

*Mike Winnerstig\**

*Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI)\*\**

# Security Policy at Road's End? The Roles of Sweden and Finland in the Nordic-Baltic Defence Cooperation Process

The article addresses a number of questions related to Nordic and to an extent also Nordic-Baltic defence cooperation. First of all, how far has Nordic and Nordic-Baltic defence cooperation come today? Secondly, what are the differences in the approaches of Sweden and Finland when it comes to defence cooperation, especially regarding NATO, in the Nordic-Baltic area? As a first analytical result, it is apparent that the rhetorical standing of the Nordic and Nordic-Baltic defence cooperation process is greater than its real achievements, especially in terms of defence integration. Secondly, it seems also to be clear that the defence and security policy debates of Sweden and Finland are quite different. Some problems identified in the debates within the two countries, respectively, are very similar although the suggested solutions vary very remarkably. Regarding the key issue of NATO membership, the developments of the last few years suggest that the Swedish political establishment, as well as the general public, might be closer to a substantial discussion of NATO membership than their Finnish equivalents.

## Introduction

Nordic, sometimes Nordic-Baltic, defence cooperation is the premier buzzword of both the Swedish and Finnish security policy debate today. It denotes ideas of economic savings and security and/or defence integration, though many of the strategic consequences of the latter are never spelled out.

Therefore, it seems to be fair to ask a number of questions regarding all these concepts. In the first place, how far has Nordic and Nordic-Baltic defence cooperation come today? To be able to answer this, we need to look closely at what kinds of defence cooperation among the Nordic-Baltic countries that

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\* *Dr. Mike Winnerstig* is a member of the Royal Swedish Academy of the War Sciences and currently serves as a deputy director of research at the Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI). Address for correspondence: Swedish Defence Research Agency, SE-16490 Stockholm, Sweden; phone +46-8-555-030-00; e-mail: [mike.winnerstig@foi.se](mailto:mike.winnerstig@foi.se)

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exist today. How strong is, for example, Nordic-Baltic defence cooperation as compared to Nordic-only cooperation?

Secondly, Sweden and Finland are the odd men out in the Nordic-Baltic context, as they are EU but not NATO members. All the other states involved are members of both organizations (with the exception of Norway and the militarily insignificant Iceland, which are not members of the EU). But are there differences in the approaches of these two countries when it comes to defence cooperation, especially regarding NATO?,

These questions are the primary issues of the following text, which is based on several earlier analyses of the same topics.

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Secondly, it seems also to be clear that the defence and security policy debates of Sweden and Finland are quite different. Some problems identified in the debates within the two countries, respectively, are very similar although the suggested solutions vary very remarkably. Regarding the key issue of NATO membership, the developments of the last few years suggest that the Swedish political establishment, as well as the general public, is closer to a substantial discussion of NATO membership than their Finnish equivalents.

## 1. Sweden, Finland and the Cold War legacy

During the Cold War, it was perfectly possible for both Sweden and Finland to argue officially – not least by references to the so-called policy of neutrality - that the interactions or conflicts of other countries in the Baltic Sea area did not affect them. The stated goal of Swedish security policy for most of the Cold War was explicitly to keep Sweden out of any conflicts in its own neighborhood. Accordingly, it could be argued that the Baltic Sea area during the Cold War was little more than a general extension of the geopolitics of the Cold War itself, with Sweden and Finland acting as buffer zones between the two military blocs in Europe.

Today, some 20 years after the end of the Cold War, the situation has changed fundamentally. Interactions in the Baltic Sea area abound; economic and political linkages develop at high speed; business relationships that were completely impossible, even unthinkable during the Cold War – such as the extraordinarily big role that Swedish banks currently play in all the three Baltic economies – all have transformed the situation. The area of defence

is, admittedly, much less developed than the economic sphere, but with the integration of the Baltic states into NATO in 2004, more than half of Scandinavia is now also militarily allied with their Baltic neighbors. Military issues, however, are also those – though not only those – that have generated considerable friction between Russia on the one side and the NATO allies of the area on the other during the last few years. The NATO plans for missile defence installations in Poland and the quite undiplomatic Russian military exercises Zapad exercises in 2009 and 2013 are issues that have led to a considerable amount of verbal tension, at the very least.<sup>1</sup>

This has also led to a substantial discussion of the role of Russia in the Baltic Sea region. In particular, some recent Russian military exercises – including several mock air attacks on Sweden – have received a lot of attention in the Swedish debate.<sup>2</sup> As Swedish public opinion is one of the absolutely most Russia-skeptic ones in the entire European Union, resurrections of Cold War sentiments have been quite common recently. In the latest *Transatlantic Trends* opinion poll, conducted by the German Marshall Fund, a full 76% of the Swedish population viewed Russia unfavorably, by far the highest figure among the 13 countries surveyed.<sup>3</sup> Similar figures related to Finland were not available in the poll, though there is a wide-spread impression that the Finnish view of Russia is less negative, although it is complicated by an increased economic integration process and the increasing importance of Russian immigrants in Finnish society.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> On the missile defence issue, see for example Anders Lennartsson & Fredrik Lindvall (2011): *USAs bidrag till NATO:s missilförsvar [The US Contribution to the NATO Missile Defence System]*, FOI-R--3226—SE (Stockholm: FOI Defence Analysis]. On the Russian exercises, see e.g. Roger McDermott (2009), *Zapad 2009 Rehearses Countering a NATO Attack on Belarus*, Jamestown Foundation, [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=35558](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=35558).

<sup>2</sup> See for example Mikael Holmström (2013): "Ryskt flyg övade anfall mot Sverige" [Russian air forces exercised attacking Sweden], *Svenska Dagbladet*, April 22 ([http://www.svd.se/nyheter/inrikes/ryskt-flyg-ovade-anfall-mot-sverige\\_8108894.svd](http://www.svd.se/nyheter/inrikes/ryskt-flyg-ovade-anfall-mot-sverige_8108894.svd)) and Olle Lönnaeus (2013), "Het militärhöst runt Östersjön" ["Hot military autumn around the Baltic Sea"], *Sydsvenska Dagbladet*, September Nov. 9, <http://www.sydsvenskan.se/sverige/het-militarhost-runt-ostersjon/>.

<sup>3</sup> See German Marshall Fund of the United States (2013): Country Profile: Sweden, (<http://trends.gmfus.org/transatlantic-trends/country-profiles-2/sweden/>).

<sup>4</sup> Richard Milne (2013): "Finns eye growing Russian presence with apprehension", *Financial Times*, Oct. 31, <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/1934c268-407b-11e3-ae19-00144feabdc0.html#axzz2jUxxlUqX>.

## 2. Nordic-Baltic Defence Cooperation and the NB8 Concept<sup>5\*</sup>

However, despite the different legacies of the Cold War, the concept of Nordic, and/or Nordic-Baltic, defence cooperation is a popular theme both in Finland, Sweden and the Baltic states.

Nordic cooperation has been a very revered concept in the Nordic countries for a long time – the Nordic Council, for example, hails from 1952. Its application in the defence field is much younger, though, as the Nordic Council was not allowed to deal with defence and security issues from its very beginning.

The Nordic-Baltic Eight (NB8) is a relatively old concept. Already in the 1990s, after the process of Baltic independence, the eight countries began meeting with each other at different levels, but for many years the activities were primarily organized by their foreign ministries and the issues dealt with did not directly include defence issues.

Today, a certain paradox is apparent when it comes to the Nordic countries and their current security and defence policies; although these five countries are often regarded as very similar, in terms of politics as well as concerning cultural and societal issues, none of them conducts a security policy identical to any other Nordic country. Iceland is a member of NATO but not of the EU, and has no defence forces of its own. Norway shares the same membership situation but does have a substantial defence force, closely linked to the US and the UK especially in its naval aspects. Denmark is a member of both NATO and the EU, but entertains an opt-out both when it comes to the EU's fledgling defence dimension and the euro. Sweden is a member of the EU – and highly active in the EU's defence activities – but has rejected adopting the euro, and is not a member of NATO. Finland is a member of the EU and has adopted the euro, making the country in principle more EU-integrated than Sweden, but is likewise not a NATO member.

In contrast to this Nordic heterogeneity in defence integration, the Baltic states are strikingly homogeneous: all of them are members of both NATO and the EU, and although Estonia and Latvia are the only ones that have adopted the euro, Lithuania strives toward this as well. It is therefore fair

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<sup>5\*</sup> This section relies heavily on Mike Winnerstig (2012): Defence Integration in the Baltic Sea Security Complex— A Conceptual Approach, in Kurt Volker and Ieva Kupce (eds.): *Nordic-Baltic-American Cooperation: Shaping the US-European Agenda*, (Washington, DC: SAIS/JHU – Center for Transatlantic Relations).

to say that all the Baltic countries are actually already more integrated in the general Euro-Atlantic security framework than any of their Nordic neighbors. It is important to keep these relationships in mind when considering the future of NB8 defence integration.

### 3. The Development of NB8 Defence Cooperation

As noted above, the Baltic states are - at least after 2004 - in principle the most integrated in the major international security-related organizations, such as NATO and the EU. However, given their size, and the fact that issues of territorial defence were highly unpopular within NATO before the Russo-Georgian war of 2008, the practical implications of this might have been less than the Baltic states had hoped for - at least until 2010. During this year, according to press reports, official statements and the Wikileaks revelations, fully-fledged plans for the territorial defence of the Baltic states were adopted by NATO.<sup>6</sup> Although there are some question marks about the practical implications of these plans given the cutbacks of military troops in NATO Europe, their existence implies that the Baltic states are clearly integrated militarily with their Nordic allies in the NATO framework.

However, on the Nordic side - the heterogeneous part of the NB8 - several attempts have been made in order to increase cooperation in the defence field. The so-called Stoltenberg report, published in 2009 and written by the former Norwegian minister of foreign affairs, Thorvald Stoltenberg, presented a number of concrete proposals on how to increase both foreign and security policy cooperation among the Nordic states - including a kind of mutual defence guarantee between the five states.<sup>7</sup> Partly because of the latter proposal, the Stoltenberg report never made it that far in the public discourse of the countries involved.

During the same year, however, several other important events started to frame the whole issue of defence in the Nordic states. The EU's Lisbon Treaty was adopted, and with it so were two kinds of mutual assistance clauses; in the first place a solidarity clause relating to mutual assistance in the event

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<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Bo Ljung, Tomas Malmlöf, Karlis Neretnieks & Mike Winnerstig (2012): *The Security and Defensibility of the Baltic States - a Comprehensive Analysis* (Stockholm: FOI Defence Analysis), esp. chapters 3 and 4.

<sup>7</sup> See Thorvald Stoltenberg (2009): *Nordic Cooperation On Foreign and Security Policy: Proposals presented to the extraordinary meeting of Nordic foreign ministers in Oslo on 9 February 2009*, <http://www.regeringen.se/content/1/c6/12/01/83/94662dc3.pdf>.

of a terrorist attack, a natural disaster or the like in a member state (art. 2.2.2), second was a traditional defence assistance clause of the NATO art. 5 variety (art. 42.7). It was established in the treaty that for the EU members which are also NATO members, NATO arrangements in terms of defence are those which will be followed by these members. Because of this, the notion of the EU as a military alliance fell short pretty quickly. It initiated, however, a discussion on defence and solidarity in both Sweden and Finland.

Partly as a result of this outcome, the Swedish Parliament adopted a major defence bill in the summer of 2009. In this bill, two major changes of Swedish security policy were introduced. Firstly, the government stated – in fundamental contrast to the Swedish security policy doctrine’s main tenets since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century – that Sweden will not remain passive if a disaster or an attack should afflict another EU member state or Nordic country, and that Sweden also expects these countries to act in the same manner if Sweden is affected. Secondly, in order to operationalize this, the government tasked the Swedish armed forces to be able both to give and to receive military assistance.<sup>8</sup> Both these issues – being affected by attacks on other states and being able to help them militarily as well as receiving help from them in the event of an attack on Sweden – had been, with minor exceptions, anathema for Swedish security policy decision-makers since 1812. A peculiarity of this new doctrine – labeled the “solidarity declaration” in Sweden – is its unilateral character; in announcing it, Sweden did not ask for any reciprocity but instead seemed to rely on “expectations”, i.e. that other countries would come to Sweden’s assistance without any prior official endorsement of this doctrine – and vice versa. The new doctrine led to a few public critical comments in Sweden, especially by some theologians of the traditional neutrality policy,<sup>9</sup> but was in general accepted without much fanfare – and, one could add, much public knowledge of the doctrinal change. As the bill also contained the framework for a major defence reform, including making conscription “dormant” and forming instead a small, all-volunteer force of about 10% of the manpower

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<sup>8</sup> Ministry of Defence (2009), *A Useful Defence*, The Swedish Government’s Bill 2008/09:140, esp. p. 9. See <http://www.regeringen.se/content/1/c6/12/29/57/853ca644.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Mikael Nilsson (2009), “Ny doktrin sätter freden på spel” [New Doctrine Puts Peace at Risk], *Svenska Dagbladet*, Dec. 2<sup>nd</sup>, [http://www.svd.se/opinion/brannpunkt/ny-doktrin-satter-freden-pa-spel\\_3878379.svd](http://www.svd.se/opinion/brannpunkt/ny-doktrin-satter-freden-pa-spel_3878379.svd).

available during the Cold War, its contents were actually quite revolutionary.<sup>10</sup>

In Finland, the other “odd man out” country in terms of military alliance membership among the NB8, no identical doctrine was adopted, although Finland officially and strongly adhered to the solidarity and defence clauses of the EU Lisbon Treaty.

During 2009 as well, the fledgling Nordic cooperation on defence materiel and related issues, which had been going on in an ad hoc fashion for many years, took on a more institutionalized character through the establishment of NORDEFECO – Nordic Defence Co-Operation. The primary driver for this cooperation was economic issues – such as making better use of decreasing defence budgets through common materiel purchases and the like – and it was publicly stated that the framework as such had no purpose of building new forms of military alliances.<sup>11</sup>

In 2010, a potential milestone in NB8 cooperation was reached, through the publication of a report of two “wise men”, the former Latvian Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mr Valdis Birkavs representing the Baltic countries, and the former Danish Minister of Defence Mr Søren Gade representing the Nordic countries. The report was comprehensive, but in the field of defence cooperation its main recommendations stayed within the realms of the politically non-dangerous, such as encouraging all the NB8 countries to contribute to the EU Nordic Battle Group of 2011 and recommending the Nordic countries to further strengthen the Baltic Defence College in Tartu, Estonia (BDC).<sup>12</sup> The BDC is a joint Baltic defence academy supported financially by, among others, the Nordic countries.

What the Wise Men report did do, however, was discuss strategically the “branding” of the NB8 concept, as it noted that “key stakeholders and ordinary citizens do not seem to have sufficient knowledge of NB8 cooperation” and that more could be done in terms of public diplomacy.<sup>13</sup>

That more was going on in the defence field of the NB8 cooperation became apparent – at least at an expert level, if not at the level of public opinion – in 2011, when the Baltic states were invited by the then Swedish chairmanship

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<sup>10</sup>The Royal Swedish Academy of the War Sciences published a major study on the solidarity declaration in 2011, which was published in English the year after. This volume contained among other things some critical analyses of the practical abilities to sustain militarily the implicit promises of the solidarity declaration, but has so far not achieved a lot of public attention. See Bo Hugemark [ed.] (2012): *Friends in Need: Towards a Swedish Strategy of Solidarity with her Neighbours* (Stockholm: Royal Academy of the War Sciences).

<sup>11</sup> See <http://www.nordefco.org/facts-about-nordefco/>.

<sup>12</sup> See [http://baltikum2011.dk/fileadmin/templates/pdf/NB\\_8\\_WiseMen%20Report.pdf](http://baltikum2011.dk/fileadmin/templates/pdf/NB_8_WiseMen%20Report.pdf), p. 11f.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 13f.

to join some of the NORDEFECO cooperation areas.<sup>14</sup> The issues – advanced distributed learning (ADL), the Nordic Centre for Gender in Operations and veteran issues – were perhaps not the crucial defence issues of the day, but showed that the integration of the NB8 in the defence field had reached another stage. This impression was reinforced in 2012 when the Baltic states for the first time were invited to participate in a meeting of the NORDEFECO military coordination committee.<sup>15</sup>

However, sensitivities remain among the NB8 countries when it comes to military solidarity, i.e. mutual defence assistance, in contrast to, for instance, defence materiel cooperation. First of all, this has to do with the fact that six out of the eight countries are already members of NATO, the primary organization for politico-military solidarity and collective defence in Europe, and none of these countries want the NB8 cooperation to become a substitute for NATO. Furthermore, the two post-neutral countries of the NB8, Sweden and Finland, are still affected by the public opinion of their electorates, which have not kept up with the speed of the real developments in terms of Nordic-Baltic defence cooperation.

Examples of these sensitivities include the so-called Nordic solidarity declaration of 2011, which is an agreement among the five Nordic countries that considered their strong common values and their desire to cooperate on challenges “in the area of foreign and security policy in a spirit of solidarity”, but the issues mentioned in the declaration were “natural and man-made disasters, cyber and terrorist attacks.” There was a conspicuous absence of military attack as a cause of solidarity.<sup>16</sup>

Another example relates to the NATO exercise CMX 2011, which was a NATO crisis management exercise with territorial defence elements, played out as a staff exercise only but with the scenario geographically situated off the coast of Norway. All 28 NATO nations participated, as did Finland and Sweden as partner countries. The sensitive issue relating to this exercise, from a Finnish and Swedish traditional perspective, was that it made full use of the NATO art. 4 and art. 5 consultation and operational mechanisms.

According to press reports, Norway was the militarily attacked party in the fictional scenario. This led Norway and NATO to ask Sweden for help, including military assistance. After very briefly deliberating the issues involved, Sweden did not only participate as an observing partner country but

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<sup>14</sup> <http://www.nordefeco.org/latest-updates/the-nordic/>.

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.nordefeco.org/latest-updates/the-baltic/>.

<sup>16</sup> See the full text at <http://www.formin.fi/Public/default.aspx?contentid=217312>.



actually provided substantial military and geopolitical assets in order to help to defend, together with NATO, the territorial integrity of Norway against the aggressor state of Vineland - an invented island nation west of Norway.<sup>17</sup> This was allegedly done with explicit references to the Swedish security declaration of 2009, and with which the scenario seems to be perfectly in line.

However, probably because of the political sensitivities involved – not least concerning fears of a public opinion backlash - the actions taken within the realm of the exercise have not been discussed publicly by either the government or the parliamentary opposition in Sweden.

Finally, some issues related to what could be called “security policy identity” seem to have increased in importance. In the first place, the Baltic states have tended to underline their relationship with the Nordic countries also in terms of identity discourse. Estonia has had the easiest case in this regard, as the Estonians ethnically and linguistically are closely related to the Finns. Moreover, the long era of Swedish rule over Estonia (1561-1721) is known as the “Golden Swedish Era” in Estonian historical discourse. However, it should also be noted that Lithuania – perhaps the Baltic country least related to the Scandinavian states in terms of culture, religion and societal issues – has during the last years embarked on a determined effort to redirect itself toward the “Nordics” at least in the sense of a “strategic orientation” toward the Nordic area.<sup>18</sup> The former Lithuanian Foreign Minister, Audronius Ažubalis, actually officially framed this in terms like these:

Just like in the Vasa period, the foreign policies in the North and in the East are directly interdependent, and key political interests of the Baltic, Nordic and Central European countries coincide. The revived historic Nordic partnership presents a great opportunity for Lithuania to even more effectively promote democratic processes and build the well-being in our neighbouring Eastern European countries.<sup>19</sup>

By extension, this would also mean that the Nordic-Baltic states have

<sup>17</sup> Se Claes Arvidsson (2012): ”Sverige krigar ihop med Nato när Norge angrips” [Sweden Fights Together With NATO When Norway is Attacked], *Svenska Dagbladet*, Jan. 15<sup>th</sup>, [http://www.svd.se/opinion/ledarsidan/sverige-krigar-ihop-med-nato-nar-norge-angrips\\_6770621.svd](http://www.svd.se/opinion/ledarsidan/sverige-krigar-ihop-med-nato-nar-norge-angrips_6770621.svd). See for details on the exercise as such also *CMX 2011*, <http://uknato.fco.gov.uk/en/news/?view=News&id=674946482>.

<sup>18</sup> See “Lithuania’s strategic orientation towards the Nordic-Baltic region is based on historical experience, says Foreign Minister”, *Lithuania Tribune*, Oct. 19, 2011, <http://www.lithuaniatribune.com/2011/10/19/lithuania-%E2%80%99s-strategic-orientation-towards-the-nordic-baltic-region-is-based-on-historical-experience-says-foreign-minister/>.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* As a historical footnote, the Vasa period – named after the then Swedish royal family, which ruled Sweden from 1523 to 1654 – was a period when Sweden and Lithuania had several very intricate connections, including both wars and royalty, such as Sigismund III – who for a brief period was not only the king of Sweden but simultaneously the king of Poland and the grand duke of Lithuania.

primary security concerns that link together sufficiently closely so that their national securities cannot realistically be considered separate from one another. This is a way of defining the whole Nordic-Baltic area closely related to what the British international relations theorist, Barry Buzan, has called a “security complex”.<sup>20</sup>

In a related, although not identical, fashion public statements on Swedish security policy are also proof of what could be called a security policy identity change. For example, when speaking at a major conference on security and defence policy in early 2010, the then Swedish Minister of Defence, Sten Tolgfors, argued that the Swedish defence policy had now adopted a “neighborhood perspective”:

The design and orientation of the Swedish armed forces have and will have a clear Baltic Sea profile. The [Swedish] defence policy has now adopted a new neighborhood perspective, whose starting point is that Sweden builds security with others. (...) Security is built together with our neighbors in the Nordic countries and the EU. You cannot see a situation where a threat only affects one of the countries in our region.<sup>21</sup>

Likewise, in the 2012 foreign policy declaration to the Swedish Parliament, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Carl Bildt, stated the following:

Sweden's security is built in solidarity with others. Threats to peace and security are deterred collectively and in cooperation with other countries and organisations. (...) 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. We must be in a position to both give and receive support, civilian and military. (...) Cooperation between Sweden and our Nordic and Baltic neighbours has deep roots. Together, we have achieved peace and freedom throughout our region, and today we can combine our forces to propel these values beyond our own borders.<sup>22</sup>

What is apparent here is the complete lack of the old-time, non-aligned, neutrality-oriented isolationism that was part and parcel of Swedish security policy – and security policy identity – for almost 200 years.

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<sup>20</sup> See Barry Buzan (1983): *People, States and Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations* (Worcester: Wheatsheaf Books).

<sup>21</sup> Minister of Defence Sten Tolgfors, (2010), *Försvarsförmåga i fokus - ett försvarspolitiskt paradigmskifte [Defence Capability in Focus: A Defence Policy Paradigm Shift]*, speech at the People and Defence Conference in Sälen, Sweden on January 17, 2010. My translation. See <http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/3214/a/138070>.

<sup>22</sup> Minister of Foreign Affairs Carl Bildt, (2012): *Statement of Government Policy in the Parliamentary Debate on Foreign Affairs*, Wednesday, 15 February. See <http://www.regeringen.se/content/1/c6/18/62/82/05a7646d.pdf>.

## 4. Prospects for Further NB8 Defence Integration

As can be seen from the narrative above, NB8 cooperation is a growing field, which including the defence area. Without doubt, the NB8 countries now recognize – if implicitly – that they are part of the same security complex, i.e. their primary national security concerns cannot be dealt with in national isolation. They are all dependent on each other's security.<sup>23</sup> Thus, the fact that several of these countries, as was noted above, frame their security discourses in terms of solidarity is not surprising. However, at the same time sensitivities and hesitations concerning practical expressions of military solidarity still exist in all the countries involved. One of the reasons for this is the incoherence of the NB8 countries in terms of organizational membership in the EU and NATO, respectively.

It becomes more and more clear, however, that the NB8 concept in itself has transformative capabilities. We see it clearly in the strivings of the Baltic states to go “Nordic”. We see it also in the almost revolutionary transformation of Swedish security and defence policy over the last few years, which has been clearly influenced by the concept of neighborhood solidarity – not least relating to the NB8 countries. In Finland, this is also visible but to a much lesser degree – the Finnish security and defence policy is also in for major changes, but these seem to be caused primarily by economic factors.<sup>24</sup> There are also indications that more profound transformations of the foundations of the policy itself are in the offing.<sup>25</sup> According to current Finnish doctrine, though, it is far from certain that Finland would support militarily any of the Baltic states, should they be attacked by an external actor.

However, this setting is slowly changing – as was exemplified with the Swedish case mentioned above. The key issue for the mid- and long term future of the NB8 countries forming a security community is and will continue to be the harmonization of the grand strategies – i.e. the security policy orientation – of the NB8 countries. In practical terms, this means their common membership in the same defensive alliance, also known as NATO. The lack of common

<sup>23</sup> The “security complex” notion was, as is noted above, introduced in Barry Buzan (1983): *People, States and Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations* (Worcester: Wheatsheaf Books). It was recently adapted to the Baltic Sea region in Mike Winnerstig (2012): *Defence Integration in the Baltic Sea Security Complex— A Conceptual Approach*, in Kurt Volker and Ieva Kupce (eds.): *Nordic-Baltic-American Cooperation: Shaping the US-European Agenda*, (Washington, DC: SAIS/JHU – Center for Transatlantic Relations).

<sup>24</sup> See e.g. Bo Ljung and Karlis Neretnieks (2011), *Kommande reformering av den finländska försvarsmakten* [The Future Reforms of the Finnish Armed Forces], FOI Memo 3843 (Stockholm: FOI).

<sup>25</sup> See e.g. Ari Puheloinen (2013): *Speech by the Commander of the Finnish Armed Forces at the inauguration of the 206th Defence Course*, Helsinki, Finland, Spt. 23 (<http://www.puolustusvoimat.fi/portal/puolustusvoimat.fi>).

membership is increasingly problematic for NB8 defence cooperation, as can be seen in a number of speeches from senior political leaders in the Baltic states and is also related to practical problems appearing within the NORDEFECO context – especially in terms of Swedish-Norwegian defence cooperation.<sup>26</sup>

From a security policy perspective, the most important issue is the NATO question, essentially the eventual accession to NATO by Sweden and Finland. Therefore, this issue deserves a closer look.

## 5. The NATO membership debates in Finland and Sweden

For traditional domestic political reasons, there has been reluctance in both Sweden and Finland in terms of joining NATO, despite the obvious fact that the alliance is the most obvious practical expression of politico-military solidarity in the whole transatlantic area. This reluctance obstructs effectively the practical ability of the NB8 to form a true security community. If the defence planning of all the eight states would be performed within an allied NATO framework, almost the whole Baltic Sea area would be covered by one single politico-military structure, which would not only bring the NB8 countries much closer to each other, but would also diminish considerably all forms of military threats to the region. The freedom of maneuver for any aggressor would simply be extremely limited.

### 5.1. The Case of Finland

For ages, Finland's defence doctrine has been based on three fundamental pillars: territorial defence of the entire country, non-alignment and the conscription system. Almost 70% of the Finnish population strongly supports this framework, not least the conscription system which is seen as a national asset not only in military terms but also in terms of societal cohesion and citizen loyalty.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> See e.g. Artis Pabriks (2013): *I väntan på svenskt medlemskap i Nato* [Waiting for Swedish NATO membership], Frivärld Magasin, <http://www.frivarld.se/magasin/i-vantan-pa-svenskt-medlemskap-i-nato/>. Pabriks was at the time minister of defence of Latvia. On the Swedish-Norwegian problems, see e.g. "Norge bryter svenskt vapenkontrakt [Norway breaks Swedish arms deal]", *Swedish Radio*, December 6, 2013, <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=83&artikel=5726468>.

<sup>27</sup> For a discussion of this, see e.g. Bo Ljung and Karlis Neretnieks (2011), *Kommande reformering av den finländska försvarsmakten* [The Future Reforms of the Finnish Armed Forces], FOI Memo 3843 (Stockholm: FOI).

The structure of the Finnish armed forces is based on six modern army brigades of different kinds, a small but modern air force (with the F-18 Hornet system as the main component), a small and somewhat limited navy, and finally a lot of non-modernized “territorial defence” forces with severe limitations in terms of equipment and training. The total number of the Finnish armed forces exceeds some 230 000 troops after mobilization. This is a drawdown from some 320 000 troops some years ago. However, the European financial crisis and the problems of the Eurozone have led Finland’s economy into dire straits. As a consequence of this, reductions and savings of some 15-20% of the defence budget are planned. At the same time, a number of costly programmes – such as a mid-life upgrade of the F-18 system and a major overhaul of old, Soviet-era army equipment – are planned as well.<sup>28</sup>

The defence debate in Finland is thus driven primarily by economic, and not military or geopolitical factors. The combination of the economic crisis with the substantial rise of the isolationist True Finns party in the context of the 2011 general elections, where that party gained more than 19% of the vote, has led the Finnish defence debate toward more emphasis on a traditional territorial defence stance and away from international operations abroad.<sup>29</sup>

Given the economic problems and the obvious challenges these pose for the Finnish armed forces and for Finnish security policy doctrine, the Finnish debate on these topics has centered on a possible solution: eventual Finnish NATO membership. The profoundly odd, or at least very complex, character of the Finnish debate in this context, however, is that the whole NATO membership issue has been regarded as moot for years, not least due to the compact public opinion against the idea and due to the fact that successive governments have declared that the idea will not be pursued during their tenure. At the same time, two or three official analyses of the consequences of NATO accession have been made by Finnish officials and there has for a long time existed an imbedded, so-called “NATO option” in Finnish official doctrine, i.e. the possibility to join the alliance if the need should arise.<sup>30</sup>

However, a number of developments related to Nordic defence cooperation the last few years have exposed how sensitive defence issues still are in Finland, as non-alignment there still is a concept that is supposed to

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<sup>28</sup> See e.g. Bruce Jones (2011): “Finnish military chief braces for deeper cutbacks”, *Jane’s Defence Weekly*, 14 September.

<sup>29</sup> Johanna Minkinen (2011): “Nu kritiseras operationer i utlandet” [“Now International Operations are Criticized”], *Hufvudstadsbladet*, October 12.

<sup>30</sup> Yrsa Grüne (2011), “Varför tala om icke-frågan NATO?” [“Why talk about the NATO Membership Non-Issue?”], *Hufvudstadsbladet*, 1 November.

have both meaning and consequences. For example, when Finland in 2013 began to discuss participating in NATO's air policing mission over Iceland, together with Sweden, this led to a lengthy and very heated debate across the Finnish political spectrum. Several high-ranking Finnish parliamentarians, including such from parties within the governing coalition, voiced their grave concerns regarding this – on the grounds that Iceland is a NATO state and that non-aligned Finland had no business in taking part in the air surveillance of a NATO country. Despite the fact that the Icelandic mission was transformed from air policing to a mere exercise in air surveillance, to make a long story short, around half the Finnish population, along with several parties in the parliament, came out as strong opponents of Finnish participation in these exercises as such. The Finnish parliament, however, eventually decided that the Finnish air force should participate.<sup>31</sup>

From a Nordic-Baltic perspective, this debate and its development is highly interesting since the Finnish general public normally seems to believe that Nordic defence cooperation is a great thing; a massive 93% of the respondents in a 2013 poll argued that Nordic defence cooperation is a valuable or very valuable venture (whereas some 71% found that Finnish NATO membership would be a bad idea).<sup>32</sup> One might be able to draw the conclusion that in the view of the Finnish general public, Nordic defence is a good thing as long as it does not contain any NATO countries. That leaves three-fifth of the Nordic states outside any Nordic defence framework, though.

The NATO membership issue was most authoritatively shot down by the Finnish minister of foreign affairs, Erkki Tuomioja, in a speech in September 2013. Tuomioja – a Social Democrat – argued among other things that NATO membership, especially the mutual defence guarantees of article 5 in the NATO treaty, would not at all increase Finnish security, and that this judgment would stand not only throughout the current government's mandate but also after the next elections.<sup>33</sup> It goes without saying that this was a surprisingly strong statement; membership in an alliance based on mutual defence guarantees, covering 28 countries and some 800 million people that collectively stand for more than 50% of the global GDP and more than 50% of the global military

<sup>31</sup> See e.g. Heidi Hakala (2013), "Finland berett bidra till att övervaka Islands luftrum" ["Finland prepared to contribute to surveillance of Icelandic airspace"], Oct. 30, <http://www.arbetarbladet.fi/nyheter/alla-nyheter/8474-finl-nd-red-tt-verv>

<sup>32</sup> See Finnish Ministry of Defence (2013): *Finns' opinions on Foreign and Security policy, Defence and Security issues 2013*, [http://www.defmin.fi/files/2672/report\\_text\\_in\\_english.pdf](http://www.defmin.fi/files/2672/report_text_in_english.pdf).

<sup>33</sup> See Erkki Tuomioja (2013): *Speech by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland, Erkki Tuomioja, to the Paasikivi Society*, Helsinki, 4 September, <http://www.formin.fi/public/default.aspx?contentid=282965&nod eid=15145&contentlan=2&culture=en-US>.

defence expenditures and capabilities would - in Tuomioja's view - not increase Finnish security in any way.

In Finland, as well as in most other Nordic-Baltic states, the main white elephant in the room is Russia. For some, such as a senior group of researchers at the Finnish National Defence College, Russia represents a potential, major threat to Finnish sovereignty and territorial integrity.<sup>34</sup> To others, such as the then (2012) head of Finnish military intelligence, admiral Georgij Alafuzoff, Russia do not pose any military threat at all toward Finland. Quite on the contrary, according to Alafuzoff Finnish NATO membership could cause trouble for Finland economically since the normal, non-antagonistic relationship between Finland and Russia then could be transformed into something more adversarial.<sup>35</sup> A version of argument also returns as the third most important one in the Finnish public opinion as to why Finland should not join NATO. The most important factor for the 71% of the population which is against NATO membership seems to be, however, not the Russian factor but the impression that Finnish troops, as parts of the NATO machinery, would be forced to go to war in distant places on behalf of the NATO great powers and not in the interests of Finland.<sup>36</sup>

However, Russian officials have at several occasions implicitly and explicitly warned Finland that the consequences of joining NATO would be potentially grave, as Russia is against any enlargement of the Western alliance. During a visit to Helsinki in 2012, Nikolai Makarov, the then commander of Russia's armed forces, argued in pretty blunt terms that Finnish NATO membership actually would be considered in Moscow as a threat to Russia's security. General Makarov also even stated that Nordic defence cooperation in itself is a security concern for Russia.<sup>37</sup> It does not seem, however, that this somewhat aggressive stance – which was criticized by Finnish officials<sup>38</sup> - has pushed the Finnish public opinion toward a more positive stance regarding the issue of NATO membership. This goes as well for the reiterations of Makarov's warnings that were put forward by the Russian minister of defence, Sergey

<sup>34</sup> See e.g. Markus Lindqvist (2011): "Ryssland kan inta Norden och Baltikum när som helst" [Russia can invade and occupy the Nordic-Baltic countries anytime] *Hufvudstadsbladet*, 21 September.

<sup>35</sup> Olli Ainola (2012): "På randen till en ny revolution: Intervju med Försvarsmaktens underrättelsechef Georgij Alafuzoff" ["At the Verge of a New Revolution: Interview with the Head of Military Intelligence of the Finnish Armed Forces Georgij Alafuzoff"], *Talouselämä*, January 5.

<sup>36</sup> See Finnish Ministry of Defence (2013): *Finns' opinions on Foreign and Security policy, Defence and Security issues 2013*, [http://www.defmin.fi/files/2672/report\\_text\\_in\\_english.pdf](http://www.defmin.fi/files/2672/report_text_in_english.pdf), p.8.

<sup>37</sup> See "Russian general warns Finland about NATO", *Helsingin Sanomat*, June 6, 2012, <http://www.hs.fi/english/article/Russian+general+warns+Finland+about+NATO/1329104270495>.

<sup>38</sup> See Finland wants clarification of Russian general's comments, *Helsingin Sanomat*, June 7, 2012, <http://www.hs.fi/english/article/Finland+wants+clarification+of+Russian+general's+comments/1329104275605>.

Sjojgu, during his visit to Finland in the summer of 2013.<sup>39</sup> A Russian military expert, colonel Viktor Baranets, warned in this context that if Finland and Sweden were to join NATO, these countries would be “potential targets for Russian bombers, submarines and strategic missiles”<sup>40</sup>

Thus, as of now, the most promising aspect of Nordic defence cooperation in the eyes of both the Finnish government and the Finnish public opinion, is the bilateral relationship between Finland and Sweden. This relationship is sometimes promoted so heavily that some actors have been discussing it as a bilateral defence alliance, but this aspect is normally very quickly shot down by senior Finnish officials; Nordic defence cooperation in general and the Finnish-Swedish defence relationship in particular are not about building a defence alliance but a way to save money and to cooperate when possible on an array of military issues – way short of any discussions of mutual defence guarantees or the like. In the Finnish view, Finland alone defends Finland militarily.<sup>41</sup>

In terms of the future for Finnish security policy, an interesting statement was made by the Finnish president, Sauli Niinistö, in August 2013. In a speech before all Finnish ambassadors, gathered for an annual meeting, Niinistö commented on the critique sometimes directed against Finnish security policy – especially regarding the NATO issue – as being similar to ‘sitting on the fence’, by saying that “I happen to think that being on top of the fence is quite a good place to be.”<sup>42</sup> Some analysts immediately criticized this statement, and there have been a number of senior – often retired – Finnish officials advocating Finnish NATO membership.<sup>43</sup> But in fact, the policy of sitting on the fence seems to be a very ingrained one in Finnish security policy, and will likely remain so for years to come. The one thing that likely could change this if Finland’s Western neighbour, Sweden, would change its policy in a fundamental way.

<sup>39</sup> Peter Buchert (2013): ”Sjojgu tog fram tung rysk vokabulär [Sjojgu used the heavy Russian vocabulary]”, *Hufvudstadsbladet*, May 30.

<sup>40</sup> Matts Lindqvist (2013): ”Rysk expert varnar för Nato-anslutning [Russian expert warns against NATO accession]”, *Hufvudstadsbladet*, June 26.

<sup>41</sup> See e.g. Matts Lindqvist (2013): ”Sverige och Finland ense – ingen allians [Sweden and Finland agree – no alliance]”, *Hufvudstadsbladet*, January 18, and Mika Peltonen (2013): ”Nordefco ingen försvarsallians [Nordefco not a defence alliance]”, *Hufvudstadsbladet*, Februari 13.

<sup>42</sup> See Sauli Niinistö (2013): *President of the Republic Sauli Niinistö’s speech at the Annual Ambassadors’ Meeting*, Finlandia Hall, Helsinki, 27 August, <http://www.tpk.fi/public/default.aspx?contentid=282762&noideid=44810&contentlan=2&culture=en-US>.

<sup>43</sup> See e.g. Pauli Järvenpää (2013): *Sitting on the fence* (International Center for Defence Studies, Tallinn, Estonia), [http://www.icds.ee/index.php?id=73&cHash=5a1a2c5eba&tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=1381](http://www.icds.ee/index.php?id=73&cHash=5a1a2c5eba&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=1381), and Henrik Helenius (2014): ”Fd Moskva-ambassadören Markus Lyra: Finland bör gå med i Nato [Ex-ambassador to Moscow Markus Lyra: Finland should join NATO]”, *Arbetarbladet*, 30 January, <http://www.arbetarbladet.fi/nyheter/alla-nyheter/18395-fd-m-skv-m-ss-d-ren-m-rkus-lyr-finl-nd-b-r-g-med-i-n-t>.



## 5.2. The Case of Sweden

For many years, literally up to 2013, the issue of NATO membership was a pretty moot point in the Swedish debate on defence and security. Although a membership debate in the Swedish defence establishment did exist all the way from 1997 or so, most opinion polls from the end of the Cold War until 2012 showed that around half the population was against membership in the alliance and about 25% was in favour.<sup>44</sup> This meant that only ideologically driven smaller parties in the Parliament, essentially only the Liberal party, raised the issue at all. For the rest of the parliamentary parties, the issue was either a matter of perceived national identity (in the sense that being a Swede is to be non-aligned and neutral, making the idea of NATO membership almost repulsive), or something that in theory was desirable but in practice not worth fighting for (as in the case with the leading Moderate center-right party, which has been leading the government since 2006).<sup>45</sup>

In 2013, however, something happened to all this. In the first place, the repercussions of the dramatic and fundamental defence reform initiated in the above-mentioned 2009 defence bill became apparent; the defence force was to be strengthened from the situation in 2005, but only to some 50 000 troops in total. The defence bill's main principle was that the Swedish armed forces should be available and useful "here and now", which meant that conscription was made dormant and that the future force would consist of professional soldiers and officers as well as contracted reservists.<sup>46</sup>

This force structure was considerably larger and more effective than its equivalent in 2005, when the role of the armed forces was fundamentally unclear and when most military units demanded a year or more of training before being able to become operational. However, people – both within the establishment and the population at large – still compared this with the Swedish Armed Forces of the 1980s, when the conscription system made it possible for Sweden – then a country of some 9 million people – to mobilize around 800 000 troops, or more than half the current active-duty force of the United States of America (a country of some 330 million people and the sole

<sup>44</sup> See e.g. Mike Winnerstig (1997): *Alliansfrihet eller NATO-medlemskap? Sweden's and Europe's security after NATO's enlargement* (Stockholm: Swedish Institute of International Affairs) for one of the earliest examples of a more in-depth discussion on Sweden and NATO.

<sup>45</sup> See Joakim Berndtsson, Ulf Bjereld & Karl Ydén (2012): "Svagt stöd för Nato-anslutning" ["Weak support for NATO accession"], *Svenska Dagbladet*, 26 maj, [http://www.svd.se/opinion/brannpunkt/svagt-stod-for-nato-anslutning\\_7231251.svd](http://www.svd.se/opinion/brannpunkt/svagt-stod-for-nato-anslutning_7231251.svd).

<sup>46</sup> See Ministry of Defence (2009), *A Useful Defence*, The Swedish Government's Bill 2008/09:140. <http://www.regeringen.se/content/1/c6/12/29/57/853ca644.pdf>.

global superpower). On top of this, the general view in Sweden of the role of the Swedish armed forces in Sweden was essentially inherited from the Cold War; only Swedish armed forces defend Sweden – and nothing else – and they defend the whole country all the time.

Thus, one might have suspected that the news that broke in the spring of 2012 of Sweden's very tangible military support to Norway, in the context of the above-mentioned NATO table-top exercise, CMX11, would have stirred up a debate. During the exercise, almost the entire Swedish air force was allocated to the territorial defence of Norway, in addition to the decision (in the wargame, that is) to allow NATO to use Swedish airspace and territory as NATO saw fit.<sup>47</sup> This is hardly a kind of behavior that is expected by a non-aligned country, but it was a perfectly logical decision according to the likewise above-mentioned "solidarity declaration" from 2009. However, it did not provoke any debate at all in Swedish public opinion.

Not even General Makarov's speech in Helsinki – also mentioned above – in the summer of 2012 ignited the debate, although some editorial comments drew the conclusion that this attitude, coupled with the ongoing Russian rearmament, should speed up Swedish NATO accession.<sup>48</sup> Nor did a subsequent comment by the retiring chief of Swedish military intelligence, Major General Stefan Kristiansson, containing the idea that Russian rearmament is an issue to be taken seriously by Sweden, make any deeper impact on the public debate.<sup>49</sup>

What got the debate starting, though, was an interview the Swedish supreme commander General Sverker Göranson (essentially the Swedish CHOD – chief of defence), published in early 2013. According to General Göranson, Swedish military wargaming during the autumn of 2012 had revealed that the future structure of the Swedish armed forces – when the defence reform would be completed in 2019 or so – would be able to defend Sweden against an attack against a limited target, for about a week.<sup>50</sup>

In a NATO setting, this would not have been regarded as very strange or controversial; most NATO countries the size of Sweden have similarly capable defence forces, and rely on reinforcements from other allies to defend themselves. But in Sweden, where public opinion was still very much embracing

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<sup>47</sup> Mikael Holmström (2012): "Sverige redo kriga för Nato [Sweden prepared to go to war on behalf of NATO]", *Svenska Dagbladet*, June 21.

<sup>48</sup> *Dagens Nyheter* (2012): "Risken med ett öppet förhållande [The risks of a free relationship]" editorial, July 22.

<sup>49</sup> Mikael Holmström (2012): "MUST ser ökat hot österifrån [Swedish Military Intelligence Sees Increased Threat from the East]", *Svenska Dagbladet*, September 27].

<sup>50</sup> Mikael Holmström (2013): "Försvar med tidsgräns [A Defence with a Time Limit]", *Svenska Dagbladet*, January 2.

the idea that the Swedish armed forces should be able to defend the whole country on their own, the CHOD's statement was sheer political dynamite. A huge number of politicians, commentators, members of parliament, journalists and members of the general public made statements showing their utter surprise as to where the Swedish armed forces had been going.<sup>51</sup>

In another interview, General Göranson further noted that instead of planning for the defence of the entire country, the limitations of the future armed forces meant that military defence planning could only realistically be made for the five most important areas of the country – and only one of these would be possible to defend at the same time. In the Swedish debate, this was seen as almost as dramatic as the CHOD's revelation of what quickly became called the “one-week defence”. The drama did not end there, though; General Göranson went on sick leave for several weeks, and legal authorities started investigating him as suspected for leaking military secrets.<sup>52</sup> The defence debate temperature in Sweden was increasing rapidly, although the charges against General Göranson were eventually dropped.

At a major Swedish security policy conference in January 2013, the Secretary General of NATO – Anders Fogh Rasmussen, a fellow Scandinavian and former Danish prime minister – stated very clearly that NATO has no obligation to assist non-members. This was partly an answer to a question as to whether Sweden could rely on military help from other countries, along the lines of the Swedish unilateral 2009 solidarity declaration.<sup>53</sup> The then Norwegian minister of defence said the same thing in an interview for Swedish public radio a couple of weeks later and added that Norway does not have any troops at all available for defending anything but Norwegian territory together with NATO allies.<sup>54</sup>

On top of all this, Russian military exercises directly directed against Sweden became part and parcel of the defence debate in Sweden. In the first place, a fighter-bomber formation flew against Swedish targets during Good Friday night 2013. As this is a major holiday in Sweden, all pilots able to do intercepting missions were on leave and thus no Swedish planes went up against the Russian ones (which did not pass, however, into Swedish territory

<sup>51</sup> Ewa Stenberg (2012): ”Uttalandet från ÖB är en politisk bomb [The CHOD statement a political bomb]”, *Dagens Nyheter*, January 3.

<sup>52</sup> Mikael Holmström (2013): “Försvarsplan bara för fem områden [Defence plans only for five areas]”, *Svenska Dagbladet*, January 26.

<sup>53</sup> Mikael Holmström (2013): “NATO lovar inget ingripande [NATO does not promise any assistance]”, *Svenska Dagbladet*, January 15.

<sup>54</sup> See interview with Anne-Grete Strøm-Erichsen, Norwegian minister of defence, on January 24, 2013, <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=83&artikel=5453467>.

proper). However, Danish F16s from the NATO air policing mission in Siauliai, Lithuania, went up against the Russian airplanes, which in the following debate added insult to injury to the Swedish air force.<sup>55</sup> Later during the year, a Russian intelligence ship sailed between the island of Gotland and the Swedish mainland in order to perform signals intelligence tasks related to a major international military exercise in Sweden that took place at the same time.<sup>56</sup> In the context of the Zapad 13 exercise just after this incident, another mock air attack against Swedish targets were made by units of the Russian air force.<sup>57</sup>

All this had profound and probably lasting effects on both parliamentary and public opinion. Traditionally, only two of the four current Swedish governmental coalition parties – including the Moderate liberal-conservative party of the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister and the Defence Minister – have openly been promoting Swedish NATO membership. The other two, the Center (Agrarian) party and the Christian Democrats, have traditionally been strong supporters of Swedish non-alignment but are now officially undecided and demand a full parliamentary investigative committee on the pros and cons of Swedish NATO membership. The latter has partly been realized, as the Swedish government recently appointed a senior, retired ambassador to set up a committee investigating “Sweden’s military cooperation” with the Nordic countries, the EU and NATO.<sup>58</sup> This action was immediately criticized by social democratic press, the Social Democrats still being dead against NATO membership (together with the rest of the opposition, i.e. the Greens, the former Communist party and the right-wing populist Sweden Democrats party).<sup>59</sup>

The changed situation in the Swedish parliament was reflected in substantial changes in the public opinion’s view on NATO membership. According to a poll in May, 32% of Swedes were in favour of Swedish NATO membership (up from 23% in 2012), whereas 40% were against it (down from 50% in 2012) – the rest being undecided. This poll was particularly interesting since it also revealed that some 24% of all Social Democrats and a majority,

<sup>55</sup> Mikael Holmström (2013): “Ryskt flyg övade anfall mot Sverige [Russian Aircraft Exercised Attacking Sweden], *Svenska Dagbladet*, April 24.

<sup>56</sup> Mikael Holmström (2012): “Här spionerar Ryssland på Sverige [Here, Russia is spying against Sweden]”, *Svenska Dagbladet*, September 21<sup>st</sup>.

<sup>57</sup> Olle Lönnaeus (2013): “Het militärhöst runt Östersjön [Hot military autumn around the Baltic Sea]”, *Sydsvenskan*, November 9<sup>th</sup>, <http://www.sydsvenskan.se/sverige/het-militarhost-runt-ostersjon/>.

<sup>58</sup> Ministry of Defence (2013): “Översyn över internationella samarbeten [Overhaul of international cooperative ventures]”, December 28<sup>th</sup>, <http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/17014/a/231323>.

<sup>59</sup> See e.g. Anders Lindberg (2014): “Vilket problem är Nato lösning på? [Which problem is NATO a solution to?]”, January 11, <http://www.aftonbladet.se/ledare/ledarkronika/anderslindberg/article/18158319.ab>.

or 56%, of all Sweden Democrats were in favour of NATO membership. In another poll, performed within the Transatlantic Trends project of the German Marshall Fund, 36% were in favour of NATO membership (up from 24% in 2012) and 56% were against it.<sup>60</sup> In yet another poll, published in January 2014 by the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB), 36% of respondents were in favour of Swedish NATO membership and 40% were against it – indicating essentially a statistical tie.<sup>61</sup>

In other words, the combination of a drastically decreased defence structure, a partly – and quite fundamentally – changed security policy doctrine, and a resurgent, rearming Russia, has most likely led to a substantial increase in Swedes favoring NATO membership, to the point that the numbers of Swedes favoring and opposing this are virtually the same. This is a most different situation compared to the Finnish case as described above.

## Conclusions

To sum up, Nordic and Nordic-Baltic defence cooperative ventures today are growing, but they are not without their problems and the Nordic part of this seems to grow substantially quicker than the Nordic-Baltic part. There is a clear tendency, however, of the NB8 concept to function as a means of transformation of the defence cooperation patterns of the Baltic Sea area as such.

One can add, as well, that the massive complex of linkages around the Baltic Sea – in economic, political, societal and military terms – constitutes what could be called a “security complex”: the security problems of the individual countries within the region affect all other countries within it. This means not only that traditional problematic issues – such as the situation of the Russian minorities in Estonia and Latvia and the like – but also more recent ones, such as the lack of a common security policy strategy of the NB8 countries – are of increasing importance for all countries of the NB8.

In blunter terms, the incoherence of NB8 security policy obstructs effectively the ability of the NB8 countries to form a true security community,

<sup>60</sup> See Claes Arvidsson (2012): *Känsla och förnuft – opinioner om NATO* [Feelings and rationality – opinions about NATO], in Karlis Neretnieks [ed.] *Nato - för och emot [NATO: Pro and Con]* (Stockholm: Kungliga Krigsvetenskapsakademien/The Royal Academy of the War Sciences), pp. 133 ff.

<sup>61</sup> See MSB (2014): *Opinioner 2013 Allmänhetens syn på samhällsskydd, beredskap, säkerhetspolitik och försvar [Opinions 2013: The General Public's Views on Societal Security, Preparedness, Security Policy and Defence]*, <http://rib.msb.se/Filer/pdf/27284.pdf>, pp. 85ff.

in which common trust would be so deep that common military planning would be seen as a natural thing. This is already largely taking place within those of the NB8 countries that belong to NATO, but as two of the do not, the issue will not be solved in a satisfactory way in the long run.

However, the NATO membership issue has moved a long way in the two countries of the NB8 not belonging to the alliance, but in very different ways. Due to the lack of big changes in defence policy and threat perceptions, Finland seems to be the country right now where eventual NATO membership is by far most unlikely. In Sweden, on the other hand, dramatic changes in both defence and security policy as well as in perceived threat perceptions have led to a much more conducive attitude toward NATO membership within the general public and in the parliament. A decision on NATO membership is probably a few years away even in Sweden, but given the current polls and the parliamentary views that are developing, its eventual realization seems to be more likely than ever.

*January 2014*