

Northern Europe's Arctic Defence Agenda¹

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Introduction

During the 1970s and 1980s, the land, air, and maritime spaces above the Arctic Circle were considered by allied planners to be of immense strategic importance. The possibility of a nuclear exchange between the super-powers transiting over the polar regions spurred efforts to maintain a robust early warning and aerospace defence posture. The need to counter Soviet naval and air movements in the Norwegian Sea and the North Atlantic likewise prompted NATO allies to adopt defence strategies that would proactively engage Soviet forces close to their bases, while reinforcing NATO's northern flank with rapidly-deployable ground and air units. Although the non-aligned Nordic states firmly maintained their status, there is some evidence to suggest that they were not aloof from the East-West stand-off, and were consulted on territorial defence planning by their NATO neighbours.²

The demise of the Soviet Union and the decade-long atrophy of the military capabilities of the Russian Federation significantly reduced the importance of the region in the minds of Western defence planners. But even as the northern European allies and their non-NATO neighbours adjusted their defence spending to suit the new strategic environment, an awareness of the importance of co-operation across a broad range of

¹ The reported results, their interpretation, and any opinions expressed herein, are those of the author and do not represent, or otherwise reflect, any official position of the Department of National Defence or the Government of Canada.

² Robert Dalsjo, "Sweden's Squandered Life-Line to the West," Parallel History Project on Cooperative Security, http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/coll_sweden/introduction.cfm?navinfo=29456 Accessed 18 June 2010.

security endeavours remained. The first decade of the new century has seen a marked increase in attention devoted to two critical security issues: environmental stewardship and energy security. Thus, a region widely considered to have been neglected by policy-makers and defence planners immediately after the Cold War has enjoyed something of a renaissance in the security discourse.

This essay will explore the contemporary defence policies of the European Nordic states as they pertain to the Arctic, as well as the potential roles of two major international organizations in which these countries hold membership(s) - NATO and the European Union (EU). Following a brief examination of each state's view of the Nordic strategic picture and a review of contemporary policy guidance, the defence postures and future plans of each state and organization will be examined. The future of Nordic defence, including interactions with the EU and NATO, will be viewed through the lens of the Stoltenberg Report – the product of high-level consultations between the states under examination.

The picture that emerges is one in which the Nordic allies and partners – Norway, Denmark, Iceland, Sweden, Finland – are intent on creating forces that are more usable and deployable than was the case under the previous system of mass mobilization. All more or less agree on the factors driving the new pre-occupation with the north, even if their level of military interest in the region varies. Each agrees on the need for dialogue and co-operation among all states with territories adjacent to the Arctic, including Russia. All states are emphasizing presence – that is, the ability of national authorities to freely operate in areas under which they claim sovereignty. All value the contribution of other government departments to overall security – in particular, para-military forces wielding what could be termed “semi-hard” power. The latter stems from a belief that northern security challenges are multi-dimensional, and that presence and control does not always require a display of kinetic strength, as was the case during the Cold War.

Notwithstanding this effort to fashion a broader, whole-of-government approach to Arctic security, traditional defence efforts are alive and well and may ultimately receive added impetus from the evolution of the international organizations to which the Nordics belong.

Norway

With a long coastline, an economy fuelled by maritime resources and trade, and proximity to Russia, Norway has long been a key player in the Nordic security equation. The protection of national territory, the upholding of sovereignty, the prevention of wars and the promotion of international security through the rule of law continue to be the foundation of the country's defence and security policy. However, the belief that security threats are more diffuse, involving not so much the threat of armed invasion, but rather threats to sovereignty, maritime resources, and dangers stemming from climate change, reflect a departure from the state-centric conflict paradigm of previous era. One visible manifestation of this mix of continuity and change may be found in the country's approach to the north.³

The two principal government documents relating to the Arctic are *The Norwegian Government's High North Strategy*, promulgated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Defence Ministry's *Capable Force: Strategic Concept for the Norwegian Armed Forces*. The former emphasizes the need for a credible, consistent government presence in the High North to address the above-mentioned threats. As these are considered to be "cross-sectoral", a comprehensive government response is required, involving the participation of civilian and military authorities.⁴ The maintenance of good working relations with Russia is an integral part of the strategy. While bilateral relations are generally constructive and orderly – characterized recently by an apparent resolution of a maritime border dispute in the Barents Sea⁵ - uncertainty over the latter's political trajectory is still a matter of concern. Accordingly, great value is placed on the resolution of territorial disputes through bilateral dialogue or in forums such as the Arctic Council.⁶ But Oslo's determination to uphold what it believes to be its territorial

³ "North" refers to the Norwegian landmass, its territorial seas and the Svalbard archipelago. Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *The Norwegian Government's High North Strategy*. <http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/UD/Vedlegg/strategien.pdf>. Accessed 22 March 2010, p. 6.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁵ For decades an area of 175,000 km² containing potentially lucrative fisheries and petroleum resources had not been formally delineated. On 27 April 2010 *BBC Online* reported that the two countries had agreed in principle on a border. Norway has also held sovereignty over the de-militarized Svalbard archipelago and has maintained a restrictive fishing regime there despite Russian objections.

⁶ Established in 1996, this body comprises Denmark (including Greenland and the Faroe Islands), Norway, Finland, Iceland, Sweden, the US, and Russia and six aboriginal groups. It is a consultative forum intended to coordinate activities relating to environmental stewardship and sustainable economic development.

rights is punctuated with the none-too-subtle statement that Norwegian coast guard vessels and air force patrol planes are currently operating in the north at a higher tempo than in the recent past.⁷

The military's capstone document, *Capable Force*, states that while the tenets of Norwegian security policy have been constant over time, changes in the international environment compel the country to update and transform its armed forces. International stability operations will continue to garner attention and resources, but security in immediate neighbourhood, including the High North, is clearly the priority.⁸

The document mentions the challenges of globalization - mutual dependence and vulnerability, competition for resources and environmental matters - as factors affecting national and international security. But it also promotes the view that traditional threats continue to exist alongside non-traditional/non-military ones. In an oblique reference to Russia's brief war with Georgia in 2008, it notes the speed at which conflicts can arise and the "renewed tendencies by great powers to establish spheres of influence." Accordingly, it recommends taking "a balanced approach with regard to the attention which should be directed at international terrorism and intra-state conflicts in relation to interstate conflicts."⁹

As with *High North Strategy*, *Capable Force* envisions a civil-military (or whole-of-government) approach to security in the High North. Similarly, it does not anticipate large-scale conventional threats to the country's northern domains. Rather, it postulates that:

[t]he most likely future challenges to our sovereignty will be in the form of episodes and limited assaults or crises. There may also be attempts to restrict our political freedom of action. These challenges could materialise very quickly, and they require an immediate response by Norwegian authorities. Here, the [armed forces] will play a central role. For these reasons, the High North will remain the Government's primary strategic focus area also in the future. It underlines the general need for Norway to

⁷ Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 19. Surveillance and intelligence are two capabilities that are repeatedly mentioned.

⁸ Norwegian Ministry of Defence, *Capable Force: Strategic Concept for the Norwegian Armed Forces*. http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/FD/Dokumenter/Capable-force_strategic-concept.pdf. Accessed 22 March 2010, p. 4.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

demonstrate that it is able to protect vital national interests in the High North.¹⁰

The document goes on to list two such interests: protection of offshore oil and gas installations and freedom of navigation. As the former are of importance to other countries' energy markets, collective defence through NATO is seen as vital to Norway's overall security. Co-operation with Nordic neighbours (and NATO Partnership for Peace members) Sweden and, to a lesser extent, Finland is gaining traction, with all three countries contributing to the Nordic Battlegroup and enhancing regional air policing capacity.¹¹ But Norway shows no sign of joining the European Union, and does not consider her Nordic or EU partnerships - which involve no mutual defence guarantees - to be a substitute for NATO membership.¹² However, officials have suggested that tri-national collaboration in areas such as air and maritime surveillance may be deepened. It remains unclear, though, whether these activities may be carried out in the High North as opposed to just the Baltic Sea. Still, it raises the possibility of greater regional defence co-operation¹³ - a matter which will be discussed below.

In a recent speech to the Oslo Military Society, Defence Minister Grete Faremo boasted:

[W]e are developing a series of new military capabilities and upgrading others, not least those which are of particular importance in safeguarding our interests in the northern areas. There is thus a close linkage between the Government's Northern Area strategy and the development of the Armed Forces.¹⁴

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 40.

¹¹ On 22 January 2010 the three neighbours signed an agreement to hold more frequent air exercises and to allow fighter aircraft from each country to cross one another's airspace at short notice for training purposes.

¹² Peter Felstead, "Guardians of the North," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 14 January 2009, p. 24.

¹³ Margaret Blunden, "The New Problem of Arctic Stability," *Survival*, Vol. 51.5, October-November, 2009, 130. Blunden notes other trilateral initiatives including the Nordic Coordinated Arrangement for Peace Support, the Nordic Supportive Defence Structures, and Nordic Armaments Co-operation.

¹⁴ Grete Fraremo, "Capable and ready for action - Norway's Armed Forces 2010," Speech to Oslo Military Society, 4 January 2010. <http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/fd/whats-new/Speeches-and-articles/minister/speeches-and-articles-by-minister-of-def/2010/Capable-and-ready-for-action--Norways-armed-forces-2010.html?id=591655>. Accessed 5 February 2010.

Indeed, tangible progress has been made in transforming the Norwegian Armed Forces into a mission-ready organization capable of operating in a variety of theatres, including the north. The operational command headquarters has been re-located northward to Bodø. In March of 2009 Norway hosted 7,000 troops from 13 allied nations in Exercise COLD RESPONSE. The exercise, which involved simultaneous kinetic and non-kinetic operations, was repeated in February 2010 with 9,000 troops from 14 nations, the newcomer being non-NATO partner Sweden.¹⁵

Norway adheres to the Total Defence concept, which envisions “mutual civil-military support and coordination in the whole spectrum of crises, from peace time via crisis to armed conflict and war.”¹⁶ To enable this, Norway retains a policy of conscription, ensuring sufficient trained manpower for domestic operations. The chief beneficiary of this is the Home Guard, a 45,000-strong national guard-type organization with presence throughout the country and responsibility for joint operations with the regular armed forces. It is a tri-service body with six coastal patrol vessels (to be increased to 12) and will soon take delivery of light fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters for air surveillance. While Guardsmen may also deploy abroad alongside members of the regular forces, they are primarily employed in homeland defence and other constabulary operations, many of which (i.e. border protection and naval boarding parties) are highly relevant to northern security.

The second para-military body, the Coast Guard, is under the direction of the Royal Norwegian Navy (RNN). It assists the latter in patrolling the country’s 2.2 million km² of ocean real estate – the largest exclusive economic zone in Western Europe. It is responsible for search-and-rescue, environmental/fisheries patrol, and other constabulary duties. Coast Guard Squadron North operates vessels of various sizes, including three 3,200-tonne gun-armed *Nordkapp*-class patrol vessels which can be equipped with anti-ship missiles. Notable recent additions include the 6,500-tonne *Svalbard* ice-capable patrol ship,¹⁷ and a 3,100-tonne *Harstad* patrol ship, each of which

¹⁵ Barents Observer (online), “Large NATO exercises start in Northern Norway,” <http://www.barentsobserver.com/large-nato-exercise-starts-in-northern-norway.4749025.html>. Accessed 25 March 2010.

¹⁶ Norwegian Ministry of Defence, p. 71.

¹⁷ This vessel is expected to form the design of the provisional Arctic/Offshore Patrol Ship (AOPS) under consideration by the Government of Canada. See Canadian-American Strategic Review, “Background –

carry a light gun. All of these vessels are helicopter-capable and are of high endurance. Three more 3,200-tonne patrol vessels of the *Barentshav* class are expected to enter service by the end of 2010. When combined with various smaller, inshore patrol craft, the Coast Guard represents a powerful yet non-offensive policy tool able to demonstrate government presence and resolve in northern waters.¹⁸

The RNN has undergone significant transformation in recent years. It has shed the guise of a coastal force composed exclusively of light frigates and missile-armed fast patrol boats and embraced “blue water” status with the arrival of the *Fridtjof Nansen*-class general purpose frigates. Five of these impressive vessels will soon be in service. Equipped with a scaled-down version of the Aegis air defence system and new NH-90 naval helicopters, they will allow the navy to undertake higher-level operations well away from coastal waters.

According to the inspector-general of the RNN, one of the main challenges is monitoring increased Russian activity in northern waters – not in anticipation of delivering kinetic effects, but rather in the context of promoting maritime domain awareness.¹⁹ To aid in this, and to enhance the navy’s covert surveillance capabilities, it is modernizing its six *Ula*-class submarines with modern sonar and will retain their service until at least 2020.

Future plans call for the establishment of the Norwegian Task Group (NorTG), to be composed of a flexible combination of frigates, mine counter-measures vessels, fast attack craft, and a Joint Logistics and Support Ship (JLSS). Announced in July of 2009, the JLSS represents an entirely new capability for the RNN. Concerns that coastal states may extend their economic zones out to 300 nautical miles prompted naval planners to argue that the RNN (and Coast Guard) may eventually have to patrol an area triple the size of the current zone. The program envisions a vessel able to re-supply underway units for up to 30 days with fuel, ammunition, spare parts, as well as maintenance and medical services. A roll-on/roll-off capability will allow the JLSS to carry vehicle cargo

Armed Naval Icebreaker / Arctic Offshore Patrol Ship” <http://www.casr.ca/bg-icebreaker-aops.htm>. Accessed 17 March 2010.

¹⁸ One area in which non-offensive presence is maintained is the waters around the Svalbard islands, where Norway claims an economic zone over Russian objections. See Felstead, p. 30.

¹⁹ Felstead, pp. 29-30.

and off-load it using landing craft. The ability to carry members of the Naval Special Warfare Group will further enhance the ship's value in home and foreign waters.²⁰

The Royal Norwegian Air Force (RNoAF) is currently in the throes of selecting a fighter aircraft to replace its F-16s, with the yet-to-be built F-35 Joint Strike Fighter mooted as the favourite. Regardless of how the issue plays out, the new fighter will likely be based in the north at Bodø, the largest RNoAF base and the one from which 32 interceptions of Russian aircraft have taken place since 2000.²¹

Airborne intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) is currently provided by F-16s equipped with targeting pods, and six P-3 Orion maritime patrol aircraft. The latter are undergoing a modest upgrade program which will include new electro-optical gear that will enable the aircraft to stream video to higher headquarters in real time. Said the air force chief of staff, MGen Stein Erik Nodeland: "The P-3s are very important for what we do up in the northern areas."²²

Characteristic of the transformation of the Norwegian land forces is the termination of the old mobilization model whereby up to a dozen brigades were to be raised in the event of a national emergency. Now the structure rests on the 7,000-strong regular army (composed of 3,000 full-timers and 4,000 conscripts) backed up by the 45,000 light-infantry reservists of the Home Guard. The army is intended for maximum deployability at home or abroad, and with a high standard of training and equipment, should allow for rapid response to most contingencies in the country's north.

Despite the economic and budgetary malaise gripping the west, petroleum-rich Norway is clearly intent on building modern, well-balanced armed forces.²³ They will be required to address a variety of contingencies, and will therefore possess a range of "hard" (traditional) military and "semi-hard" (constabulary) capabilities. The monitoring of air and maritime spaces in the country's north is clearly a priority, and

²⁰ Tim Fish, "Multipurpose ships: logical solution for the small navy", *International Defence Review*, December 2009, pp. 16-17.

²¹ Felstead, p. 24.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 29.

²³ In contrast to many NATO members Norway's defence budget has been rising since 2005 and has generally kept pace with inflation. See Jane's Sentinel, <http://www.janes.com/articles/Janes-Sentinel-Security-Assessment-Western-Europe/Defence-budget-Norway.html> Accessed 18 June 2010.

Oslo's determination to assert control – though its own resources or through various security partnerships - should not be doubted.

Denmark

Currently chairing the Arctic Council, Denmark views the Arctic security landscape in relatively benign terms. Threats are considered to be largely non-military and no zero-sum “scramble” for territory or Arctic resources is anticipated. Policy priorities include sustainable economic development (through responsible maritime resource extraction and tourism); pollution prevention by encouraging safe shipping through Arctic waters; mitigation of the effects of climate change; the protection of indigenous peoples, and; search and rescue.²⁴

However, Copenhagen remains watchful for the evolution of the security environment along unfavourable lines. In its 2009 annual threat assessment, the Danish Defence Intelligence Agency stated: “there is a risk of minor clashes and diplomatic crises between the coastal states of the Arctic, because significant strategic and particularly energy policy interests collide.”²⁵

Current defence policy is reflected in the *Danish Defence Agreement 2010-2014* and reflects an all-party consensus on the objectives, structure and tasks of the armed forces.²⁶ The document notes the absence of traditional threats to the security of Denmark, and recommends continuation of the process of transformation from a mobilization-based military to one that is useable and deployable. Participation in NATO and United Nations operations are at the foundation of Denmark's proactive foreign policy, although national tasks – including sovereignty enforcement and

²⁴ Per Stig Moller, “Foreign Minister's Speech at the Arctic Council on April 29, 2009.”

<http://www.um.dk/en/menu/aboutus/theministerforforeignaffairs/speechesandarticles/udenrigsministere/nstaleiarktiskraadd29april2009>. Accessed 18 March 2010.

²⁵ The Copenhagen Post Online, “Arctic argument escalates,”

<http://www.cphpost.dk/news/international/89-international/46809-arctic-argument-escalates.html>. Accessed 24 March 2010.

²⁶ A total of seven political parties have signed off on the document, ensuring that policy fundamentals remain constant over time, command broad public support, and that changes in government will not significantly interrupt the process of defence re-structuring.

support to other government departments – demand the government’s full attention. The military’s role in the High North is encapsulated thus:

[T]he Arctic regions are expected to gain increasing international importance. The melting of the polar ice cap as a result of global warming will open new opportunities for the extraction of raw materials and the opening of new shipping routes. The rising activity will change the region's geostrategic dynamic and significance and will therefore in the long term present the Danish Armed Forces with several challenges.²⁷

One obvious challenge is the need to venture long distances to promote and protect air and maritime sovereignty in and around Greenland. Although the later enjoys home rule and has taken steps in the direction of independence, Denmark remains responsible for its defence. The increased salience of the Arctic has prompted an alteration to the Danish Armed Forces’ command and control arrangements, with Greenland Command and Faroe Command merging into a new Arctic Command. A joint Arctic Response Force will also be established; not a standing force, but rather one composed of units with capabilities relevant to domestic or international tasks in an Arctic environment.

It is noteworthy that the document calls for a period of reflection and analysis on how the rest of the armed forces should be tasked to promote Arctic security, and whether closer co-operation with other polar states in surveillance of the waters around Greenland is feasible. One possibility is to utilize the US Air Force base at Thule as an operational hub. In the meantime, options for using combat aircraft for surveillance, and increasing the use of patrol craft in Greenland waters is to be studied in the 2010-2014 period.²⁸

The armed forces retain conscription, with longer-term contracts offered to those wishing to serve on international missions. Those not wishing to are trained for domestic crisis response tasks. Like Norway, Denmark maintains a Home Guard for terrestrial and inshore operations. It also provides limited back-up to the regular force’s

²⁷ Danish Ministry of Defence, *Danish Defence Agreement 2010-2014*.

<http://www.fmn.dk/Nyt%20og%20Presse/Documents/20090716%20Samlede%20Forligstekst%202010-2014%20inkl%20bilag%20-%20english.pdf>. Accessed 24 March 2010, p. 12.

²⁸ The Copenhagen Post Online, “Arctic rivalry heating up,” <http://www.cphpost.dk/news/national/88-national/46275-arctic-rivalry-heating-up.html>. Accessed 5 March 2010.

international operations. It does not normally operate in an Arctic environment, although support to the navy's ice-breaking efforts is under consideration.

Northern operations – specifically those in and around Greenland and the Faroe Islands – are the preserve of the Royal Danish Navy and Royal Danish Air Force. The former comprises several classes of ice-strengthened patrol ships, each having standard gun armament, and the ability to support helicopter operations for sovereignty and fisheries patrol. These include the four 3,500-tonne *Thetis*-class vessels and two 1,700-tonne *Knud Rasmussen*-class vessels, which can also be fitted with containerized anti-air or anti-ship missiles. There is also a single Greenland-based patrol cutter which is likely to be replaced by a third *Knud Rasmussen* in order to monitor increased ship traffic around Greenland.

Like its Norwegian counterpart, the Royal Danish Navy is undergoing a period of significant transformation. It is acquiring larger, long-range, helicopter-capable combatants to replace smaller vessels. It has taken delivery of two 6,300-tonne *Absalon*-class frigates which boast significant above-water self-defence capabilities, a vehicle deck and medical facilities, plus the ability to carry and deploy personnel ashore via small landing craft. These will soon be joined by a trio of 6,600-tonne *Ivar Huitfeldt*-class air defence frigates with a full range of air/surface/sub-surface armaments and command and control facilities. Although this new “blue water” force posture is being formed mainly with international (i.e. NATO, UN) enforcement operations in mind, it gives the navy an unprecedented ability to deploy to assert authority in northern territorial waters if the situation requires.

The air force operates three Bombardier 604 multi-mission aircraft outfitted with surveillance gear for sovereignty and fisheries patrols around Greenland and the Faroe Islands. Although the aircraft are unarmed, this innovative use of simple, off-the-shelf technology represents a cost-effective way of conducting long-range surveillance and reconnaissance.²⁹ As noted above, they may ultimately be complemented by forward-deployed F-16s carrying reconnaissance pods.

Although there are no known plans to station significant ground units in Greenland, the Danish army continues its transformation toward an expeditionary force

²⁹ Canadian-American Strategic Review, “Canadian Aerospace – Background – Challenger 604 MMA,” <http://www.casr.ca/bg-aerospace-challenger-604-mma.htm>. Accessed 24 March 2010.

posture. “Quick” response to northern crises could be undertaken by small groups of special forces ferried in by air, such as the navy’s combat swimmers. The Home Guard’s Greenland-based ranger patrols would, however, be of limited value.³⁰ Like its Norwegian neighbour, Denmark seems to have concluded that flexible, long-range maritime forces backed up by appropriate air elements are the most useful tools for northern operations.

Iceland

Iceland is seized by the issue of Arctic security by virtue of its location within rich fishing grounds and along the trans-Atlantic shipping lanes. The possibility of trans-Arctic maritime trade routes opening up between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans gives further impetus to the country’s active membership in the Arctic Council where it promotes co-operation, the responsible use of the sea and the resources contained therein, as well as the primacy of international law in regulating activity in the High North.

Although a founding member of NATO and contributor to the Alliance’s overhead costs, Iceland has no defence ministry or armed forces. The United States withdrew its garrison from Keflavik air station in 2006, but remains treaty-bound to see to the island’s defence against conventional threats. Non-military security falls primarily to the Icelandic Coast Guard whose mission includes sovereignty protection, domestic and high seas fisheries patrol, search and rescue, and explosive ordnance disposal (EOD).³¹ Its primary units are two aging *Tyr*-class offshore patrol vessels displacing 1,200 tonnes and carrying a light gun. Both have a small flight deck to support helicopter operations. A much larger unit - similar in lay-out to the Norwegian Coast Guard’s *Harstad*-class patrol vessel - was expected to enter service in mid-2010, but sustained damage while in a Chilean dry dock as a result of the earthquake on 27 February 2010.

³⁰ Known as Sledgepatrol Sirius, these two-man teams are deployed on four-month patrols in northern Greenland and are highly self-sufficient. From 6-26 April 2010 a sledgepatrol took part in Operation NUNALIVUT 10 on the northern tip of Ellesmere Island alongside regular CF personnel and Canadian Rangers.

³¹ This capability is employed for the disposal of mines laid during the Second World War. But Icelandic EOD specialists have been deployed to Iraq and southern Lebanon.

The Coast Guard's Aeronautical Division operates three civilian-pattern helicopters (two of which are rented) with military-grade surveillance gear, as well as a single Bombardier Dash-8 patrol aircraft. Plans to purchase military-pattern helicopters are being considered.

Clearly, Iceland adheres to the "think globally, act locally" approach to northern security. It is politically active in the relevant international organizations and discussion forums, while focussing its modest para-military resources on its immediate territory.

Sweden

Sweden's *Foreign Policy Statement 2010* does not specifically mention the Arctic. Nevertheless, it takes a keen interest in the region by virtue of the link it draws between climate change and security, through its security partnerships with other Nordic states, and its membership in the Arctic Council.

Like Denmark, Swedish defence policy is spelled out in a four-year plan with several broad themes. The defence ministry's lead document, *A functional defence*, envisions a force that is more "useable" and "accessible," able to defend Sweden at short notice as well as undertake expeditionary "in collaboration with others [to] deal with challenges and threats before they reach our territory."³² Of particular interest is the government's assertion that "Sweden will not remain passive if another EU Member State or Nordic country suffers a disaster or an attack. We expect these countries to act in the same way if Sweden is similarly affected."³³ Thus despite a long history of non-alignment, and notwithstanding the lack of mutually binding security guarantees in the EU's Lisbon Treaty or among Nordic or Partnership for Peace states, Swedish defence has both a proactive and increasingly collaborative character. Entry into NATO is not considered likely in the short term, but defence co-operation with the Alliance is now undertaken openly. Along with ten Alliance members, Stockholm provides funding and personnel for three C-17 transport aircraft to support traditional military and crisis

³² Swedish Ministry of Defence, *A functional defence*, <http://www.sweden.gov.se/content/1/c6/13/77/05/1705333d.pdf> Accessed 24 March 2009.

³³ Ibid.

management operations. This reflects a degree of continuity, but also evolution of the country's security policy from its insular origins.³⁴

The armed forces are undergoing a period of transformation from a mobilization-based structure to one relying more on professional and contracted personnel. The defence effort has until recently been oriented to the homeland, and secondly to the Baltic area. But Stockholm's horizons are expanding. According to the current Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), one priority is achieving a shared operational picture with Denmark, Norway and Finland. Although this initiative was originally tailored to the Baltic Sea, it may ultimately be extended to the High North.³⁵

Sweden's armed forces are NATO-inter-operable, and pursue training and exercise opportunities under UN, EU or NATO command. Forces comprise a Home Guard and Coast Guard whose primary responsibilities lie in protecting domestic front, with backing from appropriate civil response bodies. The army will be re-structured along the lines of higher-readiness battle groups consisting of a small number of permanent, and a larger number of contracted personnel. "Usability" will mean that all units must be available and deployable; the distinction between domestic and foreign operations will no longer be drawn.

The navy and air force will be composed of permanent manpower. Having no frontage to the Norwegian or Barents Seas, Sweden has configured its maritime forces - mostly comprising fast attack craft and submarines - for operations in the Baltic alongside NATO and EU partners. Although it has lately deployed missile-armed corvettes to the Mediterranean Sea and the Gulf of Aden, there is no indication that deployments to Arctic waters are being contemplated. Nor are there any plans to acquire larger naval combatants such as those entering Norwegian or Danish service. However, Sweden's commitment to international crisis management should be seen as

³⁴ Interview with Dr. Robert Dalsjo, Swedish Ministry of Defence, 19 March, 2010. Dr. Dalsjo argued that Swedish neutrality maintained a secret passage to the West during the Cold War: "Sweden's military and political rulers during the early Cold War...realised that despite our desire to stay neutral in a war, we might still be attacked. Then we would need military help from the great powers of the West, and would need to cooperate with Norway and Denmark. So, Cabinet authorised the top military to prepare joint plans for wartime use with Norway and Denmark in a number of functional areas. The inner cabinet also gave a green light for military dialogues with the UK and the US, in which cooperation in wartime was discussed. But cooperation was mainly bilaterally with NATO countries; more seldom with NATO as such."

³⁵ Interview with General Sverker Goranson, *Defense News*, 2 November 2009, p. 58.

a pledge to at least consider making such deployments. Plans to acquire a 15,000-tonne combat support ship for underway replenishment and limited sealift of troops and vehicles should be seen in this context.³⁶

The air force continues to place emphasis on readiness, with plans to keep 100 advanced JAS-39 C/D Gripen fighters in service. One fighter wing is located in northern Sweden but many other facilities are located well south, again reflecting the focus on the Baltic as opposed to the north. But Sweden is the only Nordic country to maintain an airborne early warning capability, with six radar-equipped Saab 340 aircraft able to contribute to a regional air picture envisioned by the CDS. This would have useful applications for northern security.

Finland

Strictly non-aligned throughout the Cold War, Finland has recently enhanced its partnerships with its Nordic neighbours and international organizations. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs states that the country's security is based on good bilateral and international relations, a strong role in the EU, effective multilateralism and a "credible" defence. The expansion of NATO into the Baltic area is also considered a positive development.³⁷ In a document outlining Finland's expertise in Arctic matters, Foreign Minister Alexander Stubbs expects the High Arctic to be "more interesting in terms of foreign and security policy", not least because of receding ice and the resultant accessibility of natural resources and maritime transport routes. Although the country has no frontage to northern waters, one-third of its territory lies above the Arctic Circle. Accordingly, it intends to be "a versatile and influential actor in Arctic matters."³⁸

On the defence side, *Finnish Security and Defence Policy 2009* provides a comprehensive view of the international security landscape, and outlines the expected future challenges relating to Finland's military defence. It calls for a mixture of

³⁶ Fish, pp. 14-15.

³⁷ Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, *Finland's Foreign and Security Policy*, <http://formin.finland.fi/public/default.aspx?nodeid=32280&contentlan=2&culture=en-US> Accessed 17 June 2010.

³⁸ Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, *Arctic Expertise in Finland*, <http://formin.finland.fi/public/download.aspx?ID=55636&GUID={745C0C44-2B7D-4895-B472-64D141A323E4}> Accessed 17 June 2010.

territorial defence overseas crisis response, as well as a comprehensive approach to conflict management, but notes that the ageing population is likely to put downward pressure on the size of the recruiting base by the middle of the decade.³⁹

Co-operation with NATO is deemed central to Finland's defence. The armed forces are committed to developing capabilities that meet NATO standards, and, along with membership in the Partnership for Peace, the Alliance's adoption of the Comprehensive Approach is viewed as another avenue for Finnish-NATO co-operation.⁴⁰ Like Sweden, Finland is a participant in a strategic airlift program which pools funding for large transport aircraft. As yet this capability has not been employed in the country's north, although it could very well be called upon to do so.

It is clear, however, that the EU occupies pride of place in international defence and security planning. The document speaks approvingly of the Union's efforts to fight terrorism and organized crime and promote greater defence industrial cooperation. It pledges to align force development with EU efforts to assume greater responsibility for crisis management operations, and anticipates Finland participating in rapid-response civil-military deployments.⁴¹ In a reference to how the country's Arctic policy is implemented, it is the EU rather than NATO that is mentioned by name.⁴² This suggests that Helsinki wishes to strike a judicious balance between "hard" and "soft" security.

A particularly intriguing statement is that the country's highly-prized membership in the EU may require Finland to concern itself with matters that may have heretofore been considered tangential to its security.⁴³ Thus, the inclusion of the Arctic on the EU's list of security priorities (see below) compels Finland to take note of developments in the region. Although the Baltic area is still a major area of interest, stability in the north is considered essential for commercial and economic reasons.⁴⁴

The policy notes that in spite of the considerable military forces deployed on the Russian side of the shared border, Russia's northwestern approaches are more secure

³⁹ Prime Minister's Office, *Finnish Security and Defence Policy 2009*, <http://www.vnk.fi/julkaisukansio/2009/j11-turvallisuus-j12-sakerhets-j13-finnish/pdf/en.pdf> Accessed 29 March 2010.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 65-66.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 74.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

than anywhere else in the Federation. But in yet another reference to Russia's uncertain political development and its short war against Georgia, the document states that "the possibility of change in the security situation of our neighbouring areas cannot be excluded, nor can the possibility of armed aggression or the threat thereof."⁴⁵ Accordingly, while non-alignment is a fact of national life, Finland must, like its Swedish neighbour, be prepared to render and receive international military assistance. Consequently, active participation in multilateral forums such as the EU and NATO (through the PFP) are considered vital to the country's security. Eventual membership in the Atlantic Alliance is not ruled out.⁴⁶

Despite (or rather, because of) the shrinking population of draft-age males, conscription will remain in force. The high educational standards of those doing compulsory service in the Finnish Defence Forces is considered to be an asset, allowing more advanced skills training without the need to undertake a major expansion of the regular forces. The re-capitalization of key equipment sets will emphasize quality over quantity. Much of the current inventory is a mixture of Western and Soviet/Russian designs, although the most recent purchases (i.e. tanks, transport helicopters, fighter aircraft, and naval vessels) have been NATO-compatible.

A phased upgrade to the defence forces will see ground-based air defence prioritized until 2014, to be followed by upgrades to reserve ground units and then (post 2016) regular ground units. Although these units are well-schooled in winter warfare (the army's Lapland-based Jaeger Brigade is responsible for developing and evaluating tactics and weapons used in harsh northern conditions) there is no indication that the government is contemplating deploying them on Arctic operations outside of Finnish territory except in the event of a threat to an EU neighbour's territory.⁴⁷ The navy consists of several fast attack craft, mine warfare vessels and coastal defence units which are, naturally, configured for operations in the Baltic Sea. As with Sweden, there are no plans to acquire any expeditionary naval combatants.

The Finnish Air Force is emerging from a long period whereby non-alignment obliged it to restrict its capabilities for fear of provoking Soviet counter-measures. The

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 66.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 81.

⁴⁷ It is unclear whether this would include a crisis in Greenland or the Svalbard islands, for which Denmark and Norway, respectively, might request assistance.

F/A-18 C/D fleet is being upgraded with improved air-to-air and, for the first time, significant air-to-ground capabilities. One squadron is located in Lapland in the country's north. The fighter fleet has exercised with tanker aircraft from partner countries, demonstrating both inter-operability and a modest expeditionary capability.

NATO in the Arctic

As the Atlantic Alliance strives to define a new strategic concept, one of the more contentious issues is the balance to be struck between the defence of NATO territory and expeditionary or "out-of-area" operations.⁴⁸ The debate over whether, or to what degree, the Alliance should concern itself with Arctic security mirrors the conflicting visions for the "home" and "away" games, albeit on a much smaller scale. There is currently no institutional NATO position on Arctic security, although some members of the Euro-Atlantic community have made their views known. The sum total of these viewpoints is a mixture of laissez-faire and engagement.

The Alliance took up the matter of security in the High North in January 2009 at meeting in Reykjavik. Then-Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer noted three issues – search-and-rescue/disaster management, energy security, and territorial claims – in which NATO might be useful, if only as a forum for discussion and co-operation between members. Although he was quick to add that the Alliance should not usurp the Arctic Council as the lead agency in any multilateral discussions, he suggested that the NATO-Russia Council could add value by bringing Moscow's concerns and priorities for the region to the table, thereby encouraging trust and transparency.⁴⁹

The speech seemed to encourage a relatively passive stance – one in which the Alliance was encouraged to take an intellectual interest in the region, concerning itself with monitoring developments and welcoming input from the EU as part of a comprehensive approach. But interestingly, de Hoop Scheffer admonished the allies to

⁴⁸ See Timo Noetzel and Benjamin Schreer, "Does a Multi-Tier NATO Matter? The Atlantic Alliance and the Process of Strategic Change," *International Affairs*, March 2009, pp. 211-226.

⁴⁹ Speech by NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer on security prospects in the High North, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/SID-AAC0DD5A-A0BB70B5/natolive/opinions_50077.htm, Accessed 12 July 2009.

not become overly focussed on a region which just happened to be in the news, as excessive regionalization could undermine Alliance cohesion.

This laissez-faire approach is shared by Denmark which sees a restricted role for NATO while welcoming the considerable heft of the EU in finding solutions to the challenges posed by climate change.⁵⁰ Finland and Sweden are relatively mute on the subject of an active NATO role. However, since both consider the Alliance to be an essential security actor in the Euro-Atlantic area, it may be surmised that a limited role in, say, surveillance, intelligence sharing or search-and-rescue would not be frowned upon.

Among the European Nordic states, Norway has been the most vocal in its support for a more active NATO in the High North, going as far as to suggest that the Alliance was in danger of neglecting its primary duty of territorial self-defence. Espen Barth Eide, State Secretary in the Ministry of Defence, addressed the dichotomy between territorial defence and complex expeditionary operations thus:

Our mild and friendly critique of NATO is that we have a tendency to extrapolate from today's problems and project it into the future...[so] that you would get the impression that Afghanistan is the only problem in NATO or the next problem will look like Afghanistan again, which is not necessarily true... We have in a sense over-focussed and over-adapted to a scenario in which our armed forces will only meet enemies that are asymmetric... We don't need to re-invent the Cold War, but we may again see a potential conflict or at least the need to deter a conflict with other states...⁵¹

This call for a re-emphasis on collective defence should not necessarily be viewed as alarmist, as Norwegian policy calls for constructive relations with Russia. Rather, the suggestion that NATO should show a visible presence in the High North attests to Oslo's faith in the Alliance as a stabilizing influence in an area where there is lingering strategic uncertainty and a clear asymmetry in military capabilities. The mention of the Georgian conflict in Norway's policy statements is instructive, as it implies that conflict in one region may lead to escalating tensions and ultimately confrontation elsewhere, including the Arctic, either deliberately or through miscalculation. As Norway is of

⁵⁰ Interview with Danish Embassy official, Ottawa, 8 March 2010.

⁵¹ Felstead, p. 23.

modest military means, it is natural that it would seek to compensate by encouraging a visible collective defence posture in the region.

Air exercises in Norway and Iceland and the maintenance of fighter aircraft for quick reaction/interception are a reminder that deterrence is still a going concern. Thus despite a commitment to engage constructively with Russia, Oslo looks willing to involve the Alliance in the north even as it engages with its larger neighbour on the delineation of their common maritime border. According to one observer, this could create unwanted tension, as "Russia may be expected to respond negatively to almost any aspect of an increased Alliance presence in the region."⁵² Indeed, Moscow has made clear that it would prefer to deal with fellow Arctic states bilaterally whenever possible.

Still, what a NATO presence in the Arctic might mean in concrete terms is less sinister than the Alliance's detractors might imagine. Allied military exercises on land or sea can be tailored so as not to alarm Moscow, and may even include Russian forces. Non-kinetic operations may also bring Alliance capabilities into play in a constructive manner. Barth Eide observed that "the international level of presence and surveillance and search-and-rescue capacity and so on is close to zero [in the north]... so we are engaging with NATO with some success...on this subject."⁵³

The possibility that a NATO member might try to internationalize a bilateral dispute is nothing new, as Greece has often appealed to broader international opinion in its row with Turkey over Cyprus. For years this dispute on NATO's southern flank was managed in the interest of allied solidarity in the face of the Soviet menace. In order to not re-create tensions on the northern flank, strenuous efforts at military and political confidence building will have to be made, in addition to contingency planning to control any escalation of tensions. But as long as NATO remains a central figure in the security policies of allied (and Nordic Pfp) states, it would be unreasonable to expect that the Alliance would not assume at least a peripheral role in the region.

Downward pressure on allied defence budgets may give this added impetus. Although it is unlikely that greater attempts at burden-sharing will see Italian search-and-rescue aircraft operating from Bodø, the allies may be compelled to further pool

⁵² Sven Holstmark, "Toward cooperation or confrontation? Security in the High North," NATO Defence College Research Paper No. 45, February 2009, p. 10.

⁵³ Ibid.

their resources to provide key capabilities (i.e. ISR) for use on the fringes of allied territory – including the north. Two relatively new projects - the NATO Response Force (NRF) and the soon-to-be inaugurated Alliance Ground Surveillance (AGS) system – may point the way forward.

The NRF was originally conceived as a 25,000-strong joint, multinational force for a variety of operations, including those at the higher end of the conflict spectrum. Due to the inability of allies to agree on the force's mandate and a funding formula to support its deployments, it was subsequently re-structured for less onerous crisis management tasks. Still, it is interesting that Norway (along with many of the new members on the Alliance's eastern borders) has insisted that the NRF be augmented to handle collective defence missions so as to demonstrate allied cohesion and resolve.⁵⁴

Scheduled for delivery in 2011, AGS comprises four Northrop-Grumman RQ-4B Global Hawk unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) equipped with radar for ground sensing. The UAVs and their main ground station are to be based in Italy, but mobile ground stations are also part of the package. One can easily imagine them being deployed further north to promote domain awareness along coastlines or in territorial seas.⁵⁵

While neither individual NATO members nor the Alliance as a whole contemplate the re-militarization of the High North, it seems clear that each will devote some thought to the particular security characteristics of the region and put up resources to deal with them. There is an equally strong consensus that these issues should be handled cooperatively and transparently. Absent a direct attack on the territory of a Nordic state, the Alliance will likely keep a low profile, acting only alongside or at the behest of other institutions. This should have the dual effect of

⁵⁴ Jens Ringsmose, "Taking Stock of NATO's Response Force," NATO Defence College Research Paper No. 54, January 2010, p. 6. Ringsmose notes that disagreement over the purpose of the NRF reflects a larger dispute over NATO's purpose, with 'Article 5ers' calling for a return to territorial defence, in contrast with 'globalizers' who wish to see the Alliance (and the NRF) take on expeditionary operations outside the Euro-Atlantic area.

⁵⁵ On 22 June 2010 Denmark announced that it was withdrawing its 380-million kroner financial contribution to the AGS project due to budget cuts. <http://www.defense-aerospace.com/article-view/release/115870/denmark-withdraws-from-nato%E2%80%99s-ags-program.html> Accessed 24 June 2010.

restraining its activities and ensuring that relations with a prickly Russia remain on an even keel.

The EU in the Arctic

Although only three EU members out of a total of 27 are contiguous to the Arctic, the assertion by the Union of a role in Arctic affairs can be explained by what Alyson Bailes called a “multi-institutional” approach to Arctic security. This envisions “making use of the frameworks and competencies of a number of different organizations in a complimentary manner.”⁵⁶ While the EU recognizes the primacy of the Arctic Council in matters relating to circumpolar affairs, it is not hesitant in expressing the desirability having non-Nordic states contribute to policy development, not least because the principal issue – climate change – has a global impact. In addition, several non-Nordic EU members are interested in the opening of shipping lanes and in the protection and development northern fishing grounds. Accordingly, the Union is supportive of member-states seeking permanent observer status on the Arctic Council, and has been eager to secure such a place for itself.

The EU’s realm of policy activity is broad indeed, spanning economic, social, cultural, and, increasingly, security matters – all of which are, to a greater or lesser degree, relevant to the future of the Arctic. The Union’s three main policy objectives in the High North are articulated in the European Commission’s November 2008 communiqué: the protection/preservation of the Arctic in co-operation with its populations; the sustainable use of natural resources, and; the enhancement and development of Arctic governance.⁵⁷

From this there is little to indicate that the Union envisions a defence role for itself in region; its role is that of a purveyor of “soft” security. Indeed, the European Security Strategy does not mention the Arctic, although it does make reference to the need for better maritime surveillance, the dangers posed by climate change, and the

⁵⁶ Alyson Bailes, “Options for closer cooperation in the High North – what is needed”, in Sven Holtmark and Brooke Smith-Windsor, *Security Prospects in the High North: geostrategic thaw or freeze?* NATO Defense College Forum Paper 7, May 2009, p. 32.

⁵⁷ European Commission, “The European Union and the Arctic Region,” COM (2008) 763 final, Brussels, 20 November 2008.

need for multilateral and comprehensive solutions to this and other challenges.⁵⁸ But the passage of the Lisbon Treaty has breathed new life into the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), which is intended to foster wider and deeper strategic collaboration between members. Nevertheless, national defence remains the preserve of individual states, some of which remain sceptical of any effort to supplant NATO as the continent's ultimate security guarantor. In addition, the budgetary woes affecting almost all European members of NATO will almost surely restrict individual or collective efforts to enhance the EU's defence capabilities beyond the small-scale initiatives already underway.⁵⁹ Even if this were not the case, it has been suggested that Europe's strength lies in its mastery of "soft" power and the provision of civilian crisis management capabilities, and that it should concentrate its efforts there.⁶⁰

Nevertheless, several recent developments may have a salutary effect on Europe's ability and willingness to assume a harder security role in the polar regions. The Lisbon Treaty provides for "permanent structured co-operation", whereby constellations of EU members may forge ahead with defence co-operation without the benefit of a NATO-like consensus. Although it is early days, this opens the door to Nordic and non-Nordic EU members co-ordinating military activities in the High North under the EU banner.⁶¹ The establishment of a proper military headquarters in Brussels for the planning and conduct of operations could facilitate this. Capability development may also benefit from the efforts of the European Defence Agency (EDA) to align national defence industrial policies so that scarce financial resources are not wasted on duplication or the acquisition of unneeded hardware.

⁵⁸ European Union, *Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy*, Brussels, 11 December 2008, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/reports/104630.pdf Accessed 30 March 2010.

⁵⁹ One of the EU's major military accomplishments is the establishment of EU battle groups for crisis management, comprising several national contingents into small force packages. They are meant for operations on the lower end of the conflict spectrum, illustrating the modest ambitions of European defence planners.

⁶⁰ Alvaro de Vasconcelos, "The day after Ireland said 'Yes'," in A. de Vasconcelos, ed., *What ambitions for European defence in 2020?* (2nd edition), European Union Institute for Security Studies, October 2009, 18.

⁶¹ A useful example of the EU's new-found determination and capacity to promote maritime security is Operation ATALANTA, the deployment of naval vessels to the Indian Ocean to monitor maritime traffic and combat piracy. A flotilla of naval and/or coast guard vessels in northern waters is therefore not beyond the realm of possibility.

Like NATO, the EU is undergoing a process of transformation. Although efforts by both organizations to forge closer ties continue to be hampered by Turkey's heretofore unsuccessful attempt to gain EU membership, each appreciates the complexity of the international system and the need for a multi-dimensional approach to security. Both recognize the emergence of the Arctic as a region of interest, albeit one where the polar states are the main actors. The EU lags behind NATO in envisioning a military role for itself in the region, not least because it remains the policy of the Nordic states to look to NATO for protection, and because the Union's military ambitions – as articulated in the ESDP – remain comparatively modest. But should the Nordics perceive a clear and present danger in the High North – one that would compel them to pool their military and non-military resources with those of partners who also happened to be observers on the Arctic Council – Europe's ability to undertake operations in the region will receive a significant boost.

Whither Nordic Defence Co-operation?

Such a boost may come through greater regional collaboration. In February of 2009 former Norwegian Foreign Minister Thorvald Stoltenberg tabled a report outlining how Denmark, Sweden, Finland, and Iceland might further align their efforts to promote security in the Arctic. *Nordic Cooperation on Foreign and Security Policy* – also known as the Stoltenberg Report – is a forward-looking document that takes account of current progress on regional civil and military co-operation while proposing ways of enhancing both.⁶²

Stoltenberg recounted that his discussions with government officials revealed a desire to strengthen co-operation based on a range of common interests in the north. While some of this would focus on the Baltic Sea, the Arctic was repeatedly mentioned as an area where stronger defence and security links should be explored. The membership of each of the four neighbours in NATO and/or the EU would not be prejudiced by deeper and broader defence ties. Indeed, since the two organizations have been observed to be taking a greater interest in the region, Nordic co-operation seemed to make perfect sense.

⁶² Thorvald Stoltenberg, *Nordic Cooperation on Foreign and Security Policy*, http://www.mfa.is/media/Frettatilkygning/Nordic_report.pdf Accessed 17 June 2010.

The proposals include the co-ordination of national programs (i.e. for maritime surveillance) and the pooling of resources to acquire key capabilities (i.e. observation/communication satellites, multi-purpose icebreakers) that the partners might not be able to afford on their own. Initial progress on several fronts was noted, such as the provision of air patrols over Iceland through rotations of Danish and Norwegian personnel and aircraft to replace departed US forces. Future rotations could be supported by all four partners.

Many of the proposals are designed to be flexible, or tailored to politico-geographic realities. Maritime surveillance efforts in the North Atlantic and Arctic Oceans as well as the Barents Sea would involve states with frontages to those bodies of water. In keeping with widely-held view that security threats were primarily non-military, an integrated civilian system for the monitoring of maritime traffic in environmentally-sensitive northern waters was suggested.

Two of the more interesting objectives involve, first, the further development of a Nordic stabilization task force which would bring civilian and military capabilities to bear in UN-approved operations. The report suggests the notional force could employ resources currently dedicated to the EU Battlegroups or the NATO Response Force (NRF), and in turn contribute to their operations.⁶³ To be sure, this is envisioned for deployments to fragile states as opposed to the Arctic.⁶⁴ But it is noteworthy that consideration is being given to incorporating outside organizations into the Nordics' planning process and capability mix. The overlapping membership of the partners in the two security bodies is not seen as an obstacle.

Secondly, the report envisioned a point at which the Nordics formally commit themselves to guaranteeing the security of their neighbours in the event of "external attack or undue pressure." Stoltenberg touted this as a way of bringing defence planning and even procurement into closer alignment, ensuring that the collective effort exceeded that of the individual states together.⁶⁵ Such an arrangement would be familiar to NATO members. A mutual security clause and the acquisition of common

⁶³ Ibid., p. 8.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 28. For Arctic operations, the report speculated that a Nordic amphibious unit could be fashioned from current units for international operations, but that it could eventually acquire "Arctic expertise."

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 34.

capabilities clearly mirror the means through which the Atlantic Alliance promotes security within its area of interest.

However, it was left conspicuously unclear how a binding defence clause would be reconciled with the extant policies of Sweden and Finland, which remain officially neutralist in times of war. Nor does the report offer any insights as to how NATO resources would be accessed by a grouping whose members are not fully committed to the Alliance. Beyond strategic airlift, there are no other significant capability areas to which Sweden and Finland contribute. It is therefore unclear why the rest of NATO would view a request for additional resources as anything less than preferential treatment and inconsistent with the letter (if not the spirit) of the Partnership for Peace, which does not confer the benefits of full membership.

Conclusion

At the strategic political level, all European Nordic countries and Euro-Atlantic security organizations have demonstrated an interest in the Arctic. All agree that security risks are markedly different from those that prevailed during the Cold War, and each has called for responsible economic and political behaviour by interested parties. At the defence policy level, capability development seems to be in proportion to direct exposure to the Arctic seas, with Norway and Denmark devoting substantial resources to control their sizeable maritime areas of responsibility and the airspace above it. The role of para-military or constabulary forces in northern operations is also key; all four Nordics embrace the notion of Arctic defence as a cross-governmental endeavour. The partners are mindful of the importance of international/expeditionary operations to a greater or lesser degree, and each considers itself bound by at least a *de facto* mutual security obligation.

Looking ahead, the strategic direction of NATO and the EU (as well as Russia) will undoubtedly influence, and be influenced by, the pre-occupation of Nordic states with the political, economic and environmental dynamics of the north. These institutions will allow states to multiply their “hard”, “semi-hard” and “soft” power and provide much-needed forums for the consideration and resolution of potentially divisive issues. The Stoltenberg Report suggests that a spirit of cooperation among the polar states prevails and that the burdens of promoting security in the region can be

shared – and in a matter not unlike NATO. This enhances the prospect that foreign and security policy in this remote yet increasingly important region will not be characterized by the costly zero-sum approach that once divided the globe.