see the need to counter Russian threats to their political freedom of action as a major challenge. Interests in avoiding this type of political constraints, to some extent, mitigate different interest created by geography in fighting a war. They see the ability to react quickly as crucial, and they see real gains in deterrence by building capacity to act together. Functioning command and control, well developed planning and joint exercises are among the most effective, and relatively inexpensive, measures for improving Nordic collective defense.

Furthermore, the Nordic states believe that tactical small steps to improve operational readiness together with other Nordic states also improve their military ability to fight a large war. The Finnish-Swedish defense cooperation illustrate this nicely. There is no political commitment to provide assistance in the advent of war, so both countries have preserved their freedom to act as they best see fit. However, the close military cooperation give any potential aggressor the additional political risk of conflict with two countries rather than one. On the other hand, the cooperation between the two countries do provide additional tangible military benefits. Sweden has submarines that Finland lack. The Finnish Army is much larger than the Swedish one. The Finnish air force can hit targets on the ground that the Swedish cannot. Their combined air force and naval capacities, when operational, are obviously larger, covering a wider spectrum of capabilities than any of them would have alone. In short, by improving their odds in event of open conflict, they have improved their joint deterrent effect to avoid conflict.

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## About FFI

The Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (FFI) was founded 11th of April 1946. It is organised as an administrative agency subordinate to the Ministry of Defence.

## FFI's mission

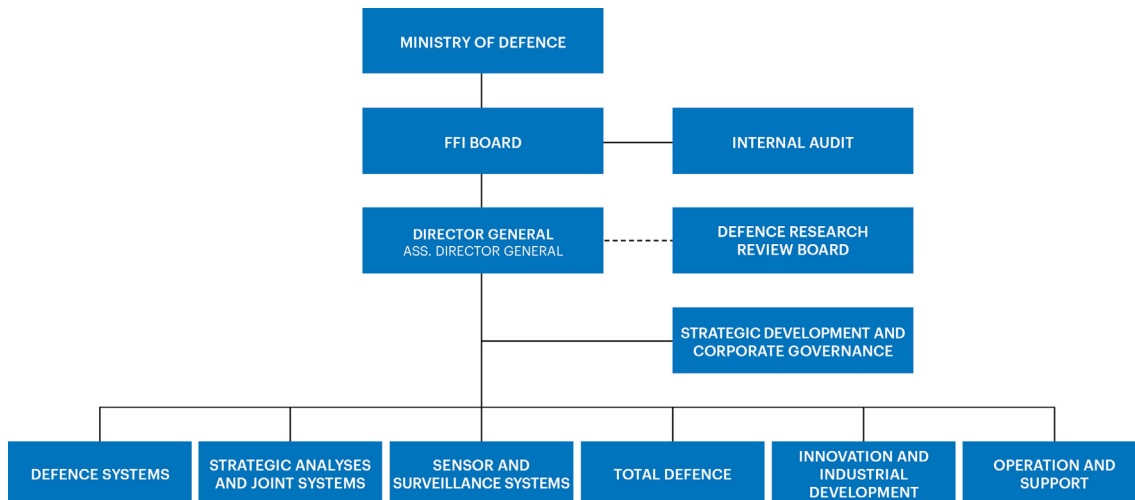
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