

# Northern Europe's Strategic Challenge from Russia

## What Political and Military Responses?



Barbara KUNZ

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### **Ifri**

27 rue de la Procession 75740 Paris Cedex 15—FRANCE

Tel.: +33 (0)1 40 61 60 00—Fax: +33 (0)1 40 61 60 60

Email: [accueil@ifri.org](mailto:accueil@ifri.org)

Website: [ifri.org](http://ifri.org)

# ***Russie.Nei.Visions***

*Russie.Nei.Visions* is an online collection dedicated to Russia and the other new independent states (Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan). Written by leading experts, these policy-oriented papers deal with strategic, political and economic issues.

## **Author**

**Barbara Kunz** is a Research Fellow at the Study Committee for Franco-German relations (Cerfa) within the French Institute of International Relations (Ifri). Her current research centres on Germany's security and defence policy and defence cooperation between France and Germany. She is also interested in security issues in Northern Europe.

In terms of Nordic questions, she recently directed the dossier "The Arctic: A Strategic Exploration" in *Politique étrangère* (Vol. 82, No. 3, autumn 2017) and published "La fragmentation de l'architecture de sécurité dans la Baltique" [The Fragmentation of the security architecture in the Baltic] in *Champs de Mars* (No. 29, summer 2017). In late 2015, she also published "Sweden's NATO Workaround: Swedish Security and Defense Policy against the Backdrop of Russian Revisionism" (*Focus stratégique* No. 64).

She holds a PhD from Stockholm University and a Master's degree from the Paris Institute of Political Studies (Sciences Po).

# Abstract

The return of more conflictual relations between Russia and the West following Russia's intervention in Eastern Ukraine and its annexation of Crimea has led to a deterioration in the strategic environment for Northern European countries, particularly in the Baltic Sea Region and the Arctic. In Nordic capitals, this climate of tension is perceived as the "new normal" to which one must adapt by implementing an effective strategy of deterrence. This adaptation is taking place as much on a national scale, at the level of defence policies and doctrines, as in bilateral and multilateral settings, principally transatlantic and in a NATO context.

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# Introduction

Norway, Sweden, Finland and Denmark<sup>1</sup> were unanimous in their condemnation of the annexation of Crimea and Russia's intervention in Eastern Ukraine. These events have come to play a decisive role in shaping their current policies, particularly in the fields of security and defence. In April 2015, the four Nordic defence ministers (and the Icelandic Minister of Foreign Affairs) responded by publishing a joint communique characterising "Russia's aggression against Ukraine and the illegal annexation of Crimea" as "the greatest challenge to security in Europe".<sup>2</sup> "New normal" is the phrase used in Nordic capitals to describe this enduring climate of strategic tension. The Nordic countries have responded on a national scale, in terms of defence policies and doctrine, as well as in bilateral and multilateral settings.

The four countries' foreign, security and defence policies are largely determined by their recognition that they are small countries whose main ally is the United States. Now that Russia has re-emerged as a threat, they have stepped up their efforts to keep America engaged in the Nordic and European security architecture. In the main, they act multilaterally, whether in terms of deterrence–cooperation with NATO, adherence to the sanctions regime put in place by the European Union (EU)–or when searching for dialogue with Russia. Cooperation with Russia essentially takes place in regional formats such as the Arctic Council, the Council of the Baltic Sea States and the Barents Euro-Arctic Council. The Nordic states have not undertaken major efforts to open up a dialogue with Russia, although they do, for example, support Germany's "Structured Dialogue" initiative within the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), as well as the resumption of dialogue between the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and Russia.

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Translated from French by Cameron Johnston.

Final version of the text submitted in January 2018.

1. Iceland, the fifth Nordic country, maintains no standing armed forces: its defence is guaranteed by the United States. As such, it will not be analysed in this paper.

2. P. Hultqvist, N. Wammen, G. B. Sveinsson, I. Eriksen Søreide and C. Haglund, "Vi utdyper det nordiske forsvarssamarbeidet" [We are deepening Nordic defence cooperation], Norwegian Government, 10 April 2015, [www.regjeringen.no](http://www.regjeringen.no).

# Dealing with Russia: Similar Approaches Despite Different Trajectories

Despite being geographically and culturally close to one another, the Nordic countries' defence and security policies are shaped by differing histories: these influence their perceptions and understanding of Russia and their political relationship with it.

For the Swedes, Russia was the main geopolitical challenge for centuries. The two (former) great powers confronted each other in numerous wars and shared a common border until Finland became independent. More recently, Sweden opted for neutrality in the First and Second World Wars and remained non-aligned during and after the Cold War, despite tacitly leaning towards the West. Questions of security now predominate in strategic debates in Sweden, with particular attention being paid to the Baltic Sea Region. The tone on Russia is generally very critical in Sweden, so much so that the Russian ambassador in Stockholm recently called for the two countries to “make peace in their heads”.<sup>3</sup> In practical terms, no high-level dialogue took place between 2014 and February 2017, when the Swedish Foreign Minister visited Moscow. Since then, two further meetings have taken place, within the framework of the United Nations (UN) in September 2017 and the Barents Euro-Arctic Council in October 2017.

After belonging first to the Swedish and then the Russian empire, Finland gained independence in 1917 and shares a 1,300 kilometers-long border with its eastern neighbour. The early years of the young republic were marked by a civil war between the “reds” who favoured union with the USSR and the “whites” who wanted independence. The Soviet assault in 1939 led to the Winter War, followed in 1941 by the so-called “Continuation War”. Finland paid a heavy price, losing inter *alia* Karelia and its second city, Vyborg. Russia also demanded swingeing reparations of \$ 300 million at 1938 prices, to be paid mainly through the supply of ships and locomotives. During the Cold War, Finland followed a policy of strict neutrality in line

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3. V. Tatarintsev, “Rysslands ambassador: hög tid att Sverige och Ryssland slutar fred” [Russian ambassador: it is high time for Sweden and Russia to make peace], Dagens industri, 17 October 2017, [www.di.se](http://www.di.se).

with the Paasikivi-Kekkonen doctrine, named after the Finnish Presidents in power between 1946 and 1981. The Agreement of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance signed between Moscow and Helsinki in 1948—and renewed in 1955, 1970 and 1983—limited Finland's room for manoeuvre in security policy but allowed the country to remain a democracy and market economy.<sup>4</sup> After 1991, Finland joined the West, a choice embodied in its membership of the European Union in 1995.

Helsinki is today firmly anchored in the West and supports EU sanctions despite their economic cost. Unlike many other countries, neighbouring Sweden in particular, Helsinki never believed in the “end of history” after 1989 and always supported a sizeable military. It regards Moscow, however, as a “neighbour one must talk to, whether you want to or not”.<sup>5</sup> Finland's Russia policy is therefore marked by its pragmatism, favouring as much cooperation as possible while at the same time remaining alert and uncompromising over the foundations of the European security order. The importance Finland attaches to dialogue can be seen in the regular meetings between the two countries' heads of state—Vladimir Putin visited Helsinki in July 2016, for instance, in his first European outing since the annexation of Crimea.

Since Norway only won independence in 1905, the history of its relations with Russia is relatively short. Norway shares land and sea borders with Russia and is concerned, above all, with the security situation and Moscow's activity in the North Atlantic. Resolutely atlanticist in outlook, Oslo has mostly placed its bets on the Atlantic Alliance and Washington, arguing that “Norway is NATO in the North”.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, it tries hard not to provoke Russia, given that “reassurance in the North means, above all, reassurance of Russia”.<sup>7</sup> The two countries resolved a longstanding dispute over their border in the Barents Sea in 2010, but other issues continue to cast a pall over their relationship, not least the conflict in Ukraine and its consequences. The presence of American forces on Norwegian soil since 2017 has become a source of tension. Russia also believes that Norway could be “more cooperative” in the High North.<sup>8</sup>

Denmark seems to be relatively less preoccupied by Russia than the other Nordic countries. For a long time, the immediate neighbourhood did not

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4. The agreement contained a mutual defence clause between the two countries and forbade Finland from joining any organisation “hostile to the Soviet Union”.

5. Interview with Finnish officials, October 2017.

6. Interviews with Norwegian officials, October 2017.

7. Interviews with Norwegian officials, October 2017.

8. A. Staalesen, “Lavrov Attacks Norway, Says Relations on Svalbard Could Be Better”, *The Barents Observer*, 19 October 2017, <https://thebarentsobserver.com>.



count much amongst Denmark's priorities, even more so after the Baltic states joined the Western camp. But Russia's actions in the Baltic region and particularly the military situation in Kaliningrad, as well as cyber and information threats, are drawing Copenhagen's attention back to the Baltic.

Economics plays second fiddle to security in the way in which the Nordic countries regard the "Russia problem". Except for Finland, trade with Russia has never played a major role in Northern Europe: trade volumes were already low and they fell further after 2014, mainly because of Russia's economic counter-sanctions. These economic ties matter most for Finland. While Russia was Finland's number one trading partner in 2013, it fell to number five in 2015 after Finnish exports declined by 35% and imports by 37%.<sup>9</sup> Only 6% of Finnish exports went to Russia in 2016, compared to 59% to the rest of the EU.<sup>10</sup> As for Sweden, Russia accounted for only 1.4% of Swedish trade volumes in 2017, down from 2% in 2012: Russia therefore ranks as Sweden's 15<sup>th</sup> largest trading partner.<sup>11</sup> The volume of trade declined between 2014 and 2016 because of sanctions, with Swedish exports to Russia falling 33% and Russian exports to Sweden down 44%.<sup>12</sup> In 2011, 2% of Danish exports went to Russia, which was then the 13<sup>th</sup> largest market for Danish companies. Sanctions led to a 40% decrease in exports.<sup>13</sup> Meanwhile, the Russian market absorbed 2% of Norwegian exports in 2015. Between 2014 and 2015, Norwegian exports to Russia declined by a third.<sup>14</sup>

Energy issues are no longer at the heart of Nordic debates about Russia, despite what certain newspaper articles might have once believed.<sup>15</sup> Norway is the fifth biggest exporter of oil and gas in the world, meets its own needs<sup>16</sup> and even competes with Russia on world markets. Denmark is also a net exporter of gas and oil.

For its part, Sweden meets all its need for gas by importing from Denmark and buying liquefied natural gas (LNG) on the world market. It only imports oil from Russia and could in theory switch supplier. Hence, Sweden is not truly dependent on Russia.

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9. "Finnish Exports to Russia Down More than 35 Percent", YLE, 25 August 2015, <https://yle.fi>.

10. "Trade", Statistics Finland, visited 16 March 2018, [www.stat.fi](http://www.stat.fi).

11. "Exports to our 30 Largest Trade Partners", Statistiska centralbyrån, 27 February 2018, [www.scb.se](http://www.scb.se).

12. "Business Sweden i Ryssland" [Business Sweden in Russia], Business Sweden, [www.business-sweden.se](http://www.business-sweden.se), visited 16 March 2018.

13. H. Kaufholz, "Danmarks eksport til Rusland faldt med 40 procent" [Danish exports to Russia drop 40%], Politiken, 15 May 2015, <https://politiken.dk>.

14. Author's calculations based on data from Statistics Norway, [www.ssb.no](http://www.ssb.no).

15. "How Much Europe Depends on Russian Energy", *The New York Times*, 2 September 2014, [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com).

16. "Norway Energy System Overview", International Energy Agency, 2017, [www.iea.org](http://www.iea.org).

Finland imports all of the gas it consumes directly from Russia. In 2006, Russian gas accounted for around 12% of its energy needs.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, Finland has a number of nuclear power stations and is investing in renewable energy, thereby reducing its vulnerability to Russian energy. In 2015, 45% of its electricity came from renewables and 30% from nuclear. The aim is to increase nuclear's share of electricity production to 60% by 2018 by bringing a fifth reactor on line, with a sixth currently being designed.<sup>18</sup>

Since the early 2000s, however, Finland has sought to reduce its dependence on Russian gas. In 2015, Helsinki bought back from Russia its 25% stake in Gasum, the Finnish gas monopoly that buys gas from Gazprom. The official reasons cited were climatic but geopolitics certainly played its part as well. Gasum thereby became 100% Finnish.<sup>19</sup> The BalticConnector project, which aims to connect the Estonian and Finnish gas networks, will start working in 2020 and allow Finland to diversify its supplies.<sup>20</sup>

As a result, the debates around the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline centre on geostrategy and its implications for the security of the region, as well as on its environmental effects. Sweden and Denmark are generally opposed to the project. Conscious of their limited influence and not wishing to come out in open opposition to Berlin, they are counting on the European Commission to block it. Finland's objections are mainly environmental, while the project has no direct effect on Norway.

In Finland, controversy also surrounds Russia's involvement in the construction of the Hanhikivi 1 nuclear power plant in Pyhäjoki, which is due to come on stream in 2024 and meet up to 10% of the country's energy needs (Rosatom acquired a 34% stake in the project).<sup>21</sup> Helsinki renewed the construction permit in 2014, causing the Greens to leave the government. This project illustrates the political tensions generated by distrust of Russia, on the one hand, and the necessity of cooperating with it in certain sectors, on the other.

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17. A. Schmidt-Felzmann, "EU Member States' Energy Relations with Russia: Conflicting Approaches to Securing Natural Gas Supplies", *Geopolitics*, Vol. 16, No. 3, 2001, pp. 574-599.

18. "Elproduktion enligt energikällor" [Production of electricity by energy sources], Finsk Energiindustri, <https://energia.fi>, visited 16 mars 2018.

19. "Finland Buys out Russian Share in Gas Firm Gasum", *YLE*, 18 December 2015, <https://yle.fi>.

20. See the Baltic Connector site, <http://balticconnector.fi>.

21. For a report of the events, see "Åtta år av Fennovoima" [Eight years with Fennovoima], *YLE*, 19 May 2016, <https://svenska.yle.fi>.

# The Two Theatres at the Heart of Nordic Concerns: The Baltic and the North Atlantic

Nordic politicians have been alarmed by Russia's actions in recent years: the large increase in its defence budget, its change of posture in the High North and Kaliningrad, the scenarios underlying its Zapad military exercises, air and maritime<sup>22</sup> incidents, and also Russian officials' (including the Russian ambassador to Stockholm) repeated warnings to Finland and Sweden not to join NATO. They now perceive containing the Russian threat to be a priority when it comes to external security. The Nordic states have differing priorities, as their attention is now focused on two theatres, namely the Baltic and the Arctic/North Atlantic.

## The Baltic

Tensions in the Baltic Sea region precede Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014. In 2013, for instance, Russian aircraft deliberately violated Swedish airspace.<sup>23</sup> The Nordic countries are less worried about a "classic" invasion of their own territories than a repeat of the Ukraine scenario whereby irregular Russian forces enter a Baltic state, triggering article 5 of the Washington Treaty. The risk that an intrusion by Russian aircraft into their airspace could lead to military escalation is even higher on the agenda. Equally, Russia might try to seize control of strategic territory such as the Åland islands or Gotland. In all these scenarios, the territory of a non-NATO member, Sweden, assumes crucial importance by virtue of its geostrategic position.

Due to the geographic location of the Baltic States, NATO's capacity to defend them is central to the debate. In time of war, NATO troops' access in the Baltic Sea Region would be crucial<sup>24</sup>, with potential Russian "anti-

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22. "Navy Ship Encounters Aggressive Russian Aircraft in Baltic Sea", US Department of Defense, 13 April 2016, [www.defense.gov](http://www.defense.gov).

23. See, for example, "The Secretary General's Annual Report 2015", NATO, 2015, p. 21, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int).

24. For instance, see E. Lucas, "The Coming Storm", *Baltic Sea Security Report*, Washington D.C., CEPA, 2015; D. Shlapak and M. Johnson, "Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank:

access” (A2AD) strategies playing a central role in NATO thinking. The Baltic is Sweden’s and Finland’s regional priority and, to a lesser extent, Denmark’s. What is more, the bulk of NATO activity in Europe is taking place in the Baltic, principally the *Enhanced Forward Presence* in the Baltic States and Poland.

## The Arctic and North Atlantic

No agreed definition of this region currently exists. By the “Arctic”, one generally means the area inside the Arctic Circle shared among the eight member states of the Arctic Council. Of these eight countries, five border the maritime zone of the Greenland and Barents Seas, which is to say the North Atlantic. It is this area that is at the root of Nordic security concerns. Amongst the Nordic countries, Norway and Denmark (Greenland) feature among the five states possessing territories in the Arctic Ocean, where they also sustain a military presence (the other three being the United States, Canada and Russia). Sweden and Finland have territory north of the Arctic Circle, of course, but they are not present in the North Atlantic. The Arctic is often described as being relatively sheltered from tensions between Russia and the West: states with Arctic coastlines have a common interest in continuing to cooperate pragmatically in “apolitical” areas like search and rescue at sea, fishing or environmental issues. Consequently, the region is not regarded as a potential source of military confrontation, although it could see clashes if a conflict between Russia and the West were to break out elsewhere in the world.

The region plays a crucial role in Russian military strategy, first and foremost for nuclear deterrence. Moscow also bases its military strategy on the idea of a “bastion” which seeks to control the waters and airspace around it to prevent an adversary from entering them in order to transfer troops or provide supplies. A2AD is therefore once more at the heart of the scenarios being considered. If Moscow for example managed to block the “GIUK” (Greenland, Iceland, Great Britain) gap, Norway would find itself behind enemy lines and the United States would be unable to come to its aid.

Nevertheless, the region is not a priority for NATO, which does not currently have a specific policy for the High North. Oslo is calling for NATO to do more, notably by changing its maritime posture and by stepping up the

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Wargaming the Defense of the Baltics”, RAND Corporation, 2016, [www.rand.org](http://www.rand.org); M. McNamara, “Securing the Nordic-Baltic Region”, *NATO Review*, 2016, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int); W. Clark, J. Luik, E. Ramms and R. Shireff, “Closing NATO’s Baltic Gap”, International Centre for Defence and Security, 2016, [www.icds.ee](http://www.icds.ee).

maritime capabilities of NATO and its members.<sup>25</sup> Norway's position is at odds with that of its allies, including Denmark, which fear that doing so could exacerbate tension with Russia. Copenhagen does not envisage an "immediate operational role for NATO in the Arctic" but nor does it exclude the possibility that this role might change if the threat were to evolve.<sup>26</sup> At a meeting on 8 November 2017, NATO Defence Ministers decided to change NATO's Command Structure. NATO gained an Atlantic Command which will ensure that sea lines of communication between Europe and the United States remain open.<sup>27</sup>

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25. I. Eriksen Søreide, "NATO and the North Atlantic: Revitalizing Collective Defense and the Maritime Domain", *PRIS*, Vol. 6, No. 2, Norwegian Government, 18 July 2016, [www.regjeringen.no](http://www.regjeringen.no).

26. "Sikkerhetspolitisk redogørelse om utviklingen i Arktis" [Security policy analysis of developments in the Arctic on security policy], Danish Ministry of Defence, 25 February 2016, p. 18, [www.fmn.dk](http://www.fmn.dk); interviews with Danish officials, October 2017.

27. "Press Conference by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg Following the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council at the Level of Defence Ministers", NATO, 8 November 2017, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int).

# Credible Deterrence and Bolstered Military Capabilities

The deterioration in the strategic environment is having direct effects on national defence policies. After years of foreign operations that shaped planning and defence policy, national defence is back at the centre of attention, a shift confirmed by various doctrinal documents adopted at national levels since 2014.

The strategies of Norway and Denmark are rooted within a NATO context and consist of defending part of their territory until allied reinforcements arrive. Sweden's approach is similar even though it is not a NATO member. Sweden began to revert back to territorial defence in 2015 and now relies on a "threshold effect"<sup>28</sup> which means making an attack on Sweden too costly in the eyes of an adversary. Such deterrence depends on Sweden's ability to defend its territorial integrity, "alone or with others".<sup>29</sup>

Likewise, Norway has always insisted that collective defence based on article 5 of the Treaty of Washington should be treated as a priority within NATO, even during the 1990s and 2000s when NATO concentrated mainly on crisis management, as in Yugoslavia and Afghanistan. In response to the war in Georgia in 2008, Norway circulated the "Core Area Initiative", a "non-paper" which aimed to correct the error—from the Norwegian point of view—of focusing exclusively on crisis management to the detriment of collective defence.<sup>30</sup> It is no accident then that the triannual exercise Trident Juncture will take place in Norway this year and be based on an article 5-type scenario. According to its latest Defence law, Norway should "be able to manage security crises, terrorist attacks and assaults of a certain size, and maintain sufficient forces to allow us to counter an adversary across all domains for a period of time. This ability, combined with an unambiguous commitment by allies to support us, will serve to deter a potential adversary".<sup>31</sup>

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28. "Visionen" [The Vision], Swedish Armed Forces, [www.forsvarsmakten.se](http://www.forsvarsmakten.se).

29. "Militärstrategisk doktrin" [Doctrine of Military Strategy], Swedish Armed Forces, p. 33, [www.forsvarsmakten.se](http://www.forsvarsmakten.se).

30. "Om samarbeidet i Nato 2008" [On Cooperation in NATO 2008], St.meld.nr. 38 (2008-2009), Norwegian Government, 15 May 2009, [www.regjeringen.no](http://www.regjeringen.no).

31. "Kampkraft og bærekraft. Iverksettelsesbrev till forsvarssektoren for langtidspersiden 2017-2020" [Fighting force and capacity for resistance. Implementation letter for the defence sector over the period 2017-2020], Norwegian Government, p. 15, [www.regjeringen.no](http://www.regjeringen.no).

According to the Danish Defence Agreement for 2018-2023, Denmark's number one priority is to increase the country's contribution to NATO deterrence and collective defence. In the event of a crisis in the Baltic, Denmark would not only have to defend the Baltic states but would also host NATO troops on its territory.<sup>32</sup>

Finland's approach is different. Since it never believed that the threat from Russia had disappeared, Finland maintained a more "classical" military based on universal military service and reserves. It seeks to maintain its ability to defend the whole of its territory alone.<sup>33</sup>

Despite the return of territorial defence, however, none of the Nordic countries has excluded itself from participating in external operations.

## Large-scale investment programmes

After years if not decades of chronic under-investment (with the exception of Finland), the Nordic countries are now improving their defence capabilities. The political dimension of this increased investment should not be underestimated, as these investments also represent a display of goodwill, primarily intended for their American ally. The security situation in Northern Europe, the anti-access scenarios that are underwriting military planning and the strategies that are being devised to counter them all call for advanced air and maritime capabilities as a matter of priority.

Norway has decided to buy 52 F-35 fighter aircraft by 2025, the biggest defence investment in Norway's history.<sup>34</sup> Oslo is also concentrating on the High North and is investing in materiel that allows it to further improve surveillance of what Russia is up to in the region. The replacement of Ula submarines is another large programme, as is the acquisition of three new coast-guard ships. Norway is also investing in five P-8 Poseidon maritime surveillance aircraft.<sup>35</sup> On the basis of a report commissioned by the Chief of the Defence Staff about the future role of the army (a question that was postponed during the debates surrounding the defence law in the absence of

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32. "Danish Defence Agreement 2018-2023", Danish Defence Ministry, 28 January 2018, [www.fmn.dk](http://www.fmn.dk).

33. "Government's Defence Report", document 7, Finnish Ministry of Defence, 2017, [www.defmin.fi](http://www.defmin.fi), p. 21.

34. See "Kampfly til Forsvaret" [Combat aircraft for the Armed Forces], Norwegian Government, [www.regjeringen.no](http://www.regjeringen.no). At present, the parliament has authorised the government to purchase 40 aircraft. The first three arrived in Norway in November 2017 while seven others are in the United States while the crews undergo training.

35. "Norge har inngått kontrakt om kjøp av fem nye P-8A Poseidon maritime patruljefly" [Norway has signed contracts to buy five new P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft], Norwegian Government, 29 March 2017, [www.regjeringen.no](http://www.regjeringen.no). The United States and Great Britain operate the same type of aircraft. The goal is therefore to cooperate with the US and UK to greatly improve surveillance of Russian activities in the Arctic Ocean.

a political consensus before the election), the Ministry of Defence put forward the government's proposals in October 2017: more mobile and reactive ground forces that are more active in the North.<sup>36</sup> This debate goes beyond military affairs: apart from regional policy, it also touches on the Heimevernet (home guard), which is a sensitive topic politically because of the public's attachment to this institution.

Having decided to buy 27 F-35 aircraft in 2016, Copenhagen intends to invest in its air and naval capabilities and is looking, in particular, to equip its frigates with short and medium-range air defence missiles, sonars and anti-submarine torpedoes.

In Sweden, increasing defence capabilities has been declared "by far the most important task".<sup>37</sup> Sweden's willingness to bring an end to chronic under-investment in its armed forces is dictated by the re-emergence of a potential Russian threat. The armed forces' return to Gotland should be understood in the same context. Sweden is planning to make sizeable investments, particularly in medium-range air defence capabilities. It announced in November 2017 that it had chosen the American system instead of the SAMP/T equivalent produced by France and Italy. It intends to buy 24 Archer artillery systems and two A26 submarines, as well as anti-submarine warfare (ASW) capabilities. Sweden will also modernise existing systems (such as 262 Strf 90 combat vehicles and 88 Stridsvagn-122 tanks, two Gotland submarines and two Gävle corvettes). Sweden also ordered 60 multirole Jas 39E aircraft in 2014, the first division of which will become operational in 2023.

Even though its two biggest projects have yet to be integrated into current spending programmes, Helsinki is also planning to buy multi-role fighter aircraft for its Air Force by 2025 (the final decision has not yet been taken). Under the "Squadron 2020" programme, its current ships are due to be replaced with four corvettes by 2020, the corvettes being designed and built by Rauma Marine Constructions. Meanwhile, the number of men who can be mobilised is increasing from 250,000 to 280,000.<sup>38</sup>

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36. See "Utredning av landmakten" [Analysis of the Army], Norwegian armed forces, <https://forsvaret.no>. Also see "En styrket landmakt" [A stronger army], *Aftenposten*, 13 October 2017, [www.dagbladet.no](http://www.dagbladet.no).

37. "Försvarspolitisk inriktning. Sveriges försvar (2016-2020)" [Defence Policy Focus. Sweden's Defence (2016-2020)], prop. 2014/15:109, Swedish Government, June 2015, [www.regeringen.se](http://www.regeringen.se).

38. "Genomförandet av statsrådets försvarsredogörelse har inlets" [The implementation of the government's defence report has started], Finnish Defence Ministry, 14 August 2017, [www.defmin.fi](http://www.defmin.fi).



## Compulsory military service and “total defence 2.0”

In Sweden, conscription was suspended in 2010, but has been reinstated in a decision that attracted ample media attention and won the support of the population.<sup>39</sup> It stems mainly from the difficulty of recruiting servicemen and probably would not have been taken in a more benign security environment. In January 2018, 4,000 conscripts began their basic military training. Thus, military service is now obligatory in all the Nordic states, the three others having never abandoned it. However, while 80% of young men regularly pass through the army in Finland, the percentage is much lower in the other countries.

Other measures involve updating “total defence” concepts, which were at the heart of the Nordic countries’ strategies during the Cold War. The model of “total defence” covers all the activities designed to prepare society for war and has been exported far beyond the North. The idea is that *all* resources, including civilian ones, should be mobilised to defend the nation, whether that be energy supplies and the medical sector or “psychological defence” and the population’s willingness to defend the country. Another crucial element of total defence is cyber security and the security of communications and electronic infrastructure.

In response to changes in the strategic environment, the Swedish government took the decision in December 2015 to restart and update the planning process which it had abandoned years earlier.<sup>40</sup> In its latest defence law, meanwhile, Norway also intends to step up its total defence by 2020.<sup>41</sup> In Finland, the concept of total defence never went out of fashion and still constitutes a pillar of national defence.<sup>42</sup> The Danish defence agreement also stresses its importance.

In addition, cyber threats are among the issues that most worry policymakers. The Nordic countries are taking part in three institutions established to counter these threats: the Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats (Hybrid CoE) in Helsinki, which is a combined EU-NATO

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39. “Starkt stöd att införa värnplikt för båda könen” [Assistance for implementing universal military service for both sexes], *Dagens Nyheter*, 1 April 2016, [www.dn.se](http://www.dn.se).

40. “Uppdrag till Försvarsmakten och Myndigheten för samhällsskydd och beredskap avseende totalförsvarsplanering” [Mission for the Armed Forces and the Authority for civil protection and preparations for civil defence planning], Regeringsbeslut 5, Fö2015/09/16/MFI, Swedish Government, 10 December 2015, [www.regeringen.se](http://www.regeringen.se). Also see B. Körlof, “Uppbyggnad av det civila försvaret – på nytt !” [Implementing the revived civil defence], *Kungliga Krigsvetenskapliga Akademiens handlingar & tidskrift*, No. 2, 2016, pp. 52-59, <http://kkrv.se>.

41. “Kampkraft og bærekraft”, 20 December 2016, p. 17, *op. cit.*

42. “Comprehensive national defence”, Finnish Ministry of Defence, [www.defmin.fi](http://www.defmin.fi).

institution, as well as two NATO bodies, the Strategic Communications (StratCom) Centre of Excellence in Riga and the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence (CCDCOE) in Tallinn, in which Sweden and Finland also participate.

# Security through International Cooperation

Bilateral and multilateral defence cooperation is vital for the Nordic countries, which are too small to guarantee their own security alone. Recent efforts aimed at deepening this cooperation follow directly from a reappraisal of the threats they face. Stockholm's approach is more flexible than Helsinki's in terms of military non-alignment, as also shown by the importance placed on external support in its military doctrine.

## NATO as the main forum: 29+2

NATO is back at the centre of the debate about security in Europe. This first and foremost is true for the Baltic Sea region (despite two key countries not being members of the Alliance), while the Arctic, for now, is not at the centre of European concerns. Although they are non-aligned states, Sweden and Finland have traditionally cooperated closely with the Alliance. Members of the Partnership for Peace programme since 1994, they have contributed to many international operations and joined the NATO Response Force in 2008 (Finland) and 2013 (Sweden). The two countries' armed forces are fully interoperable with those of the Alliance. Since NATO is now concentrating once more on collective defence, this cooperation has nevertheless become more complicated. But although non-NATO states are excluded from participating in reassurance measures in the Baltic states, developments in the region are pushing the Alliance, Sweden and Finland to cooperate more closely. During the NATO summit in Newport in 2014, for instance, both Finland and Sweden signed Host Nation Support Agreements with the Alliance. These agreements, which came into force in 2016, aim to create a legal mechanism for NATO forces to operate on Finnish and Swedish territory on the basis of an explicit invitation from the state concerned. Therefore, they do not breach the principle of military non-alignment aiming at neutrality in case of war. The agreement between Sweden and NATO was put to the test for the first time during exercise Aurora 17 (which coincided with Russia's Zapad 2017 exercise), the largest exercise for the Swedish total defence system since 1994.<sup>43</sup> Helsinki recently

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43. "Swedish Armed Forces Exercise Aurora 17 Will Increase Military Capability", Swedish Government, 13 September 2017, [www.government.se](http://www.government.se).

announced that it would like to organise a similar exercise around 2020.<sup>44</sup> The two countries also signed an agreement in Newport confirming their participation in the Enhanced Opportunities Partnership, which allows them to cooperate with NATO more closely and on a more *ad hoc* basis. This programme serves as a platform for cooperation focused more specifically on the Baltic in the “29+2” format.<sup>45</sup>

Considering that Sweden, Finland and NATO share interests in the Baltic, Stockholm and Helsinki participate in NATO's *Baltic Sea Process*. NATO's 29 members and these two non-aligned countries cooperate regularly when it comes to political dialogue, exercises, training and the exchange of information. Situational awareness plays a particularly important role. Stockholm and Helsinki took part in all the meetings of NATO Defence and Foreign Ministers in 2016. Members of the Swedish and Finnish governments also took part in the Warsaw summit. And although collective defence, including defence planning, constitutes a “red line” for NATO on the one hand and Sweden and Finland on the other, Stockholm and Helsinki never tire of highlighting its value and underline the unity of effort.<sup>46</sup>

Nevertheless, it remains unlikely that they will join the Alliance. Though a debate about NATO membership emerged after the annexation of Crimea, Sweden's red-green government refuses to take the plunge. The Social-Democrats have stayed firm on this issue, which strikes at the heart of national identity. The Finnish government has left itself more wriggle-room and “does not rule out” membership<sup>47</sup>, but has not taken any specific steps to bring it closer. Whether this will change with future elections remains uncertain. In Sweden, the four conservative opposition parties would like to see the country join NATO. Finland's political parties are divided on the question. In both countries, a majority of the public is against membership.<sup>48</sup> The question takes on a different complexion in Sweden than in Finland, however: whereas the Finnish debate by and large revolves around the advantages and disadvantages of membership, national identity is the main issue at stake for Swedes. Since the 1970s, the Social Democrats

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44. “Finland Making Plans to Host Large-Scale Joint Military Exercises”, YLE, 4 November 2017, <https://yle.fi>.

45. Cooperation in a “29+1” format involving only one of the non-aligned Nordic countries also exists but will not be discussed in this paper.

46. Interview with officials from the four Nordic countries, October 2017.

47. “Lösningar för Finland. Strategiskt program för statsminister Juha Sipiläs regering” [Solutions for Finland. Strategic programme for the government of Prime Minister Juha Sipilä], Finnish Government, 29 May 2015, p. 36, <https://vnk.fi>.

48. In November 2017, 59% of Finns were against membership. In July 2017, 43% of Swedes were of the same opinion (32% being in favour of membership). See “Poll: 59% of Finns Opposed to Joining NATO”, YLE, 5 November 2017, <https://yle.fi>; “Bara var tredje vill att Sverige går med i Nato” [Only one in three people want Sweden to join NATO], SVT, 3 July 2017, [www.svt.se](http://www.svt.se).

have advanced the notion of Sweden as a neutral and “moral great power”, something that would somehow be incompatible with Sweden joining a military alliance. This notion is dear to much of the population and is therefore an obstacle to membership. Moscow makes no bones about wanting Finland and Sweden to remain non-aligned. For example, in an interview with Sweden's largest paper, the Russian ambassador Viktor Tatarintsev warned that:

“[If Sweden were to join NATO], Putin pointed out that there would be consequences: Russia would be forced to take military counter-measures and to reorient its forces and its missiles. Any country that joins NATO should be conscious of the risks it is exposing itself to.”<sup>49</sup>

Whatever happens, membership of NATO would require close coordination between Stockholm and Helsinki. Since the two countries' security is inextricably linked, Nordic solidarity should prevent either of the two governments from going it alone.

## Washington as the indispensable partner

The Nordic countries are united by a single conviction: in case of a major crisis, their survival depends on the United States. The bilateral relationship with the USA is therefore even more important than NATO. Both Norway and Denmark, which benefit from Article 5 guarantees, and the two unaligned countries are looking for stronger trans-Atlantic cooperation.

The United States played an important role in Northern Europe well before the annexation of Crimea. For example, the E-PINE (Enhanced Partnership for Northern Europe) network was established in 2003 to continue dialogue between Washington and North and North-Eastern European nations after the initial objective had been met—supporting the Baltic states in their defence transition and into NATO. The European Deterrence Initiative (formerly the European Reassurance Initiative) illustrates the United States' willingness to engage in the current context. As for the High North, the Arctic Security Forces Roundtable launched by the US's European Command offers a forum to discuss the security challenges faced by the Arctic nations. Exercises with US participation aimed at improving interoperability took place in the past within the framework of NORDEFCO (Nordic Defence Cooperation). In May 2016, at a summit of

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49. M. Winiarski, “Rysslands ambassadör. Vi har gjort allt för att starta en dialog” [Russian Ambassador: we have done everything to start a dialogue], *Dagens nyheter*, 18 June 2015, [www.dn.se](http://www.dn.se).

Nordic and American leaders, Washington and the five Nordic countries reaffirmed the importance of “29+2” cooperation in a NATO framework.<sup>50</sup> Finally, the US Defence Secretary James Mattis took part in several meetings with Nordic leaders in November 2017, including a meeting with *Northern Group*<sup>51</sup> Defence Ministers. All this comes on top of bilateral contact between Washington and the various Nordic governments, as well as trilateral dialogue between the US, Sweden and Finland.

Despite disagreements about a number of issues in the wake of the Cold War (anti-personnel mines, the Iraq War, the recognition of Hamas, the US missile defence shield), relations between Norway and the United States are excellent in general. In 2017, James Mattis characterised Oslo as an important ally of the United States and NATO and commended Norway for its role in military cooperation in the North, as well as in Afghanistan and the fight against Daesh.<sup>52</sup> Since 1981, the US Marine Corps has prepositioned materiel in Norway as part of the Marine Corps Prepositioning Program-Norway and the Norwegian government hopes build on these arrangements.<sup>53</sup> Since January 2017, American troops have been stationed at Værnes base near Trondheim on “permanent rotation”. Their deployment marks an important development in relation to the “*norsk basepolitikk*” (“Norwegian policy on military bases”) adopted in 1949, whereby Oslo undertook not to allow foreign forces to establish military bases on its soil so long as the country was not threatened. This deployment has provoked debate: while the government insists that it is not permanent, others regard it as a break with traditional Norwegian policy and a needless provocation of Moscow.<sup>54</sup> Exchange of information is at the heart of the cooperation between Oslo and Washington, with Norway’s geographical position allowing it to follow up close Russia’s military activity in the High North. Lastly, a joint study is being carried out by the Norwegian Defence Research Institute and the US Missile Defence Agency into NATO’s missile defence and the part Norway might play in this project.<sup>55</sup>

While Denmark was not a model ally in American eyes before 1991, mainly because Denmark’s military spending was perceived to be too low,

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50. See the joint communique “U.S.-Nordic Leaders’ Joint Statement”, 13 May 2016, *White House* website, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov>.

51. The Nordic countries, the Baltic States, Germany, the Netherlands, Great Britain and Poland.

52. “Mattis Praises Norway as Important U.S., NATO Ally”, US Department of Defense, 18 May 2017, [www.defense.gov](http://www.defense.gov).

53. “Kampkraft og bærekraft”, 20 December 2016, p. 16, *op. cit.*

54. Interviews with Norwegian officials and researchers, October 2017.

55. “NATO’s missilforsvar – en viktig del av kollektivt forsvar” [NATO missile defence—an important element in collective defence], Norwegian Government, 13 January 2017, [www.regjeringen.no](http://www.regjeringen.no). The Danish Prime Minister had announced in 2014 that his country would contribute to NATO missile defence. This policy provoked debate in Denmark: the current Minister of Defence, Claus Hjort Frederiksen, indicated at the beginning of 2017 that Copenhagen ought to contribute to the system.

Washington and Copenhagen now enjoy very good relations.<sup>56</sup> The Thule airbase in Greenland brings the two countries together but their cooperation is, above all, operational. In line with its “activist” foreign policy, Denmark has taken part in many international operations over the last few decades, including in Iraq and Afghanistan. Danes and Americans are so interoperable that, according to Danish officers, “the Americans hardly notice any more that they are not dealing with compatriots”.<sup>57</sup> The exchange of information also has an important part to play in bilateral cooperation, as it does for the other Nordic countries.

Conscious of the US's crucial role, the Swedish government is actively seeking to strengthen its bonds with the US. The “Hultqvist doctrine”, named after the current Swedish Defence Minister Peter Hultqvist, advocates an increase in Sweden's operational capabilities and international cooperation. Sweden's rapprochement with the US is also rooted in pragmatic calculation: since NATO's power consists, above all, of American power, the Swedish strategy is to circumvent NATO's “cumbersome” bureaucracy and go directly “to the source”. In view of the Swedish doctrine of threshold defence, American support is crucial. During his visit to Stockholm in autumn 2016, former US Vice-President Joe Biden declared that Swedish territory was “inviolable”.<sup>58</sup> In May, while hosting his Swedish counterpart, James Mattis characterised Sweden as a “friend and an ally” and Hultqvist stated after their interview that bilateral cooperation was “alive and well”.<sup>59</sup>

Cooperation between Sweden and the US is longstanding. It began in the 1940s and has intensified since the end of the Cold War. Before 1991, it was mainly about technology as well as secret preparations for US support in case of war. More recently, interoperability has often been at the heart of cooperation projects, notably in Afghanistan. Industrial cooperation remains just as important: for example, roughly half the components for a JAS aircraft are American. Other areas of cooperation include anti-submarine warfare (ASW) and the presence of Swedish liaison officers in the different branches of the US military. Intelligence cooperation is also

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56. See, in particular, M. R. Olesen, “Det dansk-amerikanske forhold efter den kolde krig i lyset af valget af Trump” [Danish-American relations after the Cold War in the light of Trump's election], *Internasjonal Politikk*, Vol. 75, No. 1, 2017, pp. 28-35.

57. Interviews with a Danish official, October 2017.

58. “Biden: Sverige ‘okränkbart-punkt’” [Biden: Sweden is “inviolable, full stop”], *Aftonbladet*, 25 August 2016, [www.aftonbladet.se](http://www.aftonbladet.se).

59. “Sveriges försvarssamarbete med USA” [Swedish Defence cooperation with the United States], *P1 morgon*, 19 May 2017, <http://sverigesradio.se>. It is also interesting to note that P. Hultqvist decided to go to Washington rather than taking part in a meeting of EU Defence Ministers held on the same day.

significant, particularly where Russia is concerned. In June 2016, the countries' Defence Ministries agreed to step up bilateral cooperation and signed a Statement of Intent.<sup>60</sup> Among other things, this agreement covers the exchange of information, joint exercises and military research and development. The involvement of US forces in the Aurora 17 exercise is a concrete example of this enhanced cooperation.

Nevertheless, a recent diplomatic incident highlights the tensions that can arise when ambitions to be a "moral superpower", to which the population is still attached, rub up against the *Realpolitik* that guides cooperation with NATO and the United States: James Mattis allegedly warned Peter Hultqvist that Sweden should not sign the Nuclear Weapon Ban Treaty. London, Paris and Berlin are also thought to have warned Stockholm that signing the treaty would have a negative effect on cooperation between Sweden and NATO.<sup>61</sup> Stockholm succeeded in defusing the tension by postponing its decision: the government has ordered an expert report that will not be made public until after the parliamentary elections in September 2018. Nevertheless, the Foreign and Defence Ministries in Sweden take opposing positions on this issue that divides the nation.

Relations between Finland and the United States have been on a solid footing since the 1990s. The countries' Ministers of Defence signed a Statement of Intent in October 2016<sup>62</sup> that will strengthen existing cooperation. Helsinki and Washington work particularly closely on the sharing of information and research and development, particularly with regard to naval construction and the development of technologies adapted to the Arctic.

## NORDEF CO

After the annexation of Crimea, the four Nordic defence ministers (and the Icelandic foreign minister) published a joint editorial in which they stressed the importance of Nordic cooperation.<sup>63</sup> Such cooperation would be intensified, they indicated, in view of the deterioration in the strategic

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60. See "Statement of Intent between the Secretary of Defense of the United States of America and the Minister of Defense of Sweden", Swedish Government, 8 June 2016, [www.regeringen.se](http://www.regeringen.se).

61. "USA: Kärnvapenstopp hotar samarbete med Sverige" [United States: bannish nuclear weapons endangers cooperation with Sweden], *Dagens industri*, 30 August 2017, [www.di.se](http://www.di.se).

62. "Statement of Intent between the Department of Defense of the United States of America and the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Finland", Finnish Ministry of Defence, 7 October 2016, [www.defmin.fi](http://www.defmin.fi).

63. P. Hultqvist, N. Wammen, G. B. Sveinsson, I. Eriksen Søreide and C. Haglund, "Vi utdyper det nordiske forsvarssamarbeidet" [We are going to deepen Nordic defence cooperation], Norwegian Government, 10 April 2015, [www.regjeringen.no](http://www.regjeringen.no).



environment caused by Russia. Since 2009, further to the Stoltenberg report on the potential avenues for defence cooperation between the Nordic countries, such cooperation has been grouped under the label NORDEFECO. But NORDEFECO's remit is fairly limited: the countries' interests are too different when it comes to industry and capabilities, while the fact that it brings together NATO and non-NATO members creates political challenges. Hence, NORDEFECO is a long way from being an integrated security architecture in Northern Europe: rather, it is regarded as a complementary structure, with the NATO members giving clear priority to the Alliance.<sup>64</sup>

During their last meeting in Helsinki in November 2017, NORDEFECO Defence Ministers discussed their arms procurement plans and Nordic cooperation within the framework of ongoing foreign operations. They also signed the Memorandum of Understanding on Nordic Cooperation for Air Surveillance Information Exchange,<sup>65</sup> which strengthens their existing cooperation.

## Other settings for cooperation

In addition to the bilateral and multilateral forums for cooperation described above, there are other bilateral avenues and highly technical settings, sometimes *ad hoc* ones. For example, the International Civil Aviation Organisation created the Baltic Sea Project Team (BSPT) working group in 2015 to look into the problem of “non-cooperative flights” over the Baltic Sea, that is, military aircraft flying with their transponders turned off.<sup>66</sup> Given the risk of accidents, this issue matters to the nations bordering the Baltic Sea. All the countries in the region were involved in the BSPT, as well as international organisations, including NATO. Work on this topic continues and the issue has also been broached in the NATO-Russia Council.

Bilateral cooperation rounds off activity within the frameworks described above. After the United States, Great Britain is the most important partner for the Nordic countries. The Danish army, for instance, is sometimes described as a “branch” of the British army, given how closely the two countries have cooperated operationally since the war in Iraq and the deployment of Danish troops to Afghanistan. In 2012, London and Copenhagen signed an agreement on strategic cooperation. A number of projects now aim to maintain the current level of cooperation, particularly

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64. “International Defence Cooperation. Efficiency, Solidarity, Sovereignty”, rapport n° Fö2013:B, October 2014, p. 31, Swedish Government, [www.government.se](http://www.government.se).

65. “Finland to Host the meeting of Nordic Defence Ministers”, Finnish Ministry of Defence, 2 November 2017, [www.defmin.fi](http://www.defmin.fi).

66. “Report on Occurrences over the High Seas Involving Military Aircraft in 2014”, Report-EDo.1-2015-edo3.00-PC-final, European Aviation Safety Agency, 14 April 2014, <https://ec.europa.eu>.

through the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) whereby Denmark brings its “piece of lego to fit into the British model”.<sup>67</sup> Norway is also a member of the JEF and has recently stepped up its cooperation with Great Britain over P8 maritime surveillance aircraft.<sup>68</sup> Stockholm and Helsinki have also decided to intensify their defence cooperation with London,<sup>69</sup> announcing in 2017 that they would contribute to the JEF.<sup>70</sup>

Interest in political and military cooperation with Germany is also growing. Due to its weight on the international stage but also because of its Russia policy, Berlin is often viewed as a stabilising force. The Swedish Defence Minister has repeatedly stated that he would like to intensify cooperation with Germany. In June 2017, Stockholm concluded an agreement with Berlin (updating a previous agreement from 2010) containing 14 points, including exercises and capabilities, as well as a detailed dialogue on the security situation in the Baltic Sea Region. Hultqvist described this agreement as the foundation of a bilateral relationship destined to prosper.<sup>71</sup> For its part, Oslo purchased German submarines in 2017, describing Germany as a “strategic partner” and stressing that cooperation will be deep and enduring.<sup>72</sup> In the German coalition agreement, Norway is mentioned as one of three countries with which Berlin wishes to increase cooperation.<sup>73</sup>

As for France, it is regarded in Copenhagen as a country with a similar strategic culture to Denmark's, while Oslo is watching the changes to NATO's maritime strategy with interest, and the role that France could play in it.

Since the annexation of Crimea, cooperation agreements have also been signed between the Nordic countries and Poland, the Netherlands and the Baltic states. In terms of bilateral relationships between the Nordic countries, the cooperation between Sweden and Finland has become the most extensive. Stockholm and Finland signed multiple agreements in 2015

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67. C. Brøndum, “Så fik den danske hær papir på sin britiske, kæreste” [How the Danish army got papers for its British lover], *Berlingske*, 1 December 2015, [www.b.dk](http://www.b.dk).

68. “UK and Norway Agree New Cooperation on Maritime Patrol Aircraft”, British Government, 10 November 2016, [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).

69. M. Fallon and P. Hultqvist, “Sverige och Storbritannien fördjupar försvarssamarbete” [Sweden and Great Britain step up their Defence cooperation], *Dagens Nyheter*, 27 September 2016, [www.regeringen.se](http://www.regeringen.se); “Finland och Storbritannien skrev på avtal om försvarssamarbete” [Finland and Great Britain signed an agreement on Defence cooperation], *Hufvudstadsbladet*, 9 July 2017, [www.hbl.fi](http://www.hbl.fi).

70. “Sweden and Finland Join UK-led Response Force”, British Government, 30 June 2017, [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).

71. “Sverige i tätare försvarssamarbete med Tyskland” [Sweden cooperates more closely with Germany over Defence], *Expressen*, 29 June 2017, [www.expressen.se](http://www.expressen.se).

72. S. B. Bentzrød, “Forsvaret kjøper nye ubåter fra Tyskland” [The armed forces buy new submarines in Germany], *Aftenposten*, 21 April 2017, [www.aftenposten.no](http://www.aftenposten.no).

73. The two others being France and the Netherlands.

and a joint official report was published.<sup>74</sup> Their cooperation takes many forms and includes the creation of a Swedish-Finnish Naval Task Force by 2023. It also entails joint military exercises, use of each other's infrastructure, as well as working together on training and communication. Such cooperation is seen in Helsinki and Stockholm as a political priority and could apply in time of war. It therefore marks a major shift, as it may potentially call into question the principle of military non-alignment.

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74. "Final Reports on Deepened Defence Cooperation between Finland and Sweden", 30 January 2015, Swedish Government, Finnish Government, [www.regeringen.se](http://www.regeringen.se).

# Conclusion

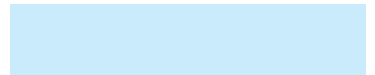
The deterioration in the strategic environment caused by Russia will remain the main determinant of the Nordic countries' defence policies over the long term. Given the limits of their military capabilities, however, they remain dependent on international cooperation. Northern European security issues are consequently to be seen in the context of the future of Euro-Atlantic security as a whole.

When formulating responses to security issues in the two Nordic theatres (Baltic and Arctic/North Atlantic), pragmatism is in order. Despite its security architecture being fragmented, the Baltic Sea Region is a strategic unity whose challenges require joint responses. Consequently, the close cooperation between NATO and Sweden and Finland is vital, even if the latter do not wish to join the Alliance. In the North Atlantic, it pays to be vigilant while honouring the traditional spirit of cooperation in certain areas, such as the environment and sea rescue. In either case, the US remains central, just as NATO's approach still shapes most of the Nordic countries' defence policies.

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