



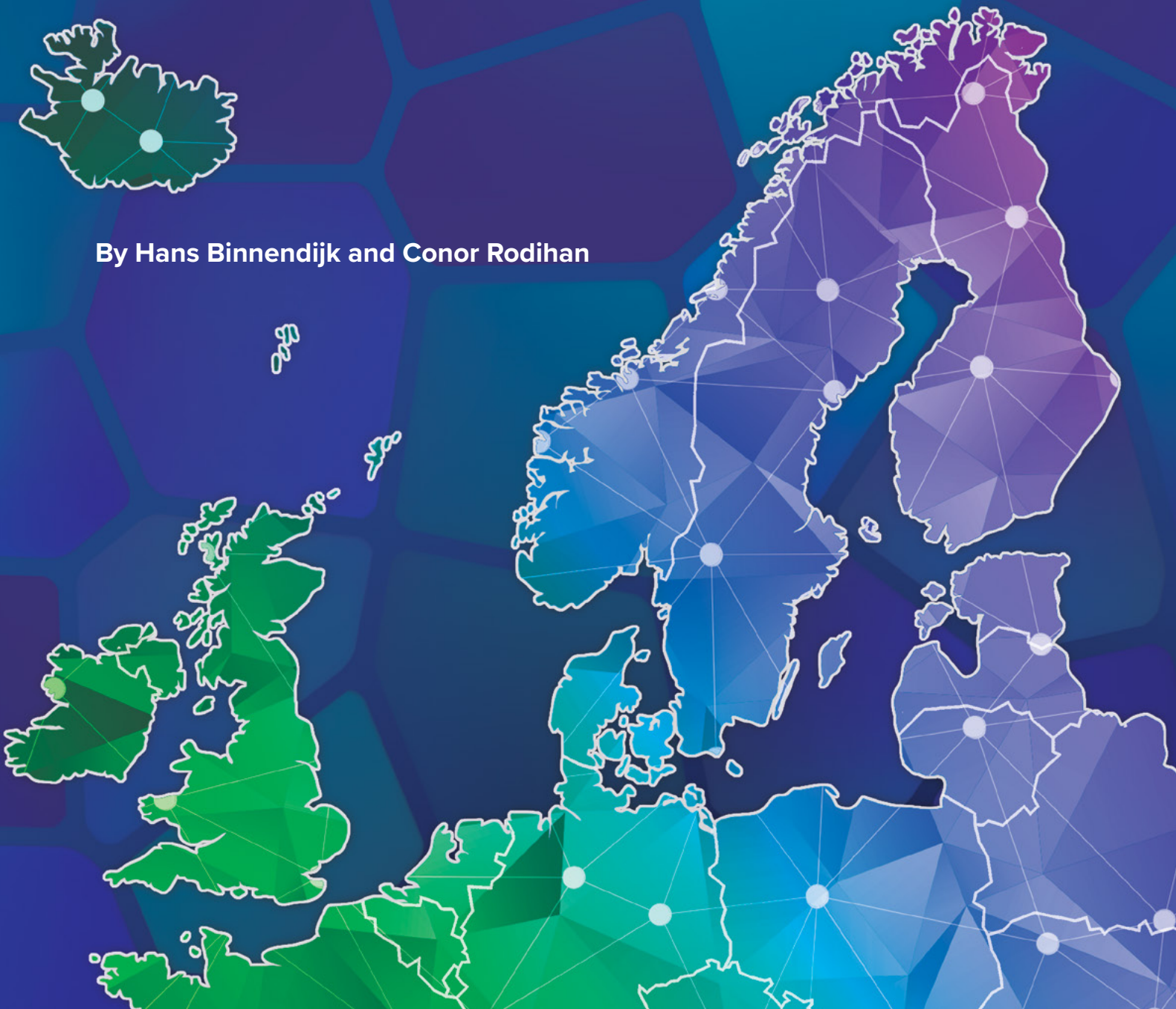
**Atlantic Council**

SCOWCROFT CENTER  
FOR STRATEGY AND SECURITY

# Geometries of Deterrence: Assessing Defense Arrangements in Europe's Northeast

---

By Hans Binnendijk and Conor Rodihan





**Atlantic Council**

**SCOWCROFT CENTER  
FOR STRATEGY AND SECURITY**

*The Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security works to develop sustainable, nonpartisan strategies to address the most important security challenges facing the United States and the world. The Center honors General Brent Scowcroft's legacy of service and embodies his ethos of nonpartisan commitment to the cause of security, support for US leadership in cooperation with allies and partners, and dedication to the mentorship of the next generation of leaders.*

*The Scowcroft Center's Transatlantic Security Initiative brings together top policymakers, government and military officials, business leaders, and experts from Europe and North America to share insights, strengthen cooperation, and develop innovative approaches to the key challenges facing NATO and the transatlantic community.*

# Geometries of Deterrence: Assessing Defense Arrangements in Europe's Northeast

---

Hans Binnendijk and Conor Rodihan

ISBN-13: 978-1-61977-095-9

*This report is written and published in accordance with the Atlantic Council Policy on Intellectual Independence. The authors are solely responsible for its analysis and recommendations. The Atlantic Council and its donors do not determine, nor do they necessarily endorse or advocate for, any of this report's conclusions.*

May 2020

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

---

**T**he Atlantic Council achieves its mission of “shaping the global future together” in close cooperation with like-minded allies and partners. To foster stronger transatlantic relations, the Atlantic Council maintains abiding relationships and actively partners and cooperates with governments and institutions across Europe.

The analysis in this report is a result of the Atlantic Council’s persistent and wide-ranging body of work on defense and security issues in the Nordic and Baltic region, conducted through annual study trips to the region, routine public events and not-for-attribution roundtables with regional officials and experts, and related analyses published by the Atlantic Council, including recent reports such as “Permanent Deterrence: Enhancements to

the US Military Presence in North Central Europe,” “Over the Horizon: NATO Joint Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance in the Baltic Sea Region,” and “Moving Out: A Comprehensive Assessment of European Military Mobility.”

This report is written and published in accordance with the Atlantic Council Policy on Intellectual Independence. The authors are solely responsible for its analysis and recommendations. The Atlantic Council and its donors do not determine, nor do they necessarily endorse or advocate for, any of this report’s conclusions. This report is made possible by general support to the Atlantic Council’s Transatlantic Security Initiative, housed within the Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security, and is not the result of direct sponsorship.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

Executive Summary	1
A. Setting the Stage	3
B. The Russian Challenge to Europe's Northeastern Flank	5
Understanding the Threat to Europe's Northeastern Flank	5
Threat Perceptions	6
Russia's Toolbox	6
Focusing on Local Conventional Force Imbalances	8
C. Finnish and Swedish Nonalignment and Defense Postures	10
Legacies of Neutrality and Nonalignment	10
Strengthening National Defenses	11
D. Components of a Strong Deterrent Posture	13
The Nature of Deterrence	13
A Gold Standard for Deterrence	15
E. The Geometries of Existing Defense and Security Arrangements	17
Group 1 (Primarily Northern European Countries)	17
a) The Finland-Sweden bilateral defense relationship	17
b) Nordic countries	20
c) Nordic-Baltic Eight	21
d) The Northern Group	22
Group 2 (Geographically Broader Arrangements)	24
a) NATO Partnerships	24
b) European Union	26
c) Ad hoc European arrangements	28
Joint Expeditionary Force (British lead)	28
Framework Nation Concept (German lead)	28
European Intervention Initiative (French lead)	29
d) Bilateral and trilateral cooperation with the United States	30
F. Conclusions	32
G. Recommendations to Enhance Deterrence	34
About the Authors	36

Europe's Northeastern Flank



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

---

**T**he conventional military threat from Russia towards Europe is felt most acutely by a number of frontline Nordic and Baltic states. This threat environment spans the area from the Barents Sea through the Baltic Sea and includes seven countries: Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, and Sweden. These frontline states are supported by a second group of rear area states from which the front line would be reinforced in times of crisis or conflict. This second group includes, among others, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom.<sup>1</sup> This study argues that security analysts should view the seven frontline European countries as a united “Northeastern Flank.”

---

“This study is focused on understanding and assessing the effectiveness of these ‘geometries of deterrence’ and how they incorporate Finland and Sweden to address the deterrence challenges posed by the two countries’ military nonalignment.”

---

The security of these seven frontline states is inextricably bound together by geography, values, culture, defense cooperation, and a common set of challenges posed by neighboring Russia. In isolation, each of these seven countries is vulnerable to a conventional military attack by Russia, especially if they receive little strategic warning and if they do not receive rapid military support from their partners and/or allies. But in unison, the force structure of these countries is roughly in balance with that of Russia’s in the region.

Five of the Northeastern Flank countries have a firm defense commitment through NATO, six are members of the European Union, and two (Finland and Sweden) are militarily nonaligned. This diverse set of alignments creates some potential gaps for deterrence along the flank. How militarily nonaligned Finland and Sweden fit into a regional

deterrent posture and what role the two countries would play in a regional conflict are critical questions for national and NATO defense planners. This study evaluates the role of Finland and Sweden in the region and how their cooperation with other partners fills some of the gaps in the deterrent structure along this Northeastern Flank.

Since Russia’s invasion of Crimea in 2014, the countries along the Northeastern Flank, in concert with other European and North American countries, have concentrated on strengthening their own defenses and on developing and enhancing eight sets of different defense cooperation arrangements. Each of these arrangements involves different partners and was created with a different rationale in mind, but each is clearly meant to signal resolve to Moscow. Taken together, they enhance a range of important components of ideal deterrence.

This study is focused on understanding and assessing the effectiveness of these “geometries of deterrence” and how they incorporate Finland and Sweden to address the deterrence challenges posed by the two countries’ military nonalignment.

Overall, the impact of these arrangements is positive. The deterrence glass may be said to be more than half full, a marked improvement from half a decade ago. But the gold standard for deterrence established in this study has not been fully achieved. Gaps remain and more needs to be done.

Areas in which these “geometries of deterrence” have made the most significant progress with regard to building deterrence for Finland, Sweden, and the flank as a whole include 1) security cooperation and consultation at senior levels of government; 2) military training, exercises, and ongoing operations; 3) defense industrial cooperation; and 4) military interoperability.

Areas in which some useful progress has been made and more is possible include 1) some form of regional defense commitments, 2) host nation support and easy/assured access arrangements, 3) experience with joint command arrangements, 4) defense intelligence sharing, and 5) cooperation on building resilience to various hybrid operations.

---

<sup>1</sup> Some might argue that Denmark and Germany should also be included in this Northeastern Flank given their location and involvement in Baltic Sea security, as well as their involvement in most of the arrangements evaluated in this study. However, because of their geographic distance from the front line, this study considers them to be in the second category of states.

Areas where significant gaps still exist include 1) a firm and credible alliance defense commitment, 2) a reliable nuclear deterrent, 3) significant contributions to augment frontline force structure, and 4) common multinational defense planning for the Northeastern Flank.

Short of NATO membership, this report suggests a set of recommendations, laid out in more detail later, for Finland, Sweden, and their regional partners to fill critical gaps in deterrence along the Northeastern Flank. These include:

**Strengthening mutual defense commitments** by designing bilateral mutual defense arrangements, including between Finland and Sweden, to reinforce the commitment demonstrated by ongoing and close defense cooperation;

**Strengthening regional defense cooperation** by reemphasizing the value of operational structures in Nordic Cooperation, building closer Nordic-Baltic defense ties, and strengthening ties within the Northern Group;

**Strengthening cooperation with NATO** by reinvigorating the Enhanced Opportunity Partnership and more closely

integrating Finland and Sweden into NATO planning, exercises, and operations along the Northeastern Flank;

**Strengthening cooperation with the United States** by issuing a US-Nordic Charter and improving the implementation of trilateral defense cooperation between Finland, Sweden, and the United States.

Critically, as the frontline state with the most significant resources that can be brought to bear, but least represented state in these arrangements, more needs to be done to strengthen Poland's military ties with other countries on the Northeastern Flank.

None of these actions should legitimately trigger a harsh Russian reaction.

As part of their ongoing efforts to enhance regional deterrence, Finland and Sweden will continue to weigh the balance between achieving the highest level of deterrence by joining NATO and the risk of triggering a negative reaction from Moscow. If the threat from Russia to the region continues to grow, triggering a negative reaction may become less important than securing firm deterrence by joining the Alliance.

## A. SETTING THE STAGE

The broad array of challenges now posed by Russia to NATO's east requires a closer examination of interconnected frontline regions. The area from the Barents Sea in the north to the Baltic Sea and Poland in the east is such an interconnected region. This region and the NATO and European Union (EU) member states whose borders are next to or close to Russia and Belarus encompass what might be called Europe's Northeastern Flank. Frontline nations on this flank include Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, and Sweden.

The Western nations in this region share common cultures and values and face a similar threat. Russia and its close allies share a border with most of these countries. All are within the range of Russian fighter aircraft and cruise missiles, and each potentially faces Russian forces from the Western Military District and the Northern Fleet Joint Strategic Command. Russia's well-armed Kaliningrad exclave sits in the midst of this region. Geographically, the Barents and Baltic Seas constrain Russian naval access to the Atlantic Ocean.

Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom have a direct military connection to this region, share similar security priorities, and, especially in Denmark's case, are heavily involved in Nordic and Baltic defense arrangements. Though relevant to this analysis, these countries form a staging area from which military reinforcement operations would be mounted for the defense of the frontline states.

With the exception of Poland, the nations that make up this Northeastern Flank have relatively small active duty militaries. Many rely heavily on reserve forces or total defense concepts to defend themselves. They are stronger when united through common commitments and military cooperation, but even a united Northeastern Flank would be hard-pressed to resist a determined conventional Russian onslaught.

These seven nations of the Northeastern Flank are members either of NATO, the EU, or both. But these two institutions have differing defense commitments and arrangements, and herein lies a major problem for conventional deterrence and defense in this area. In the geographic middle of this Northeastern Flank lie two militarily nonaligned countries: Finland and Sweden.

Conducting Western military operations on the Northeastern Flank would be very difficult without the full commitment and cooperation of all seven nations. With Finland and Sweden participating, Western nations would enjoy a considerable advantage "with the region of Kaliningrad isolated from the rest of mainland Russia and St. Petersburg blocked."<sup>2</sup> Poland's capabilities, the largest on the Flank, would be critical to this strategy.

---

**"While it is hard to conceive of a full-blown military confrontation in this region, maintaining a credible conventional deterrent posture is critical to avoiding such a confrontation."**

---

While it is hard to conceive of a full-blown military confrontation in this region, maintaining a credible conventional deterrent posture is critical to avoiding such a confrontation. However, Finnish and Swedish military nonalignment creates gaps in Western defense planning, significantly impacting this regional conventional deterrent posture.

To strengthen their capacity for collective action and to fill these gaps, Nordic and Baltic nations alike have enhanced their defense and security cooperation with each other and with other allies and partners through a set of eight security and defense arrangements:

- The Finnish-Swedish bilateral defense relationship
- Nordic Defense Cooperation
- Nordic-Baltic Eight
- The Northern Group
- NATO Partnerships
- The European Union
- Ad hoc arrangements such as the Joint Expeditionary Force, Framework Nations Concept, and European Intervention Initiative
- Finnish-Swedish-US trilateral and bilateral cooperation

These diverse defense arrangements, all of which include Finland and Sweden, each enhance defense and deter-

<sup>2</sup> Grzegorz Kuczyński, *Sweden Faces the Russian Threat in the Baltic Sea*, Warsaw Institute, December, 10, 2019, 5, <https://warsawinstitute.org/sweden-faces-russian-threat-baltic/>.

rence in their own way, forming geometries of crosscutting layers of defense cooperation. Are they enough to deter Russia from exploiting the military nonalignment of Finland and Sweden and seeking a military advantage along this flank? While these complex geometries of commitment and cooperation do not create a consolidated and deeply supported NATO front, to what degree do they substitute for it? And to what degree do they enhance the security of Finland and Sweden?

This study has five elements to understand and assess these related questions. First, it presents the nature of the Russian challenge to the Northeastern Flank. Second, it reviews the militarily nonaligned status and defense posture of Finland and Sweden. Third, using historical precedent

to set a standard for analysis, it presents the components needed for ideal or “gold standard” conventional military deterrence. Fourth, it uses these ideal components of deterrence to analyze eight different clusters of defense and security arrangements through which Finland and Sweden contribute to regional deterrence and enhance their own defense posture. While the study mostly focuses on Finnish and Swedish deterrence given their militarily nonaligned status, this is, of course, not unrelated to deterrence for the entire Northeastern Flank. Finally, the study presents a set of conclusions about the individual and collective effectiveness of the various defense and security arrangements for regional deterrence and provides recommendations to further strengthen deterrence for Finland, Sweden, and indeed for the entire Northeastern Flank.

## B. THE RUSSIAN CHALLENGE TO EUROPE'S NORTHEASTERN FLANK

### Understanding the Threat to Europe's Northeastern Flank

Using a set of perceived grievances as an excuse, Russian President Vladimir Putin has sought for more than a decade to reshape the post-Cold War order using his country's political, economic, and military power to pursue a return to great power politics within Europe and on the global stage. Russia seeks both international recognition of its role as a great power in world politics, where Russia aspires to be a power broker equal to the United States or China in any global dispute, and a reimagination of the global power structure based on spheres of influence rather than the current international order.

Russia's approach to relations with its neighbors is increasingly confrontational. "Russia defines its security in a way that decreases security for other countries. Russia does not merely want to defend its own borders; it also wants to be able to defend the borders of its 'sphere of influence.'"<sup>3</sup> As described by former Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev, "Russia, like other countries of the world, has regions in which it has privileged interests."<sup>4</sup> Russia has historically considered those regions to be the former Soviet states, evidenced by its military interventions in Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014, as well as its cyberattack on Estonia in 2007. But given its assertive actions since 2014, Russia may also see some of the countries of Europe's Northeastern Flank as being within its general sphere of influence, where it opposes foreign military presence and views various forms of activity and intervention to protect Russian interests as justifiable.

The exact nature of the threats each country faces varies, but local conventional force imbalances with Russia, spanning from the Arctic to beyond the Baltic, and the natural vulnerability to hybrid threats that all free societies face mean that these countries are navigating similar threat environments and share similar security priorities. Regardless of what happens to one country, it will invariably impact the

security and actions of the rest, not only because of mutual defense commitments, but out of existential security concerns and geographic realities.

Russia's primary security zones in this area range from above the Arctic Circle in the Barents Sea, where Russian naval power dominates the security environment, to Finland's 830-mile-long border with Russia to the congested Baltic Sea region to Kaliningrad and beyond. The relatively small size of the seven frontline countries in this region, their similar histories and shared culture and values, and coordinated foreign and security policies make their defense interlinked. The benefits to the West of reinforcing the connection between theaters are significant. By linking all these countries strategically, the West and NATO can compensate for local force imbalances across the theater while reinforcing to Russia that an attack in one region will provoke a wider Western response.<sup>5</sup>

The Arctic and Baltic Sea regions, driven by the connection between these frontline states and the challenges posed by Russia in both regions, are increasingly tied together. According to a Chatham House study, "What happens militarily in the Russian Arctic has little to do with the region itself. In that sense, the Russian Arctic is not exceptional for Moscow in military-operational terms. The leadership has accorded the same level of threat perception to the Arctic as it has to other theatres of operation regarding NATO and the West. For the Kremlin, the Arctic is fundamentally Russian—especially since the four other coastal nations are NATO members."<sup>6</sup>

With the role of Finland and Sweden as Arctic, Nordic, and Baltic Sea states, and with the risk of horizontal escalation, the Baltic and Arctic regions together form a Northeastern Flank where individual crises are likely to have broader implications. Though together with Denmark they represent the main link between the two regions, Finland and Sweden are at risk of becoming isolated in a larger conflict because of a lack of joint defense planning, an absence

3 Finland's Ministries of Defence and the Interior, "Russia of Power," 2019, 17, <https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/161710/Russia%20of%20Power.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

4 Kremlin, "Interview Given by Dmitry Medvedev to Television Channels Channel One, Russia, NTV," August 31, 2008, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/48301>.

5 John Andreas Olsen, *Security in Northern Europe: Deterrence Defense and Dialogue*, Royal United Services Institute, 2018, 23, <https://rusi.org/publication/whitehall-papers/security-northern-europe-deterrence-defence-and-dialogue>.

6 Mathieu Boulègue, *Russia's Military Posture in the Arctic: Managing Hard Power in a "Low Tension" Environment*, Chatham House, June 28, 2019, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/publication/russia-s-military-posture-arctic-managing-hard-power-low-tension-environment>.

of a mutual defense commitment with NATO member states, and limited avenues for reinforcement to Finland and Sweden's most exposed regions on the Kola Peninsula and the island of Gotland, respectively.

### Threat Perceptions

The countries along NATO's Northeastern Flank share a similar perspective on the challenge posed by Russia, with some differences. Their views have more in common with each other than do those of NATO nations as a whole. According to one study done by the RAND Corporation, "Most NATO members bordering Russia regard it as potentially posing an existential threat ... this is particularly true for the Baltic States and Poland and, to a lesser extent, Finland and Norway."<sup>7</sup> They tend to differ, however, in their assessment of the immediacy and type of threat they would face from Russia in a crisis. These differences are often based on their historical relationships with Russia.

When discussing the threat posed by Russia, Norwegian officials routinely emphasize their history of cooperation and dialogue with Russia over Arctic issues as an indication that in the current state of relations, aggressive Russian actions against Norway are unlikely. But the Norwegian Ministry of Defense emphasizes that during a conflict, Russia would seek a sea "bastion" that could encroach on Norwegian territory. Norway and other allies consider the greatest risk to Norway to be horizontal escalation, with a crisis in another region triggering a Russian reaction in order to protect its strategic security interests in the Arctic.<sup>8</sup>

Sweden, given its lack of a land border with Russia, approaches the threat similarly. Recently, the fear that Russia could capture the island of Gotland during a conflict in the Baltic Sea and use it to control air space in the region has partly spurred Sweden's stronger defense efforts.<sup>9</sup> Swedish politicians are increasingly vocal about their concerns and point directly to the challenge posed by Russia.<sup>10</sup>

Finland maintained much of its robust defense capabilities following the Cold War, in large part due to a recognition of its long-term vulnerability to Russia. A large-scale

conventional conflict between Finland and Russia, similar to the Winter War, is the most immediate concern for Finnish defense planners. But Finland also places emphasis on maintaining a strategic dialogue with Moscow and Finnish politicians are more likely to mention dialogue than competition when discussing relations with their eastern neighbor.

As perhaps the most exposed countries on the Northeastern Flank, the Baltic states and Poland view the threat in much more immediate terms and have emerged as prominent advocates for a permanent and large-scale US and NATO military presence to deter the immediate threat posed by Russia's conventional force buildup.<sup>11</sup> Poland, in particular, might be hesitant to send its forces to the Nordic or even the Baltic states unless NATO troops were deployed in Poland to offset that effort, a concern that could be eased through greater defense cooperation with its neighbors.

Some countries may see the threat as less or more immediate and existential, but all are in agreement that Russia's activities constitute a hostile threat and that a strengthened defense posture is critical to deterring Russian aggression of any kind.<sup>12</sup>

### Russia's Toolbox

To support expanding interests on Europe's Northeastern Flank, the Russian government is using its full range of hybrid, conventional, and nuclear capabilities to undermine and limit the role of NATO and the EU and drive a wedge between the United States and its European allies.

Russia's hybrid activities have been extensive. Examples include direct threats of response towards Finland and Sweden should they pursue NATO membership,<sup>13</sup> cyber and social media influence in the 2016 and 2020 US elections, the attempted coup in Montenegro in 2016 to prevent the country's NATO accession, and the attempted assassination of former Russian spy Sergei Skripal in the UK in 2018, to name just a few. Taken together, "these actions are attempts to capitalize on diverging threat perceptions and views towards Russia within the Alliance, which

7 Stephanie Pezard, Andrew Radin, Thomas Szayna, and F. Stephen Larrabee, *European Relations With Russia*, RAND Corporation, 2017, x, [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR1579.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1579.html).

8 James Black et al. *Enhancing Deterrence and Defense on NATO's Northern Flank*, RAND Corporation, 2020, 7, [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR4381.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR4381.html).

9 Pezard, Radin, Szayna, and Larrabee, *European Relations With Russia*, 13.

10 Peter Hultqvist, "The Need to Up Security Cooperation in the EU," *Defense News*, December 10, 2017, <https://www.defensenews.com/outlook/2017/12/11/swedens-hultqvist-the-need-to-up-security-cooperation-in-the-eu/>.

11 Marco Siddi, *EU Member States and Russia: National and European Debates in an Evolving International Environment*, Finnish Institute of International Affairs, March 2018, 83, <https://www.fiia.fi/en/publication/eu-member-states-and-russia>; Olsen, *Security in Northern Europe*, 26.

12 As another Arctic nation, Denmark approaches the security threat from Russia in the Arctic with similar caution. However, the country takes a stronger stance in the Baltic Sea region, placing a strong NATO defense and deterrence posture as a high priority on its European security agenda.

13 Jason Lemon, "Russian Defense Minister Threatens Response if Finland and Sweden Join NATO," *Newsweek*, July 07/24, 2018, <https://www.newsweek.com/russian-defense-minister-threatens-response-if-sweden-finland-join-nato-1040806>.



Russian Army T-14 Armata tanks, Russia's next-generation main battle tank, drive down a street in Moscow before the 2018 Moscow Victory Day Parade. Photo: Dmitriy Fomin/Wikimedia Commons

has constrained collective response and further emboldened the Kremlin.”<sup>14</sup>

Conventionally, Russia's military modernization campaign has been largely designed to counter and contest US and NATO military superiority in Europe.<sup>15</sup> Russia has held no-notice “snap” military exercises concurrently with the large-scale ZAPAD 17 exercise along its western border with NATO allies in 2017,<sup>16</sup> as well as a recent large-scale submarine exercise in the Arctic.<sup>17</sup> Russia has also continued its aggressive actions in the air, land, and sea, notably buzzing US Navy ships and aircraft, violating allied air space in the Baltic Sea region, and conducting mock attack

drills on Swedish<sup>18</sup> and Norwegian military facilities.<sup>19</sup> The deployment of multiple missile systems (approximately 272 S-300/400 long-range launchers in the Western Military District alone<sup>20</sup>) in the region has also created a series of overlapping “denied areas” that while not impenetrable, raise the risk for allied military operations across the Northeastern Flank.<sup>21</sup>

In the nuclear arena, Russia has unveiled new strategic weapons systems and violated the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF).<sup>22</sup> Russia has also declared an “escalate-to-deescalate” nuclear policy, which under certain circumstances would see Russia threaten to use

14 Retired US Air Force Gen. Philip M. Breedlove and Alexander R. Vershbow, *Permanent Deterrence: Enhancements to the US Military Presence in North Central Europe*, Atlantic Council, February 7, 2019, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/report/permanent-deterrence/>.

15 Defense Intelligence Agency, “Russia Military Power,” 2017, 42, <https://www.dia.mil/Portals/27/Documents/News/Military%20Power%20Publications/Russia%20Military%20Power%20Report%202017.pdf>.

16 Dave Johnson, “VOSTOK 2018: Ten Years of Russian Strategic Exercises and Warfare Preparation,” *NATO Review*, December 20, 2018, <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2018/12/20/vostok-2018-ten-years-of-russian-strategic-exercises-and-warfare-preparation/index.html>.

17 Alec Luhn, “Russian Submarines Power into North Atlantic in Biggest Manoeuvre Since Cold War,” *Telegraph*, October 30, 2019, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2019/10/30/russian-submarines-power-north-atlantic-biggest-manoevre-since/>.

18 Armin Rosen, “NATO Report: A 2013 Russian Aerial Exercise Was Actually a ‘Simulated Nuclear Attack’ on Sweden,” *Business Insider*, February 3, 2016, <https://www.businessinsider.com/nato-report-russia-sweden-nuclear-2016-2>.

19 Thomas Nilsen, “11 Russian Fighter Jets Made Mock Attack on Norwegian Arctic Radar,” *Barents Observer*, February 12, 2019, <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/security/2019/02/11-russian-fighter-jets-made-mock-attack-norwegian-arctic-radar>.

20 Scott Boston et al. *Assessing the Conventional Force Imbalance in Europe*, RAND Corporation, 2018, 9, [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR2402.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2402.html).

21 Robert Dalsjö, Christofer Berglund, and Michael Jonsson, *Bursting the Bubble? Russian A2/AD in the Baltic Sea Region: Capabilities, Countermeasures, and Implications*, Swedish Defense Research Agency, March 2019, 11, <https://www.foi.se/rapportsammanfattning?reportNo=FOI-R--4651-SE>.

22 Russia's new nuclear systems include the Sarmat heavy intercontinental ballistic missile; the Avangard hypersonic glide vehicle; the Kinzhal hypersonic air-launched missile; the Burevestnik nuclear-powered, nuclear-armed cruise missile; and the Poseidon nuclear-armed underwater drone. Source: Matthew Kroenig, Christian Trotti, and Mark Massa, *Russia's Exotic Nuclear Weapons and Implications for the United States and NATO*, Atlantic Council, March 2020, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Russias-Exotic-Nuclear-Weapon-Systems.pdf>.

tactical nuclear strikes to end a conventional conflict on Russian terms.<sup>23</sup>

Taken together, Russia's hybrid, conventional, and nuclear activities represent an attempt to degrade the European security environment and create conditions where Russia can more easily impose its will on its neighbors. This "optimization strategy" leads Russia to lean heavily on hybrid activities to achieve incremental objectives while relying on a strong conventional and nuclear posture to back up its actions and coerce its neighbors.<sup>24</sup>

### Focusing on Local Conventional Force Imbalances

While the nations on Europe's Northeastern Flank are increasingly adept at handling hybrid threats through a series of resilience efforts, their small individual size makes matching Russia conventionally nearly impossible. Since the start of its defense modernization plan in 2008, Russia has taken significant steps towards fielding a fully modernized military force.<sup>25</sup> Coupled with a slight reorganization of its traditional command structure and a significant buildup of conventional assets on its northwestern borders, Russia's military posture is a serious concern for NATO allies and partners in Northeastern Europe.

Under this new military structure, military operations along Russia's Western borders are controlled by the Western Military District, while its Arctic operations are controlled by the Joint Strategic Command Northern Fleet (JSC—Northern Fleet). The Western Military District, which includes forces stationed in the Kaliningrad enclave and the Baltic Fleet, has primary responsibility for confronting NATO. As detailed in a 2018 RAND report, Russia has built up a contingent of more than 80,000 combat personnel and about 800 main battle tanks in the Western Military District in addition to significant air, naval, and air defense assets.<sup>26</sup>

The JSC—Northern Fleet's focus is to improve Russia's capability to project military power into the Arctic. The command was formed in 2015 and organized around the Northern Fleet, Russia's principal naval force with traditional responsibility for operating and protecting Russia's ballistic missile submarine force and defending the maritime approaches to Northwest Russia. Recognizing the growing

need for joint operations in the Arctic, the new command also drew in air, air defense, and ground units from other military districts.<sup>27</sup>

A major concern is that Russia's forces in the region have been redeployed, reorganized, and exercised to employ combat power throughout Northeastern Europe very rapidly and with limited warning. While regional allied and partner forces are capable, their small individual size means they would be hard-pressed to defeat Russia in a conventional conflict without assistance from neighbors, allowing Russia to use this force imbalance to its benefit as a tool for coercion, even in peacetime.

Table 1 demonstrates the extreme military vulnerability of the three Baltic states without NATO reinforcement. It also underlines the individual vulnerability of each of the three frontline Nordic states to a surprise attack, especially if reserve forces cannot be mobilized in time. Even if they acted together, the three frontline Nordic states would face a formidable onslaught. But Table 1 also demonstrates that if all seven states on Europe's Northeastern Flank act in unison, their overall force structure could be said to be roughly in balance with Russia's in the region. Full participation of Polish forces, the largest on the Flank, is crucial to this assessment. Taken together, the seven states would have a manpower advantage if reserves are called up in time; they would have a rough parity in tanks, artillery, and combat aircraft, but Russia would have an advantage in naval forces and air defenses. To be successful in a broad conventional attack against all seven, Russia would probably need to call on forces from its Southern and/or Central Military Districts, giving Western nations strategic warning. Under these circumstances, these seven northeastern nations would have to rely on NATO for rapid reinforcement.

This assessment also illustrates the importance of mutual defense commitments, military coordination, and security cooperation among the seven countries and with NATO. Poland in particular must be more closely involved in this coordination for the efforts to be most impactful. Subsequent sections will analyze how current efforts at defense cooperation contribute to deterrence. First, the next section discusses Finnish and Swedish military non-alignment and defense postures.

23 US Department of Defense, "2018 Nuclear Posture Review," February 2018, <https://media.defense.gov/2018/Feb/02/2001872886/-1/-1/2018-NUCLEAR-POSTURE-REVIEW-FINAL-REPORT.PDF>; also see Hans Binnendijk and David Gompert, "Decisive Response: A New Nuclear Strategy for NATO," *Survival*, Vol. 61, No. 5 (October–November 2019), 113–128, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00396338.2019.1662119?journalCode=tsur20>.

24 Finland's Ministries of Defence and the Interior, "Russia of Power," 29.

25 Defense Intelligence Agency, "Russia Military Power," 12.

26 Boston et al. *Assessing*, 7.

27 Olsen, *Security in Northern Europe*, 26.

**Table 1. A Comparison of Russian Forces in the Western Military District and JSC—Northern Fleet with Current National Forces Across Russia's Border**

	Russia (in region)	Western total	Finland	Sweden	Norway	Baltic States	Poland
<b>Active Forces</b>	102,000	217,150	21,500	15,150	23,250	34,250	123,000
<b>Reserve/ Territorial Forces</b>	9,000	350,700	216,000	31,200	40,000	45,000	18,500
<b>Battle Tanks</b>	757	865	100	120	36	3	606
<b>Heavy Artillery</b>	612	1,219	420	23	24	136	616
<b>Infantry Fighting Vehicles</b>	1,276	2,358	212	396	91	48	1,611
<b>Combat Aircraft</b>	245	315	62	96	62	0	95
<b>Combat Helicopters</b>	76+	28	0	0	0	0	28
<b>ISR and Patrol Aircraft</b>	51	24	2	5	7	0	10
<b>Standoff Air Defense Systems</b>	240	110+	44	16+	12	0	38
<b>Principal Naval Combatants</b>	15	6	0	0	4	0	2
<b>Attack Submarines</b>	19	14	0	5	6	0	3

Source: The data in this table are derived from the International Institute for Strategic Studies' *Military Balance 2020 Report* and from the 2018 RAND Corporation report on *Assessing the Conventional Force Imbalance in Europe*. ISR and patrol aircraft include medium- to long-range manned or unmanned ISR and maritime patrol aircraft. Standoff air defense systems include the number of air and missile defense launchers maintained by each country along or near the Northern Flank. Principal Naval Combatants include frigates and larger vessels.

## C. FINNISH AND SWEDISH NONALIGNMENT AND DEFENSE POSTURES

### Legacies of Neutrality and Nonalignment

Neither Sweden nor Finland find membership in NATO politically feasible at this time, despite the fact that membership would provide them with greater assurance that other members of the Alliance would come to their defense in the event of a conflict. Finland and Sweden have differing histories of involvement and neutrality during World War II respectively, but both countries turned to nonalignment during the Cold War and then what they call “military nonalignment” after the two nations joined the EU in 1995.<sup>28</sup> But since Russia’s purported annexation of Crimea in March of 2014 and subsequent military interdiction in Ukraine’s Donbas region, the debate about NATO membership has intensified in both countries. NATO officials have made clear that applications for membership would be welcome.<sup>29</sup> But Finnish and Swedish officials frequently highlight the benefit of “strategic ambiguity.” The ability to signal greater openness to membership gives them and the West room to escalate politically rather than militarily in the face of Russian aggression.

The source of their nonalignment differs.<sup>30</sup> Sweden has been neutral and has not fought in a war for two centuries, since the Napoleonic Wars. It declared itself neutral during both World Wars. During World War II, neutrality kept its sovereignty intact and allowed it to become a haven for refugees from Nazi Germany. Despite nonalignment during the Cold War, Sweden cooperated closely with the United States and other Western countries.<sup>31</sup> But nonalignment provided Sweden with a moral voice that it used to support humanitarian efforts and various peace movements. It was not threatened with occupation. After the collapse of the

Soviet Union in 1991, Sweden felt so secure with its militarily nonaligned position that it reeled in its defense spending, dramatically reducing the effectiveness of its armed forces. So Swedish nonalignment flows from centuries of history, from a useful moral position, and from confidence that it would not be attacked or occupied.

The source of Finnish nonalignment flows directly from its experience with neighboring Russia. Over eight centuries, several dozen wars were fought with Russia over Finnish territory, and from 1809 until 1917 the Grand Duchy of Finland was part of the Russian Empire. During World War II, Finland lost strategically important territory to the Soviet Union and “Finlandization” was forced upon it in lieu of occupation.<sup>32</sup> Today, Finland shares a land border of some 830 miles with Russia, a pronounced vulnerability. In 2018, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu played to those Finnish concerns stating Russia would take “countermeasures” should Finland join NATO.<sup>33</sup> With that vulnerability in mind, Finns do not want to create incentives for another conflict with Russia.

But Finns also remember the experience of the 1939-40 Winter War in which they fought without much external support against a much larger and better equipped Soviet army.<sup>34</sup> Though Finland lost that conflict and the ensuing Continuation War, Moscow suffered significantly higher casualties and Finns consider this history lesson a partial deterrent against another Russian invasion. Some 75 percent of the Finnish people think they are well prepared to fight alone.<sup>35</sup> However, Finland is seemingly trending away from this perspective, recently passing legislation that allows the country to more easily provide and receive military

28 Neutrality traditionally means that a nation refrains from taking sides in a war. A neutral nation has certain obligations not to assist either belligerent in a conflict and it is protected legally by neutral rights. Nonalignment tends to mean that a nation will not become entangled in military alliances, but should war break out it still might choose sides.

29 Charlie Duxbury, “Under Threat, Sweden Rediscovered its Viking Spirit,” *Politico*, January 30, 2018, <https://www.politico.eu/article/under-threat-sweden-rediscovered-its-viking-spirit-nato-russia/>.

30 Hans Binnendijk, Debra L. Cagan, and András Simonyi, “NATO Enlargement and Enhanced Partnership: The Nordic Case,” in *Advancing U.S.-Nordic-Baltic Security Cooperation*, ed. Daniel S. Hamilton et al. (Center for Transatlantic Relations, 2014), 65-75.

31 Ray Moseley, “Sweden Secretly Assisted NATO’s Cold War Defense,” *Chicago Tribune*, February 12, 1994, <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-1994-02-12-9402120116-story.html>.

32 The Agreement of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance of 1948 between Finland and the Soviet Union ensured Finnish sovereignty and neutrality while acquiescing to aspects of Soviet foreign policy.

33 “Russia Threatens Counter-Measures if Finland and Sweden Join NATO,” *Yle News*, July 25, 2018, [https://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/russia\\_threatens\\_counter-measures\\_if\\_finland\\_and\\_sweden\\_join\\_nato/10321784](https://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/russia_threatens_counter-measures_if_finland_and_sweden_join_nato/10321784).

34 Sweden did provide volunteers to help defend Finland in this instance.

35 Charly Salenius-Pasternak, *The Defense of Finland and Sweden: Continuity and Variance in Strategy and Public Opinion*, Finnish Institute for International Affairs, June 2018, 8, <https://www.fiia.fi/en/publication/the-defence-of-finland-and-sweden>.



A Finnish heavy rocket launcher fires a rocket during the Finnish Army's Arrow 19 exercise in May, 2019. *Photo: Finnish Army*

assistance in a crisis.<sup>36</sup> Military nonalignment for Finland is a mix of reluctance to provoke Russian aggression and confidence in self-defense.

A decision to apply for NATO membership would probably require a referendum in both countries. Given the disruptive impact of referenda in Europe, pro-membership officials in both countries are cautious about getting ahead of their public opinion. And public opinion differs in each country.

In Sweden, public support for membership grew from about 29 percent in 2007 to about 43 percent in 2017, with some polls recording a high-water mark just under 50 percent after the purported annexation of Crimea.<sup>37</sup> This indicates concern in Sweden that their depleted military would require assistance from its partners. In Finland, by contrast, support for NATO membership has been more constant, varying slightly between 20 percent and 30 percent during this same period. But if Sweden were to join

the Alliance and Finnish leaders supported membership, public support would probably rise to more than 50 percent. Interestingly, professional Finnish military personnel see the need for outside assistance and support NATO membership by about 67 percent.<sup>38</sup>

This link in Swedish and Finnish public opinion is not without historical precedent. It was Sweden's decision to move towards membership in the EU that prompted Finland to follow suit, with both countries joining at the same time. Notably, some Finnish officials think that Swedish accession to NATO would be the strategic impetus and last opportunity for Finland to join the Alliance. This belief mirrors official attempts to closely coordinate the countries' foreign and security policies.

At least four Swedish political parties—the Center Party, the Christian Democrats, the Moderate Party, and the Liberal Party—support NATO membership.<sup>39</sup> In Finland,

36 Finland will be better prepared to provide and receive international assistance," June 26, 2017, [https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/article/-/asset\\_publisher/1410869/suomen-valmiuksia-antaa-ja-vastanottaa-kansainvalista-apua-parannetaan](https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/article/-/asset_publisher/1410869/suomen-valmiuksia-antaa-ja-vastanottaa-kansainvalista-apua-parannetaan).

37 Salenius-Pasternak, *The Defense of Finland and Sweden*, 5.

38 Pauli Järvenpää, *Finland and NATO: So Close, Yet So Far*, International Center for Defense and Security, April 22, 2019, <https://icds.ee/finland-and-nato-so-close-yet-so-far/>.

39 Anna Wieslander, "Will Sweden's elections lead to NATO membership," *Atlantic Council*, September 6, 2018, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/will-sweden-s-elections-lead-to-nato-membership/>.

the Swedish People's Party, Blue Reform, and the National Coalition Party have supported membership. In neither country is this enough to assure adequate public support. The Social Democratic Parties in each country hold the keys to NATO membership, and in neither case is there adequate political support to proceed. In the minds of some officials and politicians in both countries, the benefits of strategic ambiguity currently outweigh the downsides of remaining officially outside the Alliance.

### Strengthening National Defenses

Despite these political limitations, Sweden has sought to strengthen the commitment inherent in Article 42.7 of the EU's Lisbon Treaty<sup>40</sup> by declaring:

"Sweden will not remain passive if another EU Member State or Nordic country suffers a disaster or an attack. We expect these countries to take similar action if Sweden is affected. Sweden should, therefore, be in a position to both give and receive civil and military support."<sup>41</sup>

Under these circumstances, both Finland and Sweden have since 2014 sought to develop stronger national defense capabilities and to build an interlocking web of security and defense arrangements, which together they hope will provide them with an enhanced degree of deterrence.<sup>42</sup> In Sweden, these are key elements of the so-called Hultqvist Doctrine, named after long-serving and current Swedish Defense Minister Peter Hultqvist.

At the end of the Cold War, Sweden had a strong military force with 100,000 active duty military personnel, 350,000 reserves, and a viable total defense concept—300 top fighter aircraft, and some 40 warships and 12 submarines. Its peace dividend was excessive with defense spending dropping from 2.5 percent to 1 percent of GDP over two decades. Combat units fell by half, fighter aircraft by 60 percent, and its fleet by 30 percent. Conscription was abandoned along with the total defense concept and most reserves units.<sup>43</sup>

After several provocative Russian air and sea incursions into Swedish space, Sweden has begun to reverse this declining trend. Partial conscription and the total defense concept—defined by Swedish law as the planning and measures required by the country to prepare for war—were reintroduced. Military equipment is being purchased aggressively, including advanced Gripen aircraft and the Patriot air defense missile system. Defense spending is planned at 1.5 percent of GDP. The strategic and vulnerable Baltic Sea island of Gotland has been remilitarized. And a Swedish brigade is being developed for the potential defense of Finland.<sup>44</sup>

In contrast to Sweden and other Nordic countries such as Denmark and Norway, Finland maintained a relatively strong defense posture in the post-Cold War period despite the fact that its defense spending was only about 1.3 percent of GDP in 2018. It did so by keeping its total defense concept and its strong reserve force structure. While Sweden and others were selling military equipment, Finland was buying Leopard tanks from Germany and the Netherlands, F-18s from the United States, and maintaining its large stockpile of long-range artillery. As part of its HX fighter program, Finland is set to choose among the Boeing Super Hornet, Dassault Rafale, Eurofighter Typhoon, Lockheed Martin F-35A, and Saab Gripen. Finns are strong believers in self-defense, and many have served in the reserves.

But Finnish defenses have a potentially dangerous flaw. While Finland has reasonably good equipment and can mobilize some 51,000 military personnel on short notice (professional, conscripts, and active reserves) to deal with small threats, it would take Finland a month or more to mobilize its entire wartime force structure of about 250,000 personnel. That lead time may be inadequate against a Russian short-notice attack.<sup>45</sup>

Finland and Sweden are each building capable military forces. But Sweden is playing catchup and mobilization remains a challenge for Finland. Faced with a concerted Russian military strike, these nations would require fairly rapid reinforcement from partner nations to avoid defeat.

40 Article 42.7 states: "If a Member State is the victim of armed aggression on its territory, the other Member States shall have towards it an obligation of aid and assistance by all the means in their power, in accordance with Article 51 of the United Nations Charter."

41 Quoted in Bjorn von Sydow, "Resilience: Planning for Sweden's Total Defense," *NATO Review*, April, 4, 2018, <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2018/04/04/resilience-planning-for-swedens-total-defence/index.html>.

42 Official Finnish and Swedish Government documents released in 2016 clarify that though NATO membership would dispel uncertainty in the Baltic Sea region and strengthen deterrence, in the current political context, these defense arrangements are important contributors to overall deterrence. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sweden, Summary of Security in a new era, September 9, 2016, <https://www.government.se/legal-documents/2016/09/summary-of-security-in-a-new-era---report-by-the-inquiry-on-swedens-international-defence-and-security-cooperation-sou-201657/>; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland, "The Effects of Finland's Possible NATO Membership" April 2016, 47, <https://www.politico.eu/article/under-threat-sweden-rediscovers-its-viking-spirit-nato-russia/>.

43 Kuczyński, *Sweden Faces*, 8-10.

44 *Ibid.*, 10-14.

45 Hans Binnendijk and Stephen Shapiro, "A Guide to How the US and Finland Can Enhance Defense Cooperation," *Defense News*, September 12, 2019, <https://www.defensenews.com/opinion/commentary/2019/09/12/a-guide-to-how-the-us-and-finland-can-enhance-defense-cooperation/>.

## D. COMPONENTS OF A STRONG DETERRENT POSTURE

### The Nature of Deterrence

Deterrence is in the eyes of the beholder. One size does not fit all. Steps that may deter one adversary may not deter another. Some partner nations may be comfortable with a lower standard of deterrence and have a greater tolerance for risk. Ultimately, it comes down to the adversary's cost benefit analysis.

A 2018 RAND study, *What Deters and Why*, focused on US efforts at extended deterrence since 1945 and presented a model for deterrence. It concluded that in cases of successful US deterrence, three elements always existed: low aggressor motivations; a clear US commitment, including specific consequences for the aggressor; and an advantage in the local balance of forces.<sup>46</sup> This assessment is useful for enhancing deterrence in the Baltic states where a NATO commitment and troop presence exist. But in the case of Finland and Sweden, at least two of these three key elements identified by RAND are currently missing. There is no clear US or NATO commitment nor does the local force balance favor Finland or Sweden.

In order to evaluate the ability of these geometries of deterrence that include Finland and Sweden to deter Russian aggression, some brief historic case studies can serve to showcase what has worked in the past and what has not. This understanding will help to build a gold standard for deterrence and to measure these geometries against that gold standard.

We begin with a very quick look at 10 historic cases involving major powers and deterrence: five where deterrence was successful and five where deterrence failed.

Deterrence succeeded along the European Forward Edge of the Battle Area (FEBA) during the Cold War. Despite a Soviet preponderance in conventional forces along the front lines, there was no doubt in Moscow that an armed attack would result in a unified allied response, massive conventional reinforcements with integrated forces, and probable escalation to nuclear conflict. There was no reward for Moscow that would justify such a risk.

Deterrence in West Berlin during the Cold War was a special case, and it, too, worked. Despite the fact that West

Berlin was surrounded by East Germany and that the local preponderance of forces dramatically favored the Soviets, they did not take the risk of invasion. The 1948-49 Berlin Airlift made clear to Moscow that Western allies would fight to retain West Berlin. Although the US, French, and British forces deployed in West Berlin were only a trip wire, the NATO commitment and reinforcements in large numbers were available to attempt to rescue the beleaguered city. The Berlin Wall became Moscow's response.

Deterrence also worked for South Korea after 1953. Two months after the Korean War Armistice was agreed, the United States and South Korea signed a mutual defense agreement backed up by US and allied forces deployed along the demilitarized zone (DMZ), a buffer zone between the two Koreas that runs across the Korean Peninsula. South Korean forces served in a United Nations (UN) chain of command under a US general officer. There were constant joint exercises and a high degree of military interoperability. A US nuclear umbrella was also extended.

Taiwan's success with deterrence is somewhat different and may be more applicable to Finland and Sweden. From 1955 to 1979, a US-Republic of China Mutual Defense Treaty and US naval preponderance guaranteed Taiwan's independence. China was too weak militarily to risk taking the island. After 1979, however, the Mutual Defense Treaty was replaced by the Taiwan Relations Act with a much weaker US commitment. The United States withdrew its recognition from Taiwan and US troops from the island. There is now ambiguity about the US commitment to Taiwan. Although US naval forces still occasionally transit the Taiwan Strait, China is more dominant in the regional military balance. Deterrence has held because Taiwan has not crossed the political threshold of declaring its independence and has maintained fairly strong military capabilities.

And deterrence has worked thus far in the three Baltic states. Incorporated into the Soviet Union at the onset of World War II, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania joined NATO in March of 2004. Prior to that time, Russia was too weak to risk invading. But one might argue that after Russian incursions in Georgia and the purported annexation of Crimea, parts or all of these three states would by now have been occupied by Russian forces had they not joined the Alliance. Over the past five years, NATO has taken

46 Michael J. Mazarr et al., *What Deters and Why*, RAND Corporation, 2018, 39, [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR2451.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2451.html).



NATO's Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) deployed for the first time on Exercise NOBLE JUMP, which took place in Zagan, Poland in June 2015. Over 2,100 troops from nine NATO nations participated in the exercise. *Photo: NATO/HptFw Gueiting, GER CCT*

multiple steps to strengthen deterrence in the Baltic states, including the creation of the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF), strengthening of the NATO Response Force (NRF), the deployment of NATO battle groups in each country, US activities under the European Deterrence Initiative (EDI), a new 4X30 NATO Readiness Initiative, and a Mobility effort designed to get reinforcements to the front lines quickly. More needs to be done, but Moscow is unlikely to risk a bold military intervention for limited rewards.

Four of these five successful cases of deterrence exhibit a clear US or NATO military commitment backed up by enough deployed and reinforcement forces to convince the adversary that the costs of aggression would be higher than the benefits. A nuclear commitment enhances these conventional defenses. The outlier is Taiwan, where deterrence has clearly been weakened. China understands the political costs and military risks of invasion, but its ability to intimidate Taiwan has clearly increased.

These five successful cases contrast with five in which deterrence failed.

Adolf Hitler invaded Poland in 1939 despite Poland's defense treaties with France and Britain. After meeting British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain in Munich in 1938, Hitler doubted both the resolve and military capabilities of France and Britain to stop him. The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact provided Hitler with a temporary major power partner to offset the British and French commitment. Britain and France declared war on Germany, but had no capability to defend Poland. So hard commitments alone, which are not backed up by adequate force, may not deter a determined adversary.

Japan's miscalculation in attacking Pearl Harbor in 1941 is another example of failed deterrence. Although the economic strength and long-term military potential of the United States posed a significant deterrent challenge to Japan, it did not deter Japanese leaders from seeking a swift victory over the United States in the Pacific through an attack on Pearl Harbor. They resented US interference, misinterpreted US neutrality, and underestimated US resilience. Japan's bet that it could win a short-term victory (after weakening the United States' regional forces) and

then sue for peace has echoes of Russian military thinking in Northeastern Europe today.<sup>47</sup>

The failure of deterrence is classic in the 1950 North Korean invasion of the South. Then US Secretary of State Dean Acheson seemed during a January 1950 speech to exclude South Korea from the US defense perimeter. North Korea's military could dominate that of the South. National unification provided Pyongyang with a strong motivation to attack its southern neighbor. The North had the capability, rationale, and will to invade and so it did. Pyongyang miscalculated as the United States came to South Korea's rescue, but the failure of deterrence cost millions of lives.

Deterrence also failed in 1990 when Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait. Iraq's huge wartime debt and oil disputes with Kuwait provided the motivation. Many argue that when then US Ambassador April Glaspie under instructions told Saddam that the United States had "no opinion" on the Arab conflicts and "would not start an economic war against Iraq," he interpreted this as a green light to invade Kuwait despite the United States' considerable interests in the Arab Gulf region. Kuwait's military was no match for Saddam's. Had the United States made a firm commitment to defend Kuwait, as it eventually did, Saddam may have been deterred.

Finally, deterrence also failed in Ukraine in 2014. After the pro-Russian Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich was overthrown in a popular uprising, Moscow occupied Crimea and invaded the Donbas with paramilitary forces. Ukraine was politically and militarily weak and had no strong foreign allies. Ukraine had earlier denuclearized and was at Moscow's mercy. Moscow had nationalistic incentives to attack, which outweighed the risk. The West responded with limited military assistance for Ukraine and sanctions aimed at Russia, but those efforts have thus far not substantially reversed battlefield conditions.

In these five cases, inadequate commitments by partner countries (South Korea in 1950, Kuwait in 1990, and Ukraine in 2014) and/or inadequate regional military capabilities to defeat the adversary (Poland in 1939, South Korea in 1950,

Kuwait in 1990, and Ukraine in 2014) contributed to the failure of deterrence. Only in the case of Pearl Harbor did US deterrence fail even though Japan realized that it could lose a long war with the United States.

As we seek to apply these lessons to Finland and Sweden, there are two other points worth noting that impact the effectiveness of this gold standard for conventional deterrence on the Northeastern Flank. First, Russian hybrid challenges, most of which fall under the threshold for conventional military intervention, have proven fairly difficult to deter. Both countries have been targeted. And second, Finland and Sweden's political relationships with Russia are nuanced and finely balanced to prevent escalation. When developing their defense strategies, Finland and Sweden have taken into consideration the first principle of deterrence in the RAND study, *What Deters and Why*, which is: "seek to ease security concerns that could lead to aggression."<sup>48</sup> With this approach, both countries are hesitant to fundamentally reshape the European security environment by joining NATO.

## A Gold Standard for Deterrence

With these historic cases and related observations as a reference, we can establish a gold standard for deterrence based on what might be called the 4Cs (commitments, capabilities, cooperation, and non-confrontation): 1) defense **commitments** and the will of others to support weak countries, 2) military **capabilities** of a nation and its coordination with partners to enhance those capabilities, 3) the degree of ongoing security **cooperation** among partners, and 4) the degree to which defense arrangements are **non-confrontational** for a potential adversary. The details of this gold standard are described below.

### Category A (Mutual defense commitments)

1. Alliance defense commitments<sup>49</sup>
2. Regional or bilateral defense commitments<sup>50</sup>
3. Reliable nuclear guarantees

### Category B (Military capabilities and coordination)

4. Frontline force structure<sup>51</sup>
5. Resilience to hybrid and cyberattacks

47 David C. Gompert, Hans Binnendijk, and Bonny Lin, "Japan's Attack on Pearl Harbor, 1941" in *Blinders, Blunders, and Wars: What America and China Can Learn* (RAND Corporation, 2014), 93-106, [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR768.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR768.html).

48 Mazarr et al., *What Deters and Why*, xiv.

49 This item is coded green if there is a written European/transatlantic defense commitment backed up by proper structures to facilitate or coordinate military action. It is coded yellow if there is a written commitment lacking military structures for joint military action. It is coded red if there is no written defense commitment.

50 This item is coded green if there is a written bilateral or multilateral regional commitment to collective defense backed up by proper structures to facilitate or coordinate military action. It is coded yellow if there is a written commitment, but lacking military structures for joint action or if there is no written commitment, but deeply intertwined defense capabilities and plans that constitute a near commitment.

51 This item measures only the level of deterrence added by defense cooperation. It does not measure local forces or total defense. It is coded green if the defense arrangement includes a significant deployment of partner/allied troops in the given country. It is coded yellow if the arrangement includes small standing joint units or limited deployment of partner/allied troops in the given country.

6. Joint defense planning
7. Military equipment interoperability
8. Joint military training, exercises, and operations
9. Coordinated or integrated command arrangements<sup>52</sup>
10. Host nation support and assured access agreements<sup>53</sup>

### Category C (Security cooperation)

11. Ongoing political, security, and defense consultations
12. Defense intelligence sharing
13. Defense industrial cooperation

### Category D (Non-confrontational)

14. Impact on aggressor motivation<sup>54</sup>

Category A includes both the quality of the mutual defense commitments provided to a target nation and the will of allies to deliver on that commitment.<sup>55</sup>

Category B measures the degree to which the military capabilities and preparedness of the target country to defend itself are enhanced through cooperation with its partners. This category also assesses the degree to which other countries contribute to a mutual defense posture rather than purely deterrent posture by evaluating the degree to which the security arrangement supports defense troop deployments, permanent or otherwise, along Europe's Northeastern Flank.

Category C measures the broader degree to which a country has sound political, industrial, and intelligence cooperation with its partners. The stronger these bonds, the more likely an adversary will think twice before using military force against the target country. As these bonds are formed in each arrangement and the regional security architecture changes, it is likely to provoke a response from adversaries, particularly Russia.

Category D (which is derived from the RAND study on deterrence) relates to aggressor motivation. It evaluates the implications of each existing defense cooperation arrangement on the partners' relations with Russia. As suggested in RAND's study, deterrence works better when an aggressor's motivations to test or disrupt the security environment are low. Understanding how defense and deterrence arrangements will impact Russia's threat perception and behavior is important for the countries on Europe's Northeastern Flank.

While bilateral defense relationships between the many countries mentioned in this report are extensive, the coded assessment of each category only includes bilateral and multilateral efforts that are directly tied to or supportive of each arrangement's activities and priorities. Given the force imbalance in the region, collective, rather than bilateral, initiatives are needed to truly enhance deterrence. In the next section we will use this gold standard to assess the Finnish and Swedish deterrence posture.

<sup>52</sup> This item is coded green if there is a permanent or ongoing level of command integration. It is coded yellow if the integrated command arrangements are limited or temporary.

<sup>53</sup> This item is coded green if the arrangement grants access to facilities and quick border crossings in times of conflict without further parliamentary action. It is coded yellow if it allows access to airspace and military facilities in peacetime.

<sup>54</sup> This item is coded green if the adversary is likely to see no threat presented by the defense cooperation arrangement. It is coded yellow if the adversary is likely to be unhappy with the arrangement, but is unlikely to take serious countermeasures. It is coded red if the adversary is likely to take significant countermeasures. In general, if the arrangement draws Sweden or Finland closer to a major power, it is coded yellow. None of the arrangements are coded red since none poses a legitimate threat to Russia.

<sup>55</sup> For a detailed assessment of the will of allies to deliver on their commitments, see Anika Binnendijk and Miranda Priebe, *An Attack Against Them All? Drivers of Decisions to Contribute to NATO Collective Defense*, RAND Corporation, 2019, [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR2964.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2964.html).

## E. THE GEOMETRIES OF EXISTING DEFENSE AND SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS

The multitude of defense and security arrangements in Europe that involve Finland and Sweden can be broken down into two broad groups: Northern European arrangements and geographically broader arrangements. In each group exists a subset of defense cooperation formats ranging from bilateral to regional to transatlantic. These arrangements are as follows:

### Group 1: Primarily Northern European Countries

- (a) Finland-Sweden bilateral defense relationship
- (b) Nordic Defense Cooperation
- (c) Nordic-Baltic Eight
- (d) The Northern Group

### Group 2: Geographically Broader Arrangements

- (a) NATO partnerships
- (b) European Union
- (c) Ad hoc European arrangements
- (d) Bilateral and trilateral cooperation with the United States

These arrangements vary in their purpose and activities, and none are currently meant or designed to support the entire gold standard of deterrence. Many bring specific benefits, not only through the activities involved in the arrangement, but by incorporating other major Western powers in defense cooperation on the Northeastern Flank. Collectively or individually, they could still be strengthened to support their strategic purpose and enhance deterrence.

This section will describe the purpose, progress made, and current activities within each of these eight sets of defense arrangements. It will then evaluate the activities of each arrangement and how they contribute to the gold standard of deterrence on Europe's Northeastern Flank and for Finland and Sweden in particular. Each security arrangement will be evaluated on an individual basis and graded using a "stoplight chart," based on its contributions to each category of deterrence rather than on the cumulative impact of this web of cooperation. Red in the stoplight chart means the defense arrangement being analyzed does not have a positive effect on that element of deterrence, yellow means it has some positive effect, and green means it has a strong positive effect. After each defense arrangement is rated separately, the report will evaluate all eight arrangements and frameworks collectively in the conclusion of this

### The Gold Standard for Deterrence



"Each security arrangement will be evaluated on an individual basis and graded using a 'stoplight chart,' based on its contributions to each category of deterrence rather than on the cumulative impact of this web of cooperation."

report to identify gaps in defense and deterrence along the Northeastern Flank.

### Group 1 (Primarily Northern European Countries)

#### a) The Finland-Sweden bilateral defense relationship

Due to their shared border, their joint role in linking the Baltic and Nordic regions, their historic and linguistic connections, and their status as the only two militarily nonaligned nations in Northeastern Europe, Finland and Sweden's security futures are closely connected.

Recognizing the importance of their partnership, the two countries signed an initial Action Plan in 2014 focused on improving coordination and communication while enhancing military interoperability. A subsequent memorandum in 2015 set out 19 areas of cooperation ranging from defense and security dialogue to joint interoperability to



Marines from the Swedish/Finnish Nyland Brigade amphibious task unit, return to their vehicles in Utö, Sweden, during BALTOPS 2016, June 13. Photo: US Navy/Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Alyssa Weeks

countering hybrid threats.<sup>56</sup> In the past five years, defense and security cooperation between the two countries has been considerably strengthened, particularly between the armed forces. And legislation is now nearing completion to “enable faster decisions on providing and receiving operational military support within the framework of Swedish-Finnish defense cooperation.”<sup>57</sup>

At sea, cooperation between naval forces has been deepened, with emphasis on command and control, intelligence, force generation and organization, interoperability, and logistics and infrastructure, among other areas. The Standing Swedish-Finnish Naval Task Group (SFNTG) reached initial operating capability in 2017 with a view to “protect shipping operations” and uphold “security and freedom of movement at sea and in needed land areas.”<sup>58</sup> This unit carries out quadrennial exercises, which increasingly include anti-submarine warfare (ASW) activities in light of growing concerns about submarine activity in the region. Finland and Sweden also maintain a joint Amphibious Task Unit

(SWEFIN-ATU) made up of a Swedish Marine Regiment and Finnish Amphibious Task Unit.

In the air domain, Finnish and Swedish air forces aim “to form a mutually supported and partly integrated Finnish-Swedish air force, meaning both air forces are interoperable and able to work together to build up common air operations or a combined unit for international operations.”<sup>59</sup> Tactical cross-border training exercises between squadrons, organized with Norway, occur weekly while both Finnish and Swedish aircraft routinely participate in the other’s main national air force exercises (Ruska in Finland and Flygvapenövning in Sweden).<sup>60</sup> Since 2017, they have exercised joint air defense tasks in support of common air operations and frequently operate from each other’s air bases during larger exercises.

Due to initial differences in mission priorities between Finnish and Swedish land forces (Sweden’s army is comparatively much smaller), cooperation on command and

56 Government of Sweden, “Memorandum of Understanding Between the Government of the Republic of Finland and the Government of the Republic of Sweden on Defense Cooperation,” 2015, <https://www.regeringen.se/49fcef/globalassets/regeringen/dokument/forsvarsdepartementet/mouer/mou-finnish-swedish-defence-cooperation-20180625-signerad.pdf>.

57 Government Offices of Sweden, Ministry of Defence, Referral to the Council on Legislation on operational military support between Sweden and Finland, press release, February 7, 2020, <https://www.government.se/press-releases/2020/02/referral-to-the-council-on-legislation-on-operational-military-support-between-sweden-and-finland/>.

58 Government of Sweden, “Final Reports on Deepened Defence Cooperation Between Finland and Sweden,” 2014, <https://www.government.se/49baf3/globalassets/government/dokument/forsvarsdepartementet/final-reports-on-deepened-defence-cooperation-between-finland-och-sweden.pdf>.

59 Ibid.

60 Piotr Szymański, *The Northern Tandem. The Swedish-Finnish Defence Cooperation*, Centre for Eastern Studies, March 20, 2019, [https://www.osw.waw.pl/sites/default/files/commentary\\_298.pdf](https://www.osw.waw.pl/sites/default/files/commentary_298.pdf).

control and interoperability has developed slower than it has between the naval and air forces. Efforts have initially focused on developing a combined Finnish-Swedish Brigade Framework. This capability was exercised during NATO's Trident Juncture 2018 in Norway and at the Swedish-run Northern Wind 2019 exercise, where a Finnish battalion and armored component (1,500 personnel and 500 vehicles) formed part of a Swedish Brigade.<sup>61</sup>

Both countries are focused on incrementally enhancing interoperability. In December 2019, the two chiefs of defense signed a Military Strategic Concept designed to translate political guidance from previous memoranda into actionable guidelines at the military level, including greater joint operational planning and combined training and exercises.<sup>62</sup>

Cooperation in operational logistics, security of supply and use of common parts, and joint development and acquisition of defense capabilities have become long-term operational and industrial commitments for the two countries. While Finland's defense industry is closely integrated with its Nordic neighbor Norway, Finnish-Swedish industrial cooperation is more complicated. This is in part due to the large size of some Swedish defense companies compared to a defense industrial base of mostly small- and medium-sized enterprises in Finland.

When it comes to countering hybrid threats, both Finland and Sweden are widely viewed as two of the most resilient nations in Europe. Finland's comprehensive security concept serves as a model for other nations and the European Center of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats in Helsinki is a forum for international cooperation. Sweden has also revived its total defense concept, redeveloping all civil and military defense activities that prepare the society for war.<sup>63</sup> However, according to the Swedish Defense Commission report released in 2019, there is a need for greater coordination between Finland and Sweden regarding civil defense and resilience as most efforts are on a national basis.<sup>64</sup>

The efforts detailed above to align Finnish and Swedish defense policy and capacity represent perhaps the closest level of cooperation of any of the arrangements discussed in this report. There is no formal bilateral defense treaty

between Finland and Sweden (although a Finnish-Swedish defense treaty "has not been ruled out," according to former Finnish Minister of Defense Jussi Niinistö.<sup>65</sup>), but the extensive military integration and high degree of strategic interdependence between the two countries suggests an intrinsic link. Both Finland and Sweden would be reliant on the other for defense in the event of a conflict, creating an inherent need for mutual defense.

Though there is extensive cooperation between the two Scandinavian neighbors, given their historically close relationship and the smaller impact their cooperation has on the broader European security architecture, Russia is unlikely to respond drastically to greater bilateral cooperation.

### STOPLIGHT CHART FINLAND-SWEDEN BILATERAL DEFENSE RELATIONSHIP

#### Category A (Mutual defense commitments)

- 1. Alliance defense commitments
- 2. Regional or bilateral defense commitments
- 3. Reliable nuclear guarantees

#### Category B (Military capabilities and coordination)

- 4. Frontline force structure
- 5. Resilience to hybrid and cyberattacks
- 6. Joint defense planning
- 7. Military equipment interoperability
- 8. Joint military training, exercises, and operations
- 9. Coordinated or integrated command arrangements
- 10. Host nation and assured access agreements

#### Category C (Security cooperation)

- 11. Ongoing political, security, and defense consultations
- 12. Defense intelligence sharing
- 13. Defense industrial cooperation

#### Category D (Non-confrontational)

- 14. Impact on aggressor motivation

61 Marcus Nilsson, "Swedish-Finnish Cooperation in Norway," Ministry of Defence of Sweden, October 18, 2018, <https://www.forsvarsmakten.se/en/news/2018/11/swedish-finnish-cooperation-in-norway/>.

62 Swedish Armed Forces, "Sweden and Finland signs Military Strategic Concept for the deepened defense cooperation," December 18, 2019, <https://www.forsvarsmakten.se/en/news/2019/12/sweden-and-finland-signs-military-strategic-concept-for-the-deepened-defence-cooperation/>.

63 Government of Sweden, "Development of Modern Total Defence," June 11, 2018, <https://www.government.se/articles/2018/05/development-of-modern-total-defence/>.

64 Swedish Defence Commission, "Resilience," 2019, <https://www.regeringen.se/4afeb9/globalassets/regeringen/dokument/forsvarsdepartementet/forsvarsberedningen/resilience---report-summary---20171220ny.pdf>.

65 "Finland, Sweden Consider Treaty-Based Defense Union," *Defense News*, March 4, 2016, <https://www.defensenews.com/global/europe/2016/03/04/finland-sweden-consider-treaty-based-defense-union/>.

### b) Nordic Defense Cooperation

As the Nordic countries—Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden—closely aligned their economic and social policies during the Cold War through the Nordic Council and Nordic Council of Ministers, their starkly different approaches to foreign and security policy (Finnish and Swedish nonalignment and Denmark, Norway, and Iceland's membership in NATO) meant there was little room or appetite for any Nordic defense arrangement. Instead, Nordic security cooperation during the Cold War largely entailed contributions to UN missions in the Middle East and the Balkans, and peace support education and training. It expanded to include armaments cooperation in the 1990s.

In 2009, the Nordic countries founded the Nordic Defense Cooperation (NORDEFCO) to integrate and expand upon those three historic pillars with the aim to “strengthen the participating nations’ national defense, explore common synergies and facilitate efficient common solutions.”<sup>66</sup>

NORDEFCO has defined for itself five areas for increased military cooperation, covering a range of issues and spanning different timelines to account for strategic developments and priorities as well as immediate operational requirements. These are human resources and education, capabilities, training and exercises, operations, and armaments. A legacy of the peace support operations program, common human resources and military education programs establish uniform concepts and principles at the staff and operating level while economizing education costs.<sup>67</sup>

Capabilities cooperation within the NORDEFCO framework seeks to identify emerging joint capability requirements. Projects in this sector have been wide-ranging, with significant efforts to improve land and air intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR); ground-based air defense; information infrastructure; a secure communications system to enable discussions and information sharing between capitals; and cyber defense among others in a priority NORDEFCO list.<sup>68</sup> Though intelligence is mostly shared bilaterally, a critical capability development in recent years has been on Nordic Cooperation for Air Surveillance Information Exchange (NORECAS), allowing

Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden to share air surveillance data during peacetime.

Under a Swedish proposal, NORDEFCO explored the development of a Nordic Battalion Task Force that would operate under a common concept for command and control, ISR, C4IS (Command, Control, Communications, and Computers Information System), and logistics. However, limited progress has been made on such a joint force. This follows a pattern of ambitious proposals not translating into reality.

NORDEFCO also coordinates and harmonizes military training exercises among the Nordic countries, producing the five-year Combined Joint Nordic Exercise Plan. Though rarely conducted under a direct NORDEFCO flag, exercise cooperation has produced several achievements such as joint Nordic operations (involving 13,000 personnel) during NATO's Trident Juncture exercise in 2018,<sup>69</sup> the Arctic Challenge cross-border air exercises, and an alternative land basing agreement and Easy Access Initiative to allow both unarmed and armed aircraft access to each other's air bases and to allow Nordic forces to cross borders on short notice.<sup>70</sup>

Joint operations supported by NORDEFCO have largely been expeditionary, providing medical, logistics, and training support to Afghan forces and deploying air transport assets and training teams to the UN Mission in Mali and military advisers to Kenya.

Armaments cooperation aims to “achieve financial, technical, and/or industrial benefits for all the member countries within the field of acquisition and life cycle support.”<sup>71</sup> Originally called “strategic development” cooperation and focused on strategic analysis and long-term defense planning, the designation was changed to “armaments” to better represent the shift towards armament development and procurement projects.<sup>72</sup>

Actual defense industrial cooperation has at times not matched the level of ambition hoped for by some of NORDEFCO's members. Norway's selection of a joint Norwegian-German submarine project over an offer from Swedish company Saab, on top of Norway and Denmark's selection of the F-35 over the Swedish JAS Gripen, has

66 NORDEFCO, “Memorandum of Understanding Between the Ministry of Defence of the Kingdom of Denmark and the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Finland and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iceland and the Ministry of Defence of the Kingdom of Norway and the Government of the Kingdom of Sweden on Nordic Defence Cooperation,” 2009, <https://www.nordefco.org/Files/nordefco-mou.pdf>.

67 NORDEFCO, “NORDEFCO Annual Report 2018,” 2018, [https://www.nordefco.org/Files/AnnualReport-NORDEFCO.digital\\_compressed.pdf](https://www.nordefco.org/Files/AnnualReport-NORDEFCO.digital_compressed.pdf).

68 Pauli Järvenpää, *NORDEFCO: Love in a Cold Climate? International Center for Defense and Security*, April 2017, 5, <https://icds.ee/nordefco-love-in-a-cold-climate/>.

69 NORDEFCO, “NORDEFCO Annual Report 2018.”

70 Danish Ministry of Defence, “Nordic Defence Cooperation,” accessed February 12, 2020, <https://fmn.dk/eng/allabout/Pages/nordic-defence-cooperation-nordefco.aspx>.

71 NORDEFCO, “Armaments Cooperation in NORDEFCO,” accessed February 12, 2020, <https://www.nordefco.org/Armaments-Cooperation-in-NORDEFCO-Cooperation-Area-Armaments2>.

72 Järvenpää, “NORDEFCO.”

### STOPLIGHT CHART NORDIC DEFENSE COOPERATION

#### Category A (Mutual defense commitments)

- 1. Alliance defense commitments
- 2. Regional or bilateral defense commitments
- 3. Reliable nuclear guarantees

#### Category B (Military capabilities and coordination)

- 4. Frontline force structure
- 5. Resilience to hybrid and cyberattacks
- 6. Joint defense planning
- 7. Military equipment interoperability
- 8. Joint military training, exercises, and operations
- 9. Coordinated or integrated command arrangements
- 10. Host nation support and assured access agreements

#### Category C (Security cooperation)

- 11. Ongoing political, security, and defense consultations
- 12. Defense intelligence sharing
- 13. Defense industrial cooperation

#### Category D (Non-confrontational)

- 14. Impact on aggressor motivation

raised questions about NORDEFCO's ability to help procure major and long-term combat systems.<sup>73</sup>

Further cooperation has been explored on unmanned aerial systems and the space domain, but most of the 12 current projects, like those on soldier protection, small arms, and tactical data links, are tactical in nature.<sup>74</sup> Industrial cooperation on these smaller personnel-focused projects is important for interoperability. To have a significant impact on defense and deterrence, cooperation is needed on major conventional equipment such as air defense, anti-tank, counter battery artillery, aircraft, and armored vehicles that would allow Nordic countries to shape the potential battlefield.

Vision 2025, NORDEFCO's most recent political guidance issued in 2018, declares a number of targets to be achieved in the coming years. Substantial progress is targeted for

real-time data sharing and crisis consultation; resilience to hybrid and cyber threats; joint logistics, cross-border military mobility; and joint command and control of ongoing operations.<sup>75</sup> The guidance calls for building the capacity to act jointly in all situations, hopefully having in place ready structures by 2025, a clear sign of NORDEFCO's commitment to Nordic defense.

Like Finnish and Swedish bilateral cooperation, NORDEFCO takes existing strong connections and attempts to deepen and spread them within the defense sphere. The fact that closer defense cooperation only deepens an already strong security relationship in one corner of Europe means that, while watched closely by Russian officials, NORDEFCO is unlikely to drastically impact Russia's motivations and threat perceptions in the region.

### c) Nordic-Baltic Eight

Following the independence of the Baltic states in 1991, the five Nordic nations strongly supported their accession into the EU and NATO, and provided advisory support and guidance on a range of political and economic issues. Over the years, a range of expert, parliamentary, and government-level meetings have developed between the eight nations (Estonia, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Latvia, Lithuania, and Sweden). Cooperation at the political level took the form of informal consultations between the prime ministers and foreign ministers of each country on regional issues, eventually becoming known as the Nordic-Baltic Eight (NB8) in 2000. As an attempt to further geographically broaden these links, the NB8 has developed relationships with other countries or arrangements, including the United States, the UK, and the Visegrád Four (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia).

Due to the wide range of issues covered within the NB8 and the frequent change in priorities caused by the yearly rotation of the NB8 chair, cooperation on civil issues has continued to take precedence over security policy. Nordic countries have, however, taken individual initiative to stand up Baltic defense projects such as the Baltic Battalion supported by Denmark, the Baltic Defense College supported by Sweden, and the Baltic Air Surveillance Network supported by Norway.<sup>76</sup> But outside of ad hoc bilateral initiatives, defense cooperation among all eight countries has been inherently limited by the Baltic states' reluctance to develop defense policies reliant on non-NATO members Finland and Sweden.

73 "Norway's Sub-Snub Negatively Impacts Nordic Defense Cooperation," *Defense News*, April 28, 2016, <https://www.defensenews.com/naval/2016/04/28/norways-sub-snub-impacts-negatively-on-nordic-defense-cooperation/>.

74 NORDEFCO, "COPA ARMA Yearbook 2017," 2017, <https://www.nordefco.org/COPA-ARMA-Yearbook-20162>.

75 NORDEFCO, "Nordic Defence Cooperation Vision 2025," November 13, 2018, <https://www.nordefco.org/Files/nordefco-vision-2025-signed.pdf>.

76 Olsen, *Security in Northern Europe*, 32.

Some defense cooperation among the NB8 members does exist through the NORDEFCO format. Since 2011, Nordic and Baltic forces have exercised together in select military activities. In 2012, NORDEFCO's Military Coordination Committee began annual practical and policy meetings with the Baltic states and two years later NORDEFCO's five cooperation areas were opened to Baltic participation.<sup>77</sup> In a sign of progress on capability procurement, Estonia, Finland, and Latvia recently agreed to jointly purchase new armored vehicles.<sup>78</sup>

A priority under this format has been enhanced training, with the Combined Joint Nordic-Baltic Exercise Program (CJNBEP) officially expanded to include the Baltic states.<sup>79</sup> In 2014 and 2015, Finnish and Swedish air forces trained with the Baltic Air Policing Mission (not Baltic air forces, but still focused on the defense of the Baltic states) and Sweden hosted Baltic troops during its large-scale Aurora exercise in 2017. Additionally, in 2015, the NB8 defense ministers agreed on a proposal from Lithuania and Sweden to enhance cooperation on hybrid warfare, cyber security, joint exercises and operations, updates and procurement of weaponry, assistance to Georgia and Ukraine under the Nordic-Baltic Assistance Program, and other areas.<sup>80</sup>

NATO's enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) battle groups in the Baltic states include troops from three of the five Nordic nations, but not from Finland or Sweden. While these battle groups enhance deterrence for the Baltic states, their contribution to deterrence for Finland and Sweden is only indirect.

Through routine meetings at the political level, progress has been made to more closely align NB8 security and defense policy. But, in general, cooperation efforts remain at the operational and tactical level. This is not entirely unintentional. Though the Baltic states have made significant efforts to strengthen regional stability in cooperation with Finland and Sweden, they remain resistant to deepened defense cooperation with non-NATO countries. Wary of the immediacy of the Russian threat, the Baltic states have instead chosen to prioritize cooperation with the United States bilaterally and through NATO, quietly keeping Finland and Sweden out of NATO operations in the Baltic Sea region. Outside of training opportunities, this limits the potential for joint defense preparedness and cooperation.

The Russian government repeatedly asserts its "privileged interests" in the former Soviet states, and the Baltics are no

exception. Though Russia has long viewed Baltic defense arrangements with other Western nations as an affront to its security interests, the lack of robust defense cooperation and little involvement in the NB8 by NATO's larger members means Russia is unlikely to see the NB8 as a major challenge.

### STOPLIGHT CHART NORDIC-BALTIC EIGHT

#### Category A (Mutual defense commitments)

- 1. Alliance defense commitments
- 2. Regional or bilateral defense commitments
- 3. Reliable nuclear guarantees

#### Category B (Military capabilities and coordination)

- 4. Frontline force structure
- 5. Resilience to hybrid and cyberattacks
- 6. Joint defense planning
- 7. Military equipment interoperability
- 8. Joint military training, exercises, and operations
- 9. Coordinated or integrated command arrangements
- 10. Host nation support and assured access agreements

#### Category C (Security cooperation)

- 11. Ongoing political, security, and defense consultations
- 12. Defense intelligence sharing
- 13. Defense industrial cooperation

#### Category D (Non-confrontational)

- 14. Impact on aggressor motivation

### d) The Northern Group

A British initiative, the Northern Group was founded in 2010 as a security and defense partnership between the Nordic countries and the UK, quickly expanding to include the Baltic states, Germany, the Netherlands, and Poland. It was initially intended to be a security consultative group, but it has since taken on some elements of defense coordination.

77 NORDEFCO, "NORDEFCO Annual Report 2015," 2015, 28, [https://www.nordefco.org/Files/nordefco-annual-report-2015\\_webb\\_compressed.pdf](https://www.nordefco.org/Files/nordefco-annual-report-2015_webb_compressed.pdf).

78 Sebastian Sprenger, "Estonia, Latvia, Finland Team Up to Buy Armored Troop Rides," Defense News, December 18, 2019, <https://www.defensenews.com/global/europe/2019/12/18/estonia-latvia-finland-team-up-to-buy-armored-troop-rides/>.

79 NORDEFCO, "NORDEFCO Annual Report 2015," 19.

80 Sweden's Ministry of Defence, "Nordic-Baltic Defence Ministers Statement," November 10, 2015, [https://www.regeringen.se/4af93b/globalassets/regeringen/dokument/forsvarsdepartementet/nordefco/151110-nordic-baltic-statement\\_final.pdf](https://www.regeringen.se/4af93b/globalassets/regeringen/dokument/forsvarsdepartementet/nordefco/151110-nordic-baltic-statement_final.pdf).

The Northern Group began as a framework to strengthen the UK's relationship with the Nordic countries and expand its involvement in Northern European security through informal dialogue in a more flexible setting than NATO. As described by former British Defense Secretary Liam Fox, "In this multipolar world, we need more and different levers to act in the interests of our national and joint security. Therefore, we want to create a new and wider framework that makes it easier for both NATO and non-NATO members to have a closer relationship in the region."<sup>81</sup>

The Northern Group allows non-NATO countries Finland and Sweden to build deeper security ties with countries outside of the Nordics without the politically challenging pursuit of NATO membership. For NATO allies like the UK and the Netherlands that sit outside the similar, but more active, NORDEFCO and NB8 groupings, the Northern Group is a forum for consultation with like-minded states to address security and defense priorities in a focused area while avoiding the bureaucracy and regional factionalism often found within NATO. Not wanting to visibly take a back seat in a UK-driven organization, Germany and Poland are much less active, though members are working hard to increase their engagement in the Northern Group.

Since 2014, the Northern Group has taken on added importance in Northern European and Baltic Sea security policy. The group meets at the defense minister level to discuss common issues, mostly focusing on countering Russian military aggression in the region and pushing for further integration of its members' armed forces.

Past issues on the Northern Group's agenda have included countering disinformation, supporting NATO's Readiness Action Plan and VJTF, joint communications, and military mobility.<sup>82</sup> The Northern Group has stepped up its strategic exercises on hybrid and cyber defense and in a 2019 meeting, defense ministers discussed opportunities for future joint military exercises, which would expand the group's focus beyond security cooperation. This could be a critical step for the Northern Group, as closer military preparedness and cooperation among frontline countries and staging areas like the Netherlands and Germany has the potential to strengthen reinforcement and military mobility on the Continent. However, until these exercises are planned and executed, closer defense integration within the Northern Group remains only a proposal.

Similar to the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) and the European Intervention Initiative (E2I), the Northern Group has become a laboratory for the "coalition-of-the-willing" approach to European security. An initial political-strategic decision for joint military action could be made by the Northern Group countries, with the UK-led JEF serving as the initial joint response force, while broader solidarity and support comes later through NATO. However, without a joint command structure, national forces in such a coalition would remain unintegrated.

From a Russian perspective, the potential of the Northern Group to deliver rapid political and strategic decision-making that kick-starts the deployment of allied forces, particularly British and German units, to the Northern Flank is imposing, but a lack of operational capacity mitigates some of those concerns for now.

### STOPLIGHT CHART THE NORTHERN GROUP

#### Category A (Mutual defense commitments)

- 1. Alliance defense commitments
- 2. Regional or bilateral defense commitments
- 3. Reliable nuclear guarantees

#### Category B (Military capabilities and coordination)

- 4. Frontline force structure
- 5. Resilience to hybrid and cyberattacks
- 6. Joint defense planning
- 7. Military equipment interoperability
- 8. Joint military training, exercises, and operations
- 9. Coordinated or integrated command arrangements
- 10. Host nation support and assured access agreements

#### Category C (Security cooperation)

- 11. Ongoing political, security, and defense consultations
- 12. Defense intelligence sharing
- 13. Defense industrial cooperation

#### Category D (Non-confrontational)

- 14. Impact on aggressor motivation

81 UK Ministry of Defence, "Defence Secretary Launches New Forum of Northern European Countries," November 10, 2010, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/defence-secretary-launches-new-forum-of-northern-european-countries>.

82 UK Ministry of Defence, "Defence Secretary Meets with Nordic-Baltic Defence Ministers," November 12, 2014, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/defence-secretary-meets-with-nordic-baltic-defence-ministers>.

### Group 2 (Geographically Broader Arrangements)

#### a) NATO Partnerships

Finland and Sweden have been NATO's most active partners since joining the Alliance's Partnership for Peace program at its foundation in 1994. The two countries have participated in most NATO peacekeeping missions after the end of the Cold War, including deploying roughly a battalion each to Kosovo and contributing to NATO's training missions in Afghanistan, reaching more than 500 Swedish and 156 Finnish troops in 2011 during the surge.<sup>83</sup>

In 2014, recognizing the need to strengthen interoperability with those partners most likely to contribute to NATO missions and operations, NATO created the Enhanced Opportunity Partnership (EOP) and quickly invited Finland and Sweden to join.

The opportunities involved were designed to go much further than the existing level of cooperation, including regular political consultations on security matters; enhanced access to interoperability programs and exercises; sharing information, including lessons learned; and closer association of such partners in times of crisis and the preparation of operations.<sup>84</sup> This gives Finland and Sweden the opportunity to pursue "close à la carte cooperation with NATO on matters such as intelligence-sharing, exercise planning, and exercises with high-readiness forces."<sup>85</sup>

Perhaps most significantly, the EOP allows for consultations with all the allies at once (30+1 format). First occurring in 2016, Finnish and Swedish officials now regularly meet with NATO in the 30+2 format to discuss security issues along NATO's Northeastern Flank, a rare opportunity to conduct dialogue within NATO on an equal footing to other allies. Finnish and Swedish leaders, alongside EU officials, joined sessions with allies at the 2016 and 2018 NATO summits to discuss broader global challenges.

As part of the partnership, both countries engage with NATO on civilian emergency planning, and multiyear

research projects on cyber defense, CBRN (chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear) protection, and critical infrastructure protection, among others.<sup>86</sup> Jointly with the EU, NATO also supports the European Center of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats in Helsinki.

To directly address security in the Baltic Sea region, NATO has further stepped up cooperation with Finland and Sweden in EOP areas, including more regular political dialogue, exchanges of information on hybrid warfare, coordinated training and exercises, and better joint situational awareness.<sup>87</sup> Some Finnish and Swedish staff are present in NATO's command structure and NATO allies are increasingly open to Finnish and Swedish participation in the Alliance's newer Baltic Sea region command structures. There is also a concerted effort to establish Day Zero connectivity between forces, including at all levels of command.

This format gives Finland and Sweden, pending a decision by the North Atlantic Council, access to NATO Response Force (NRF) exercise planning three to five years in advance, helping the countries introduce exercise elements of importance to their own militaries and budget for exercises appropriately.<sup>88</sup> This arrangement also allows for greater intelligence sharing in support of NRF exercises.<sup>89</sup> Finland and Sweden both contribute to the NRF's broad force pool, in years past providing air squadrons, amphibious and infantry companies, and minesweeper and coastal patrol vessels.<sup>90</sup>

Close integration into NATO's exercise program is a priority for both Finland and Sweden. Finland, for instance, participates in roughly 20 NATO exercises each year, while both countries participated in the large-scale Trident Juncture 18 exercise and routinely take part in NATO's recurring BALTOPS exercise.<sup>91</sup> The Arctic Challenge 2019 air exercise, jointly organized by Finland, Norway, and Sweden, included participation for the first time by other NATO allies. Fighter, transport, aerial refueling, and search and rescue aircraft and helicopters from six NATO allies participated in this exercise and were even supported by one of NATO's

83 Finland's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Finnish KFOR battalion will be strengthened for elections, press release, August 17, 2001, [https://finlandabroad.fi/web/usa/foreign-ministry-s-press-releases/-/asset\\_publisher/kyak4Ry9kbQ0/content/suomen-kfor-pataljoonaa-vahvennetaan-vaalien-ajaksi/35732](https://finlandabroad.fi/web/usa/foreign-ministry-s-press-releases/-/asset_publisher/kyak4Ry9kbQ0/content/suomen-kfor-pataljoonaa-vahvennetaan-vaalien-ajaksi/35732).

84 NATO, "Partnership Interoperability Initiative," accessed February 12, 2020, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_132726.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_132726.htm).

85 Barbara Kunz, *Sweden's NATO Workaround: Swedish Security and Defense Policy Against the Backdrop of Russian Revisionism*, French Institute of International Relations, November 2015, 27-28, [https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/fs64kunuz\\_0.pdf](https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/fs64kunuz_0.pdf).

86 NATO, "Relations with Sweden," accessed February 12, 2020, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_52535.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_52535.htm).

87 NATO, "Relations with Finland," accessed February 12, 2020, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_49594.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49594.htm).

88 Mission of Finland to NATO, "Enhancing Finland's Defense Capability," accessed February 12, 2020, <https://finlandabroad.fi/web/nato/enhancing-finland-s-defence-capability>.

89 Juha Pyrkönen, *Nordic Partners of NATO: How Similar Are Finland and Sweden Within NATO Cooperation?*, Finnish Institute for International Affairs, April 2017, 97, [https://www.fiia.fi/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/report48\\_finland\\_sweden\\_nato.pdf](https://www.fiia.fi/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/report48_finland_sweden_nato.pdf).

90 Ibid., 65; "Swedish Fighter Jets to Join NATO Response Force," Local, November 28, 2013, <https://www.thelocal.se/20131128/sweden-offers-up-planes-and-ships-to-nato-reaction-force>.

91 Mission of Finland to NATO, "Enhancing."



Standing NATO Maritime Group One trains with Finnish FNS Hanko during a passing exercise in the Baltic Sea. Photo: NATO/Fran CPO Christian Valverde.

Airborne Warning and Control System aircraft.<sup>92</sup> In addition, while Finland and Sweden do not participate directly in NATO's Baltic Air Policing mission, they do often exercise with those aircraft conducting Baltic Air Policing.

Both Finland and Sweden have host nation support agreements with NATO which allow for logistical support by the host nations to allied forces located on, or transiting through, Finnish and Swedish territory during exercises or a conflict.<sup>93</sup> That the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) applies during conflict could be a tremendous boost to the Alliance's ability to defend in depth on its Northeastern Flank. However, the fact that support during a conflict is conditional on Finnish and Swedish parliamentary approval will inevitably slow action during a crisis.

Both Finland and Sweden also participate in two NATO-led strategic airlift cooperation initiatives, the Strategic Airlift Capability (SAC) program and the Strategic Airlift International Solution (SALIS), which provide valuable reinforcement or expeditionary lift capacity for participating nations.

NATO, Finland, and Sweden are all supportive of even deeper cooperation, but in what way remains to be seen. Cooperation was originally set out to support the Alliance's Wales Summit in 2014 and other deliverables, but with many of these fulfilled and NATO increasingly focused on the North Atlantic, the rise of China, and emerging technology, Finland and Sweden are reevaluating where their cooperation with the Alliance can have the greatest impact.

When evaluating NATO's benefits to allies in the below categories, the Alliance rates well in almost all measures, with a strong mutual defense clause supported by a robust command structure and extensive operational interoperability. NATO is also the only organization to deploy forces to the front lines of the Northeastern Flank through its eFP, although Finland and Sweden are not contributors.

Remaining outside the Alliance means that Finland and Sweden are excluded from some of these most critical aspects. That being said, the extraordinary level of cooperation the two countries have with NATO represents

<sup>92</sup> NATO Allied Air Command, "Nordic Partners and Allies Cooperate in Cross Border Training," 2019, <https://ac.nato.int/archive/2019/nordic-partners-and-allies-cooperate-in-cross-border-training->.

<sup>93</sup> NATO, "Relations with Finland."

the closest any country could possibly get without official membership. Viewing NATO as its greatest source of strategic competition, Russia is adamantly opposed to the Alliance's efforts to strengthen ties with Finland and Sweden, drawing a red line at membership.

### STOPLIGHT CHART NATO PARTNERSHIPS

#### Category A (Mutual defense commitments)

- 1. Alliance defense commitments
- 2. Regional or bilateral defense commitments
- 3. Reliable nuclear guarantees

#### Category B (Military capabilities and coordination)

- 4. Frontline force structure
- 5. Resilience to hybrid and cyberattacks
- 6. Joint defense planning
- 7. Military equipment interoperability
- 8. Joint military training, exercises, and operations
- 9. Coordinated or integrated command arrangements
- 10. Host nation support and assured access agreements

#### Category C (Security cooperation)

- 11. Ongoing political, security, and defense consultations
- 12. Defense intelligence sharing
- 13. Defense industrial cooperation

#### Category D (Non-confrontational)

- 14. Impact on aggressor motivation

Article 42.7, the EU's mutual defense clause, states that, "If a Member State is the victim of armed aggression on its territory, the other Member States shall have towards it an obligation of aid and assistance by all the means in their power, in accordance with article 51 of the United Nations charter."<sup>94</sup> While not prejudicing against militarily nonaligned nations, meaning certain nations would not be required to provide aid when it violates their long-standing military non-alignment principles, the article does create a second defense commitment in Europe, in principle ensuring Finland and Sweden would not have to act alone in a conflict.

The obligation it places on member states to provide assistance to others makes the EU's mutual defense clause in some ways stronger than NATO's. However, due to limits in the EU's existing defense efforts, which have been made worse by Brexit, the article lacks significant deterrent effect as aid from EU members would be rendered primarily on a bilateral basis. France's decision to invoke Article 42.7 after the November 2015 Paris terrorist attacks, rather than NATO's Article 5, suggests an understanding by the EU's members that Article 42.7 is better suited for dealing with softer security issues than defense and deterrence.

Still, in line with this commitment and in support of other global security interests, the EU is a growing player in the European security environment and enjoys a pride of place in Finnish and Swedish security policy, both of which seek an expanded EU role in European security and defense.<sup>95</sup> A Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) has helped member states achieve consensus and act collectively on the international stage while a Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) comprises various EU agencies and organizations that support a range of political, operational, and industrial defense initiatives. The EU's Political and Security Committee, similar to NATO's North Atlantic Council, meets at the ambassadorial level to provide consistent dialogue on political, security, and defense issues and prepare a coherent EU response to crises.

### b) European Union

Alongside NATO, the European Union (EU) is the largest multilateral organization in Europe and although it has historically focused on economic, political, and social issues, much like NATO the EU provides a security guarantee for its members.

The EU has played a significant role in addressing broader non-traditional threats, helping member nations build resilience to hybrid threats and increase cyber and energy security, among other important efforts.<sup>96</sup> It has also expanded its capacity for crisis management, building

<sup>94</sup> Article 42.7: An explainer, European Council on Foreign Relations, November 19, 2015, [https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary\\_article\\_427\\_an\\_explainer5019](https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_article_427_an_explainer5019).

<sup>95</sup> Leo G. Michel, "Finland, Sweden, and NATO: From 'Virtual' to Formal Allies?" National Defense University, February 2011, 3, <https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/stratforum/SF-265.pdf>.

<sup>96</sup> European Commission, A Europe that protects: good progress on tackling hybrid threats, press release, May 29, 2019, [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP\\_19\\_2788](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_19_2788). Rachel Ellehuus, *Strange Birds in the Archipelago: Finland's Legislation on Foreign Real Estate Investment*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, April 7, 2020, <https://www.csis.org/blogs/kremlin-playbook-spotlight/strange-birds-archipelago-finlands-legislation-foreign-real-estate>.

structures to handle both civilian and military crisis management operations outside and within the Union.

At the operational level, the EU has developed multinational battle groups, including the Nordic Battlegroup led by Sweden and supported by Finland in 2008 and 2011, to serve as the EU's principal small-scale rapid reaction force for emerging conflicts and crises. Finland contributed approximately 300 troops between the Nordic Battlegroup and the German-Dutch Battlegroup, while Sweden contributed approximately 2,000 troops to the Nordic Battlegroup. Though operational since 2007, due to political and financial issues, the battle groups have never been deployed.<sup>97</sup>

The EU's Military Staff serves as its command and control authority and by 2020 will be able to oversee operations of up to 2,500 troops. This might be sufficient for overseas humanitarian missions, but is still far too small to control any significant collective defense operation. Its size also inhibits a stronger multinational exercise regime. If a larger command structure is needed, the EU can draw upon NATO's Berlin Plus arrangement which would place NATO's Deputy SACEUR in charge of EU forces.

Defense industrial cooperation efforts have been more extensive. The European Defense Agency (EDA) serves as the main forum for intergovernmental capability planning and prioritization among EU members, providing member states with an avenue for broader consultation. An ongoing EU-wide project on military mobility, in cooperation with NATO and partly coordinated by the EDA, will help improve border crossing times and ease access for EU members' forces in a conflict.

Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), launched in 2017, is a process for deepening defense cooperation on specific projects, each led by an EU member. A voluntary arrangement, 25 EU member states have subscribed to the more binding commitments to defense investment and capability development that PESCO prescribes. Participation in each of the 47 projects under PESCO is voluntary and many have only a few members. Finland and Sweden combined are members of 11 distinct projects (both are members of the military mobility project) such as unmanned maritime and ground systems, airborne electric attack, secure communications, and cyber security.<sup>98</sup>

The European Defense Fund (EDF) supports the multi-lateral financing of joint defense industrial projects. The first tranche of capability development projects covers

priorities in all domains—air, land, sea, cyber, and space—and will receive €500 million in initial financing, with €6 billion currently slated for the 2021-27 budget cycle.<sup>99</sup> If effectively prioritized to account for the right capability shortfalls, these industrial initiatives could represent major value added to individual nations in need of economizing their capabilities, while supporting European military interoperability and broader defense and deterrence in Europe.

EU members have an increasingly productive approach towards Article 42.7 and many of its current defense initiatives could prove beneficial for security on the Continent. But shortfalls in the EU's existing command and control structure, frontline force posture, defense planning, and joint training limit its ability to contribute to deterrence in Europe. The fact that Norway is not a member of the EU, on top of Denmark's opt-out from EU military operations and capability

### STOPLIGHT CHART EUROPEAN UNION

#### Category A (Mutual defense commitments)

- 1. Alliance defense commitments
- 2. Regional or bilateral defense commitments
- 3. Reliable nuclear guarantees

#### Category B (Military capabilities and coordination)

- 4. Frontline force structure
- 5. Resilience to hybrid and cyberattacks
- 6. Joint defense planning
- 7. Military equipment interoperability
- 8. Joint military training, exercises, and operations
- 9. Coordinated or integrated command arrangements
- 10. Host nation support and assured access agreements

#### Category C (Security cooperation)

- 11. Ongoing political, security, and defense consultations
- 12. Defense intelligence sharing
- 13. Defense industrial cooperation

#### Category D (Non-confrontational)

- 14. Impact on aggressor motivation

97 European External Action Service, "EU Battlegroups," fact sheet, accessed February 13, 2020, [https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/en/esdp/91624.pdf](https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/esdp/91624.pdf).

98 Council of the European Union, "Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO)'s Projects – Overview," November 12, 2019, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/41333/pesco-projects-12-nov-2019.pdf>.

99 Steven Erlanger, "European Defense and 'Strategic Autonomy' Are Also Coronavirus Victims," May 23, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/23/world/europe/defense-autonomy-europe-coronavirus.html>.

development and acquisition, also restricts the future potential for the CSDP to boost deterrence in Northern Europe.

That the buildup to Russia's purported annexation of Crimea and intervention in Ukraine was sparked by Ukraine's growing relationship with the EU suggests that Russia may view the EU as a strategic competitor. However, though EU members collectively outmatch Russia in military capabilities, with little capacity for collective defense operations, Russia does not currently see the EU as a military threat. Should the EU continue to expand its efforts in this area in support of "strategic autonomy," another strong and Europe-wide defense organization could spark major changes to Russian foreign policy.

### c) Ad hoc European arrangements

The need to pool forces for military operations in Europe and overseas and to pool funds for capability development has led to the creation of several ad hoc multinational defense arrangements developed to support NATO and EU priorities. These include the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF), a rapidly deployable force led by the UK; Framework Nations Concept (FNC), led by Germany to facilitate capability development among allied nations; and the European Intervention Initiative (E2I), an initiative created by France in 2018 to build a strategic culture in Europe.

The JEF, German-led FNC, and another Italian-led framework, which remains a work in progress, came out of a concept (also called the NATO Framework Nations Concept) from the 2014 NATO Wales Summit, which "focuses on groups of Allies coming together to work multinationally for the joint development of forces and capabilities required by the Alliance, facilitated by a framework nation."<sup>100</sup> As ad hoc arrangements led by nations, they offer greater flexibility in terms of membership, with Finland and Sweden participating in the JEF and FNC.

#### *Joint Expeditionary Force (British lead)*

The British-led JEF, which reached full operational capability in 2018, includes Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden. Importantly, the JEF has been purposely limited to this

group by the UK. In contrast to the long-term focus on capability and force development of the FNC, the JEF is focused on developing an immediate high-readiness force for use in a range of operations from humanitarian assistance to sub-Article V scenarios to high-intensity combat.<sup>101</sup>

Aimed at deploying an integrated force of up to 10,000 troops, the JEF is made up predominately of the UK's high-readiness forces, with partner nations contributing on a flexible as needed and as desired basis. Finland and Sweden both joined the JEF in 2017, earmarking specific forces to the JEF force pool, with Sweden's contribution comprising the same naval units that it also contributes to the NRF.<sup>102</sup> Though the JEF would be mostly composed of UK forces, Allied officials have cited opportunities for Norway, and possibly other nations, to take a larger leadership role within the JEF.<sup>103</sup>

Political and strategic decision-making structures are in place and exercised regularly while the full JEF pool of forces will only be exercised every three to four years. Given already extensive Finnish and Swedish participation in NATO exercises and contributions to the NRF, the JEF's contribution to deterrence lies in its flexible force structure and its ability to implement rapid political decisions should a coalition of the willing be needed in response to aggression.

#### *Framework Nation Concept (German lead)*

The German-led FNC, which consists of 17 NATO allies and four EU members, was originally focused on filling capability shortfalls in the NATO defense planning process (while also contributing to EU capability development).<sup>104</sup> In this Concept, nations would choose to join and contribute to different capability clusters on command and control/support, effects, Joint ISR, and protection.<sup>105</sup> The long-term nature of many of these projects means the Concept's full impact is unlikely to be seen anytime soon, although the FNC is already producing CBRN components for the NRF.<sup>106</sup>

Finland and Sweden joined the FNC in 2017 and 2018, respectively, although Sweden is likely only to take part in the clusters associated with the EU's ongoing PESCO projects and sees its cooperation primarily in terms of strengthening its bilateral relationship with Germany.<sup>107</sup>

100 Allied Heads of State and Government, "Wales Summit Declaration," NATO, September 5, 2014, par. 57, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_112964.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm).

101 UK Government, "The Joint Expeditionary Force," June 2018, <https://kam.lt/download/64335/jef-booklet.pdf>.

102 Dalsjö, Berglund, and Jonsson, *Bursting the Bubble?*, 33.

103 Black et al. *Enhancing Deterrence and Defense on NATO's Northern Flank*, 36.

104 Germany's Federal Ministry of Defence, "Conception of the Bundeswehr," 2018, 8, <https://www.bmvg.de/resource/blob/26546/befaf450b146faa515e19328e659fa1e/20180731-broschuere-konzeption-der-bundeswehr-data.pdf>.

105 Eva Hagström Frisell and Emma Sjökvist, *Military Cooperation Around Framework Nations*, Swedish Defense Research Agency, February 2018, 18, <https://www.foi.se/rest-api/report/FOI-R-4672-SE>.

106 Ibid., 24.

107 Ibid., 22.



UK Royal Marines depart from an offshore raiding craft during a cold weather training exercise in Norway in 2016. *Photo: UK Royal Navy*

In 2016, cooperation under the FNC's scope was expanded to include the generation of larger force formations that will supplement NATO's pool of follow-on forces. These units will be built around existing German force structures, which various European states would plug their forces in to, thereby creating multinational units. It is not designed to be an extra layer between NATO and individual nations and, therefore, does not include any sort of operational planning elements, but instead will serve within German command arrangements. By 2032, it is expected to include three mechanized divisions and a Multinational Air Group to contribute to NATO's follow-on forces, as well as the Baltic Maritime Component Command, which will operate under the NATO Command Structure.

While a significant contributor to long-term regional security and force posture, the fact that much of the joint force produced by the FNC will operate under the NATO Command Structure has made it difficult for Finland and Sweden to fully engage in this portion of the Concept. However, there are currently no barriers preventing participation by partner countries in this force structure, and future training and exercise opportunities with FNC forces should strengthen Finland and Sweden's interoperability with NATO.

### *European Intervention Initiative (French lead)*

As part of a vision for a "sovereign, united, and democratic Europe," French President Emmanuel Macron proposed the European Intervention Initiative (E2I) to bring capable and willing countries together to "create a shared strategic culture" and prepare for joint responses to conflict and crises both in Europe and overseas.<sup>108</sup> Fourteen European states have signed on to the E2I, including both Finland and Sweden.

Unlike the JEF and FNC, the E2I is not intended to become a NATO incorporated operational structure, but rather will serve as a structure outside NATO and EU frameworks to help European states better and more quickly respond to crises in cooperation with existing defense structures.

There are four priority areas for greater interaction: strategic foresight and intelligence; scenario development and planning; support to operations; and lessons learned and doctrine. The format for cooperation is flexible and non-binding, allowing participating nations to form working groups on thematic or geographic areas of their choice while defense ministers have continued to discuss setting

<sup>108</sup> Dick Zandee and Kimberley Kruijver, *The European Intervention Initiative: Developing a Shared Strategic Culture for European Defence*, Netherlands Institute of International Relations, September 2019, 1, <https://spectator.clingendael.org/en/publication/challenge-shared-strategic-culture-europe>.

policy guidelines for joint action through the E2I and other existing structures.<sup>109</sup>

For Finland and Sweden, the E2I provides another format for expanding its strategic level defense cooperation with major European powers like France and Germany. However, the resource-neutral nature of the E2I and lack of any operational structure limits its ability to contribute to defense and deterrence in the short term.

Individually, these ad hoc structures provide narrow and specific benefits to defense and deterrence on Europe's Northeastern Flank. Collectively, and with substantial Finnish and Swedish political and resource commitment, they form a network of arrangements that cover a range of deterrence measurements. Critically, each arrangement more closely aligns Finland and Sweden with a major European power (France, Germany, and the UK) at a time when Russia is concentrated on isolating NATO's partners.

### STOPLIGHT CHART AD HOC EUROPEAN ARRANGEMENTS

#### Category A (Mutual defense commitments)

- 1. Alliance defense commitments
- 2. Regional or bilateral defense commitments
- 3. Reliable nuclear guarantees

#### Category B (Military capabilities and coordination)

- 4. Frontline force structure
- 5. Resilience to hybrid and cyberattacks
- 6. Joint defense planning
- 7. Military equipment interoperability
- 8. Joint military training, exercises, and operations
- 9. Coordinated or integrated command arrangements
- 10. Host nation support and assured access agreements

#### Category C (Security cooperation)

- 11. Ongoing political, security, and defense consultations
- 12. Defense intelligence sharing
- 13. Defense industrial cooperation

#### Category D (Non-confrontational)

- 14. Impact on aggressor motivation

### d) Bilateral and trilateral cooperation with the United States

The United States has collaborated considerably with the nations in Northern Europe on a bilateral or multilateral (N5+1) basis and has frequently sought their participation in US-led expeditionary operations, including by non-NATO members Finland and Sweden. As part of its expanded activity in the region in recent years, the United States has sought closer defense integration with Finland and Sweden.

The United States has two notable arrangements for closer defense cooperation with European nations: NATO membership and the designation of a country as a Major Non-NATO Ally, giving preferential access to US weaponry and military training to the designee. Though both remain options for Finland and Sweden, the United States has pursued closer defense relationships through bilateral agreements. These statements were signed in 2016 to deepen practical defense cooperation and interoperability, dialogue, and armaments collaboration (notably on air and underwater warfare capabilities with Sweden and cyber, air and space, and Arctic technologies with Finland.) Overall, both bilateral defense relationships have been similarly designed, executed, and closely coordinated through trilateral dialogue between the countries.

Further steps were taken in 2018 to formalize this dialogue with the signing of the Trilateral Statement of Intent. The trilateral agreement is intended to complement and reinforce the existing relationships in a more formalized way. Rather than committing the three nations to strengthen current European security arrangements, the trilateral agreement expresses only a "shared interest" in regional stability and an intent to support NATO, NORDEFCO, and the EU through enhanced cooperation. In addition to incorporating aspects of the bilateral agreements, the trilateral agreement stresses the intent to more regularly share information, increasingly shape exercise design to reflect trilateral priorities, coordinate strategic communication, and enhance the NATO-EU partnership.<sup>110</sup>

Like many defense arrangements in the region, efforts to improve interoperability through exercises have been the most visible component of this trilateral agreement. In 2017, the United States participated in the largest Swedish exercise in more than two decades, Aurora 17, and it is scheduled to take part in the next iteration in 2021. In 2018, Finnish aircraft participated in the US-organized Red Flag exercise in Alaska and Nevada, while US aircraft participated in the joint

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>110</sup> Finland's Ministry of Defence, "Trilateral Statement of Intent Among the Department of Defense of the United States of America and the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Finland and the Ministry of Defence of the Kingdom of Sweden," May 2018, [https://www.defmin.fi/files/4231/Trilateral\\_Statement\\_of\\_Intent.pdf](https://www.defmin.fi/files/4231/Trilateral_Statement_of_Intent.pdf).



A US Air Force F-22 Raptor and two Finnish air force F/A-18 Hornets during training off the coast of Finland, Oct 19, 2018. Photo: US Air Force

Norwegian-Swedish-Finnish cross-border Arctic Challenge Exercise in 2019. On land, the Arrow 18 exercise in Finland saw US Abrams tanks employed for the first time on Finnish territory, while the Northern Wind 2019 exercise in Sweden sought to boost Finland and Sweden's Arctic combat capabilities in cooperation with Norway and the UK.<sup>111</sup> Finland has also invited Swedish and US forces to participate in an upcoming major military exercise in Finland in 2021.<sup>112</sup>

Greater collaboration on capability development and acquisition, particularly capabilities that support shared situational awareness—an area where cooperation is more flexible and less limited by non-NATO membership—could be a major benefit to the trilateral partnership and Northeastern Flank as a whole. For instance, should Finland decide to purchase the F-35 as its next fighter aircraft, three frontline states (Finland, Norway, and Poland) plus Denmark would be using the aircraft. This would not only strengthen interoperability in a crisis and make host nation support simpler, but would allow these countries and the United States to further leverage the F-35's unique data gathering capability. However, the European options also would provide important synergies with other frontline and European air forces.

Like NATO itself, the fact that such trilateral cooperation further ties European nations to the United States means it is probably viewed as a concern by Russian policymakers.

## STOPLIGHT CHART BILATERAL AND TRILATERAL COOPERATION WITH THE UNITED STATES

### Category A (Mutual defense commitments)

- 1. Alliance defense commitments
- 2. Regional or bilateral defense commitments
- 3. Reliable nuclear guarantees

### Category B (Military capabilities and coordination)

- 4. Frontline force structure
- 5. Resilience to hybrid and cyberattacks
- 6. Joint defense planning
- 7. Military equipment interoperability
- 8. Joint military training, exercises, and operations
- 9. Coordinated or integrated command arrangements
- 10. Host nation support and assured access agreements

### Category C (Security cooperation)

- 11. Ongoing political, security, and defense consultations
- 12. Defense intelligence sharing
- 13. Defense industrial cooperation

### Category D (Non-confrontational)

- 14. Impact on aggressor motivation

<sup>111</sup> Szymański, *The Northern Tandem*.

<sup>112</sup> "Finland's Niinistö on Trilateral Defense-Cooperation Agreement with US, Sweden," Defense and Aerospace Report, May 9, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TVR-PVbzhHo>.

## F. CONCLUSIONS

The most significant conventional Russian military threat to Europe is to what might be called Europe's Northeastern Flank. This military theater spans the area from the Barents Sea through the Baltic Sea and includes seven frontline countries: Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, and Sweden. Five of these countries are members of NATO, while two—Finland and Sweden—are militarily nonaligned. That difference creates uncertainty for deterrence and defense on this front.

Two facts are abundantly clear. First, Russia can quickly assemble conventional military forces in the region, which could rapidly overwhelm any one of these nations if the target nation does not receive adequate warning and immediate reinforcements from its allies and/or partners. That weakens deterrence throughout the region. Therefore, extending the Alliance to Finland and Sweden and removing any uncertainty in an allied response would be the most effective way to deter a conventional attack. But second, this step is not politically feasible in Finland and Sweden at this time for an array of reasons discussed in Section C.

Therefore, policy makers along the Northeastern Flank and the Alliance seek to mitigate this uncertainty through eight sets, or “geometries,” of deterrence arrangements.

Each of the eight sets of arrangements enhances deterrence to varying degrees for the two militarily nonaligned nations and thereby for all seven nations that make up the Northeastern Flank. Taken together, they do not equal the deterrent value of having Finland and Sweden in the Alliance. But in combination the glass is more than half full. Additional steps can be taken to improve overall cohesion and further strengthen the deterrent posture for both of these nations and for the Northeastern Flank as a whole. The recommendation section of this report will suggest several such additional steps.

Specifically, the eight arrangements contribute to enhanced regional deterrence as follows:

- **Swedish-Finnish bilateral defense arrangements** significantly enhance each nation's deterrence through a high degree of military coordination and security cooperation as indicated by the accompanying stoplight chart. While there is no formal mutual defense treaty, Moscow could expect these two countries to act firmly in each other's defense. Combined, their force structure could not defeat a determined Russian onslaught, but the cost to Russia would be high.
- Adding **NORDEFCO** to bilateral cooperation adds modestly to the deterrent equation for these two nonaligned nations. NORDEFCO, which also includes Denmark, Iceland, and Norway, enhances deterrence through security cooperation, military coordination, and interoperability in critical areas like air surveillance and air defense exercises, Joint ISR, and cooperation to support operations in Afghanistan. But though there is a vision to do so, NORDEFCO has not yet reached its full potential with regard to joint force operations, defense planning, and sharing of military facilities. While three members of NORDEFCO are NATO members, the group itself has no mutual defense clause.
- Adding **Nordic-Baltic (NB8) defense cooperation** to this mix does little to enhance conventional deterrence for the two militarily nonaligned nations nor does it bring in a major power. The NB8 does have useful ongoing security consultations, efforts to build resilience against hybrid threats, and some joint exercises. The real value of the NB8 is to the Baltic states as a formal connection to its closest sources of potential support, but they are reluctant to rely too heavily on it because Finland and Sweden provide no defense commitment. If this grouping could be modified and extended to include Poland, then it could make a more important contribution to overall deterrence as a way to solidify the Northeastern Flank.
- Finnish and Swedish participation in the **Northern Group** does bring four relatively powerful nations (Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, and the UK) into the deterrent equation and is intended to increase their voice on these issues. Any conflict on the Northeastern Flank would rely on these four countries as a bastion for reinforcements. But thus far a fleshed out Northern Group is a work in progress, and it is only focused on security consultations and hybrid threats, with the potential for future joint exercises. Its principal deterrent value currently is that it presents a political mechanism that could be used to mobilize forces in a coalition of the willing should NATO be paralyzed by lack of consensus.
- As **NATO Enhanced Opportunity Partners (EOP)**, both militarily nonaligned countries enjoy a high degree of security consultation (with the 30+2 formula) and operational military coordination (with participation in some NATO missions, participation in the NATO Response Force, scores of NATO exercises, and host nation support agreements). Should conflict ever break out and should the two militarily nonaligned countries find

themselves joining Alliance forces, this preparation would make force integration much easier. But there are limits to the value of this EOP arrangement. NATO has no commitment to the two; there are no nuclear guarantees, which leaves both open to nuclear blackmail; and there are limits to sharing of defense plans and operational intelligence.

■ Membership in the **European Union** provides these two nations with their only formal mutual security agreement (Article 42.7). While this commitment arguably reads as strong as NATO's Article V, it has thus far only been triggered to provide civilian support after a terrorist attack. Most EU members have little faith in Article 42.7 when it comes to major power threats. The EU has battle groups intended for southern expeditionary operations, but it does not have the command structure, defense plans, nuclear deterrence, or other attributes of an alliance designed to deal with Russia. The EU is providing Finland and Sweden with increasingly significant security cooperation, industrial opportunities, and military coordination as France, in particular, looks for alternatives to NATO. While the EU could eventually provide the two nonaligned countries with the deterrence they need, thus far it falls well short of what NATO could provide and, indeed, there is little appetite among most EU members for the EU to duplicate NATO's collective defense efforts.

■ The three **ad hoc European defense arrangements** (JEF, FNC, and E2I) do give the two nonaligned countries options for operational cooperation with the three largest European powers: France, Germany, and the UK. As such they do contribute somewhat to enhanced deterrence. However, only the JEF has some capability of deploying to the Northeastern Flank today, though the other two could contribute primarily in a future NATO context.

■ Enhanced **bilateral and trilateral cooperation with the United States** has just begun with relatively recent bilateral and trilateral statements of intent (SOIs) that tie the United States more closely to these two nonaligned countries. These statements stop far short of being a defense commitment, though the trilateral SOI does reference the countries' shared interest in regional stability. But the SOIs are ushering in a new era of military coordination focused on a vigorous exercise schedule and possible new levels of defense industrial cooperation.

These are the geometries of deterrence. If these eight sets of arrangements are seen as a whole and measured against the deterrence gold standard, there are areas of considerable strength, areas where some progress has been made, and areas where major gaps still exist.

Areas in which these geometries of deterrence have made the most significant progress include:

- Security cooperation and consultation at senior levels of government
- Military training, exercises, and ongoing operations
- Defense industrial cooperation
- Military interoperability

Areas in which some useful progress has been made and more is possible include:

- Some form of regional defense commitments
- Host nation support and easy/assured access arrangements
- Experience with joint command arrangements
- Defense intelligence sharing
- Cooperation on building resilience to various hybrid operations

Areas where significant gaps still exist include:

- A firm and credible alliance defense commitment
- A reliable nuclear deterrent
- Significant contributions to augment frontline force structure
- Common multinational defense planning for the Northeastern Flank

A final comment is warranted on the "impact on aggressor motivations" criteria. Russia certainly would be happier without any of these eight sets of defense arrangements. But it seems to be most concerned about Finland and Sweden joining NATO. Anything short of that is unlikely to bring a significant reaction from Moscow. The reason, of course, is that only NATO membership meets all of the first 13 elements of the deterrence gold standard. So it will be up to Helsinki and Stockholm over time to continue to weigh the balance between achieving the highest level of deterrence and triggering a significantly negative reaction from Moscow. If the threat from Russia to the region continues to grow, triggering a reaction may become less important in these capitals than securing firm deterrence by joining the Alliance.

## G. RECOMMENDATIONS TO ENHANCE DETERRENCE

---

**B**elow are a set of suggestions short of NATO membership for Finland and Sweden that would close some existing deterrence gaps and make Russia more cautious about embarking upon an attack on any frontline nation on the Northeastern Flank.

### Strengthen mutual defense commitments

- Design a stronger Finland-Sweden mutual defense commitment.
- Strengthen EU Article 42.7 with mutually reinforcing pledges.

### Strengthen regional defense cooperation

- Reinvigorate NORDEFCO and its Vision 2025 commitment to develop the capability to act jointly in all situations by placing an emphasis on Nordic defense planning and building the command and control and operational structures for joint military action.
- Revisit efforts to build standing joint Nordic units. Using the Finnish-Swedish model for active joint amphibious, naval, and air units, NORDEFCO members could redevelop concepts and begin to budget for the creation of a standing Nordic battle group, naval squadron, and air wing that could form the backbone for joint operations.
- Develop closer Finnish-Swedish defense ties with the Baltic states and, in particular, with Poland. Areas that could be initially improved to lay the groundwork for deeper cooperation include security and defense consultations to develop common operating pictures of the region and joint military training and civilian crisis management exercises. Moreover, even bilateral initiatives, such as the potential sale of Swedish submarines to Poland, could be the impetus that encourages greater Polish participation in these arrangements.
- Build host nation support elements into the Norwegian, Swedish, and Finnish Cross-Border Training exercises. While host nation support is provided at major annual exercises, testing preparedness to receive partner aircraft on a no-notice basis during weekly tactical exercises would improve the Nordic countries' understanding of the efficiency of the host nation support agreement.
- Leverage a post-Brexit UK to use the Northern Group

more effectively and enhance the Group's military capabilities. This should include an emphasis on building out a joint military exercise program, expanding strategic-level crisis response exercises, and defense planning to support the deployment of the Joint Expeditionary Force on the Northern Flank.

### Strengthen cooperation with NATO

- Deploy some Finnish and Swedish troops to support the NATO eFP battle groups in the Baltic states. These troop deployments could be in a supporting non-kinetic role, providing logistics, medical, or intelligence support to the eFP forces.
- Deepen the NATO Enhanced Opportunity Partnership program with Finland and Sweden.
- Design limited NATO joint defense planning with Finland and Sweden for the Northeastern Flank.
- Invite Finland and Sweden to integrate staff into new NATO command structures in the Baltic Sea region.
- Use NATO exercises to design and test future command arrangements that incorporate Finnish and Swedish personnel at the time of conflict. These efforts might be limited to conducting operations along the Northeastern Flank, such as the Baltic Maritime Component Command.
- Initiate greater NATO intelligence sharing with Finland and Sweden.
- Invite Finnish and Swedish participation in NATO's Baltic Air Policing (BAP) and Nordic Quick Reaction Alert (QRA) air patrols, similar to their participation in the NRF force pool.
- Jointly exercise the JEF and VJTF with Finnish and Swedish participation.

### Strengthen cooperation with the United States

- Issue a "US-Nordic Charter" similar to the 1998 US-Baltic Charter that includes the statement that the United States has a "*real, profound and enduring interest in the independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and security*"<sup>113</sup> of each nation.
- Create a US-Finnish-Swedish coordination cell in Helsinki or Stockholm for maximum implementation of the Trilateral Statement of Intent.

---

<sup>113</sup> From the first principle of the January 16, 1998, US Baltic Charter. Source: Republic of Estonia Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "US Baltic Charter," <https://vm.ee/en/us-baltic-charter>.



Defense Secretary Mark T. Esper hosts a trilateral meeting with Minister of Defense of Finland Antti Kaikkonen and Minister of Defense of Sweden Peter Hultqvist, at the Pentagon, Washington, D.C., Dec. 10, 2019. *Photo: DoD/U.S. Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class James K. Lee*

- Designate Finland and Sweden as Major Non-NATO Allies.
- Deploy a small rotational US troop presence in Finland, Sweden, and the Baltic states as the United States has in Norway and Poland.

#### **Strengthen overall security cooperation**

- Finland and Sweden should enhance the West's focus on the connection between the Arctic and Baltic regions in a crisis through regional political and security dialogue and increased military exercises and crisis response scenario exercises, led by Finland and Sweden and designed to connect the regions.
- Finland should choose its next fighter aircraft in a way

that creates maximum synergies among regional air forces.

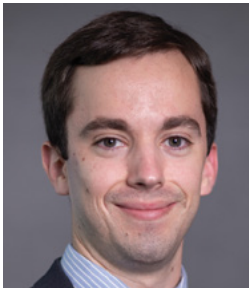
- Finland and Sweden could develop a “Resilience Initiative” alongside like-minded NATO and EU members. Building on other efforts such as their comprehensive security concepts, the Helsinki-based European Center of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats, and the work of other Centers of Excellence, Finland and Sweden could create and lead a community of interest around issues of societal and infrastructure resilience in a format that allows for the sharing of non-politically constrained lessons learned, best practices, and operational concepts, which can then be implemented by willing contributing members at the national level.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

---



**Hans Binnendijk** is a distinguished fellow at the Atlantic Council. He previously served in several senior positions, including senior director for defense policy at the National Security Council, acting director of the State Department's Policy Planning Staff, legislative director for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, director of the National Defense University's Institute for National Strategic Studies, director of Georgetown University's Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, and director of studies at the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London.



**Conor Rodihan** is the assistant director of the Transatlantic Security Initiative in the Atlantic Council's Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security. He has previously supported the Atlantic Council's two flagship task force reports on defense and deterrence in Europe, "Permanent Deterrence: Enhancements to the US military presence in North Central Europe" and "Moving Out: A Comprehensive Assessment of European Military Mobility." Prior to joining the Atlantic Council, he interned at the US Mission to NATO. He is a graduate of the University of Denver, where he received bachelor's degrees in international studies and Russian.



### CHAIRMAN

\*John F.W. Rogers

### EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN EMERITUS

\*James L. Jones

### CHAIRMAN EMERITUS

Brent Scowcroft

### PRESIDENT AND CEO

\*Frederick Kempe

### EXECUTIVE VICE CHAIRS

\*Adrienne Arsht

\*Stephen J. Hadley

### VICE CHAIRS

\*Robert J. Abernethy

\*Richard W. Edelman

\*C. Boyden Gray

\*Alexander V. Mirtchev

\*John J. Studzinski

### TREASURER

\*George Lund

### SECRETARY

\*Walter B. Slocombe

### DIRECTORS

Stéphane Abrial

Odeh Aburdene

Todd Achilles

\*Peter Ackerman

Timothy D. Adams

\*Michael Andersson

David D. Aufhauser

Colleen Bell

Matthew C. Bernstein

\*Rafic A. Bizri

Dennis C. Blair

Linden Blue

Philip M. Breedlove

Myron Brilliant

\*Esther Brimmer

R. Nicholas Burns

\*Richard R. Burt

Michael Calvey

James E. Cartwright

John E. Chapoton

Ahmed Charai

Melanie Chen

Michael Chertoff

\*George Chopivsky

Wesley K. Clark

\*Helima Croft

Ralph D. Crosby, Jr.

\*Ankit N. Desai

Dario Deste

\*Paula J. Dobriansky

Thomas J. Egan, Jr.

Stuart E. Eizenstat

Thomas R. Eldridge

\*Alan H. Fleischmann

Jendayi E. Frazer

Ronald M. Freeman

Courtney Geduldig

Robert S. Gelbard

Gianni Di Giovanni

Thomas H. Glocer

John B. Goodman

\*Sherri W. Goodman

Murathan Günal

\*Amir A. Handjani

Katie Harbath

John D. Harris, II

Frank Haun

Michael V. Hayden

Amos Hochstein

\*Karl V. Hopkins

Andrew Hove

Mary L. Howell

Ian Ihnatowycz

Wolfgang F. Ischinger

Deborah Lee James

Joia M. Johnson

Stephen R. Kappes

\*Maria Pica Karp

Andre Kelleners

Astri Kimball Van Dyke

Henry A. Kissinger

\*C. Jeffrey Knittel

Franklin D. Kramer

Laura Lane

Jan M. Lodai

Douglas Lute

Jane Holl Lute

William J. Lynn

Mian M. Mansha

Chris Marlin

William Marron

Neil Masterson

Gerardo Mato

Timothy McBride

Erin McGrain

John M. McHugh

H.R. McMaster

Eric D.K. Melby

\*Judith A. Miller

Dariusz Mioduski

Susan Molinari

\*Michael J. Morell

\*Richard Morningstar

Virginia A. Mulberger

Mary Claire Murphy

Edward J. Newberry

Thomas R. Nides

Franco Nuschese

Joseph S. Nye

Hilda Ochoa-Brillembourg

Ahmet M. Oren

Sally A. Painter

\*Ana I. Palacio

\*Kostas Pantazopoulos

Carlos Pascual

W. DeVier Pierson

Alan Pellegrini

David H. Petraeus

Lisa Pollina

Daniel B. Poneman

\*Dina H. Powell McCormick

Robert Rangel

Thomas J. Ridge

Michael J. Rogers

Charles O. Rossotti

Harry Sachinis

C. Michael Scaparrotti

Rajiv Shah

Stephen Shapiro

Wendy Sherman

Kris Singh

Christopher Smith

James G. Stavridis

Richard J.A. Steele

Mary Streett

Frances M. Townsend

Clyde C. Tuggle

Melanne Verveer

Charles F. Wald

Michael F. Walsh

Ronald Weiser

Geir Westgaard

Olin Wethington

Maciej Witucki

Neal S. Wolin

\*Jenny Wood

Guang Yang

Mary C. Yates

Dov S. Zakheim

### HONORARY DIRECTORS

James A. Baker, III

Ashton B. Carter

Robert M. Gates

Michael G. Mullen

Leon E. Panetta

William J. Perry

Colin L. Powell

Condoleezza Rice

George P. Shultz

Horst Teltschik

John W. Warner

William H. Webster

*\*Executive Committee  
Members*

*List as of March 10, 2020*



The Atlantic Council is a nonpartisan organization that promotes constructive US leadership and engagement in international affairs based on the central role of the Atlantic community in meeting today's global challenges.

© 2020 The Atlantic Council of the United States. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means without permission in writing from the Atlantic Council, except in the case of brief quotations in news articles, critical articles, or reviews. Please direct inquiries to:

Atlantic Council

1030 15th Street, NW, 12th Floor,  
Washington, DC 20005

(202) 463-7226, [www.AtlanticCouncil.org](http://www.AtlanticCouncil.org)